

## PFD in Brief

### First Virtual Global Meeting of the Policy Forum on Development A dialogue on EU Programming with Koen Doens, Director General, DG DEVCO 15 September 2020

More than 85 representatives of civil society organisations (CSO), local authorities (LA), professional and business associations, and the European Commission participated in the first virtual global meeting of the Policy Forum on Development (PFD) on 15 September 2020. On this occasion, the PFD members met for the first time with Koen Doens, Director General for International Cooperation and Development and brought forward their recommendations and feedback on EU programming. The event was part of a larger, online and written consultation process on EU programming that started in April and will continue until the end of the year.



### Introduction and welcome

In his opening words, Koen Doens welcomed the successful adoption of digital tools and suggested that the “PFD 2.0” virtual activities should complement the onsite global and regional meetings and strengthen the interactive dialogue in the years to come. He also stressed that the timing in the programming cycle was excellent. Multiple stakeholders are expected to be involved in the programming process: “It is clear that we want to engage in a structured dialogue with civil society organisations (CSOs) and local authorities (LAs).” Programming guidelines will be sent to Delegations at the end of September.



In her welcoming speech, **Tanya Cox**, Director at CONCORD Europe and CSO co-chair of the PFD reminded the participants of the growing digital divide and the

exacerbation of inequalities since the outbreak of the pandemic. She called for a people-centred approach to fight the systemic weaknesses that COVID19 exposed. “We need to change how we operate and must focus on the people, in order to leave no one behind.” **Frédéric Vallier**, Secretary General of the European Council of Municipalities and Regions/PLATFORMA and Local Authorities (LAs) co-chair of the PFD also underlined the paramount role that local and regional Governments (LRGs) played in the frontline of COVID19 and as important partners of civil society, national governments, the private sector and the European Union. This partnership has to be maintained and further strengthened in the upcoming programming period.

## Feedback and reflections from the virtual regional meetings

In the first part of the meeting, PFD members shared the main outcomes of the four virtual regional meetings that took place in July. Common concerns in all regions include the exacerbation of inequalities, digital divide, staying on track with the SDGs, a “Just transition” as we recover from the health crisis and implement Green Deals, as well as the need to provide for an enabling environment for LAs and CSOs to “build forward better”. Several PFD members look very critically at the shift from thematic to geographic programming in the new Multi-annual Financial Framework. They stressed the need for local governments, trade unions and cooperatives to be actively involved in the geographic programming processes. The EU roadmaps give an added value but should be more inclusive and transparent and the Framework Partnership Agreements constitute a good practice when it comes to multi-stakeholder partnerships. Local Authorities representatives recommended the use of FPAs at the local level with national associations of local authorities.

The Director General clarified that the “geographised” approach offers opportunities to tailor EU support to specific country needs and stressed the importance of the territorial approach to shape the programming at local level, creating benefits for both CSOs and LAs. This is the reason why the EU Delegations are being invited to engage in structured dialogues with CSOs and LAs at country level. It also implies working on an enabling environment, including capacity building or supporting partners in achieving their mandates. He also highlighted that the EC will focus more on decentralised cooperation in the future.

**Bernadia Tjandradewi**, Secretary General, United Cities and Local Governments Asia also pointed out that local resilience needs to be built, considering all its social, environmental, economic and institutional aspects. In Asia, environmental issues such as waste management and the circular economy must also be prioritised on the agenda together with the management and protection of intraregional migrants and returning workers. She also highlighted the need to minimise the digital gap, fight inequality and support decentralisation processes. She noted that all of this can be supported via the roadmaps for local authorities, which strengthen the enabling environment in which they work.

**Jean-Pierre Elong Mbassi**, Secretary General, United Cities and Local Governments Africa, underlined that local economic development including decent job creation for young people and women and social protection constitute a major challenge in Africa at present. In the current situation, it is local and regional governments, as well as CSOs, providing the immediate emergency response. He highlighted the importance of putting in place structured dialogues with the local authorities, even concluding Framework Partnerships Agreements at country level with national associations of LA. And **Georgia Papoutsi**, Policy Manager, International Co-operative Alliance, added that in order to create an economy that works for the people, the EU needs to focus on the strengthening of local, sustainable and inclusive business models. And this must comprehend support for decent jobs as well as social protection and it must reach the informal sector to be effective. The Director General in his response made reference to the recent EC Communication “[Strategic Foresight – Charting the course towards a more resilient Europe](#)” where among others “the need for new metrics to measure progress beyond GDP growth” is explicitly mentioned.

**Valter Bittencourt**, Political Adviser, Confederación Sindical de Trabajadores/as de las Américas, summarised the outcomes of the Latin American meeting whose participants emphasised the sustainable exploitation of natural resources as well as the relationship between sustainability, peace and security on the one hand and preserving nature, protecting indigenous people and human rights defenders on the other hand. This also entails the strengthening of the overall democratic system and the rule of law in the region.

Participants reiterated concern about the innovative financing models of the European Union such as blending or guarantees. Various PFD members raised concerns about accountability in these models as well as not yet proven positive impact. However, the Director General replied that in times of limited funding, blending would be supplementary to other forms of funding and it could achieve an important leverage effect, e.g. by supporting female entrepreneurs or micro-enterprises. He also welcomed the fact that PFD members' overall concerns mirror the EU priorities such as the Green Deal, digitalisation, an Inclusive Growth and Jobs Agenda, migration and safeguarding democracy/a multi-lateral rules-based system in general. He also confirmed that being people-centred is "at the heart of the Commissioner's approach."

## Global PFD constituencies giving input to EU programming

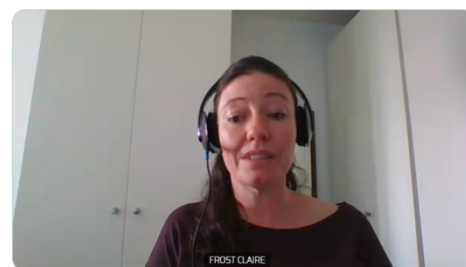
In the second part of the session, eight pre-selected speakers representing different PFD constituencies shared their feedback on EU programming with the Director General. Many of the views expressed in the first part of the discussion were stressed further and illustrated by some examples. **Ziad Abdel Samad**, Executive Director, Arab NGO Network for Development, represented the NGO members of the PFD and emphasised the importance of protecting civic space. The EU should not compromise on fundamental rights, inclusion and participation but rather enhance NGOs' capabilities to advocate and influence laws.

**Marc Noël**, International Development Director, International Co-operative Alliance, agreed that additional steps are needed to institutionalise inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogue, using existing tools such as the PFD at local level with the involvement of the EU Delegations. **Paola Simonetti**, Coordinator Development Policy, International Trade Union Confederation, reminded participants that COVID19 recovery and resilience must be tied to the compliance with the SDGs, such as ensuring universal access to public education, healthcare, social protection as well as restoring decent jobs and income. The Director General agreed with all issues brought forward and stressed that a dialogue with social partners and vibrant CSOs is essential, in order to translate the heartbeat of society into institutional decisions and public policies. In this respect enabling environments should be preserved to the benefits of all. He stressed that both the geographic and thematic programmes should be anchored locally using a territorial approach: global challenges require local actions. He provided as an example a programme on cocoa in Ghana and Ivory Coast, including the fight against deforestation and child labour which was the result of the involvement of local actors, social partners and CSOs.

**Emilia Saiz**, Secretary General, United Cities and Local Governments, stressed that the principle of subsidiarity should be promoted in the design and effective implementation of public policies that the EU supports, involving the local and regional governments that are *governments*, i.e. autonomous

 **PLATFORMA** @Platforma4Dev · 15 sept.  
At #PFD, @ClaireFrost10 from @CLGF.News calls on the #EU to mainstream #localgov in country programmes and simplify the access to #EUfunding.

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political actors in their own competences and mandates, which should be involved in all dialogues with the governments of partner countries. She highlighted that COVID revealed the crisis of public services delivery and of public policies' weaknesses, which include poorly paid public administrations. Strong and resilient local services provided by local governments are needed and all citizens should have access to them. **Claire Frost**, Programme Manager, Commonwealth Local Government Forum, agreed with the concerns underlined by the previous speakers and added that local authorities at country level should be involved, together with the national governments, in promoting the coherence of approaches. She also requested further reflections on more flexible mechanisms for accessing funds.

According to **Mohammed Touzani**, Project Manager, Confédération Générale des entreprises du Maroc, it is also of utmost importance to create an enabling business environment mainly for micro- and SMEs to push for economic recovery and build resilience. This also involves capacity-building and life-long learning. Public-private partnerships are thus more important than ever. **Nadya Hernandez**, Programs Manager, World Wide Initiative for Grantmaker Support, referred to the importance of guaranteeing extra vigilance on the use of financial transactions (to avoid terrorism financing), domestic resource mobilisation and the potential to grow and improve all forms of private resources for the common good.

**Carine Nsoudou**, Director, Africa-Europe Diaspora Development Platform, explained that diaspora individuals and organisations have played a key role in mitigating the impact of COVID-19 in Africa and reiterated the importance of the nexus between migration and development in EU programming. The Director General agreed on the importance of the nexus and praised the role of the diaspora not only because of remittances in development cooperation but also for its capacity to transfer knowledge and connect capacities between Europe and its partner countries, aspects to which he would like to devote more attention.

On the timeline of programming, the Director General explained that the programming exercise would start in early October, once the EU Delegations will have received the guidelines; the programming documents are expected to be finalised by the end of the year. He agreed to report back to the PFD members on the details on the process of consultations followed by the Delegations.

## Conclusions and next steps

The Director General closed the two-hour meeting with a quote of Václav Havel: "look for the company of people who seek the truth but run away from those who claim to have found it." In line with this quote, the first virtual global meeting was characterised by a high level of openness on the side of the EC and explicit willingness to pursue the dialogue with the PFD members during the on-going programming exercise. Regular exchanges on programming will continue in the form of three thematic virtual meetings to be held in October and November, while other means to virtually keep collecting members' insights and suggestions will be developed in the context of the forthcoming "PFD 2.0".

All the speakers' statements can be downloaded on our Cap4Dev page:

<https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/policy-forum-development/wiki/virtual-global-meeting-september-2020>