

Cities

Brief contextual information:

The remarkable process of urbanisation witnessed during the last decades continues to grow and has considerable consequences on infrastructure, environment, inequalities, access to basic services, etc. In fact, it is considered that big and medium sized cities will include more than 3 billion people by 2050. In order to tackle these issues in a transformative manner, following the spirit of the 2030 Agenda, LAs, CSOs, the private sector and international actors need to work jointly with national governments. While the role of LAs in Development is a permanent feature of the PFD, the particular role of cities has been one of the areas most discussed some of the last PFD events, including the Global 2016, Antigua 2016, Europe 2018, Global 2018, Asia 2019.

Main issues discussed

- Which trends characterise the evolution of urban growth and what kind of challenges go with it.
- How to reconcile good governance principles with national processes of decentralisation;
- How to reconcile competitiveness factors with equality and a fair redistribution of wealth in urban environments.
- How can cities cope with the increasing pressure derived from unforeseen events, such as the refugee crisis or environmental disasters.
- Ways in which international cooperation schemes need to adapt to the localization of the SDGs.
- How to finance the agenda, involving both the public and private sector and taking into consideration the considerable shortage of competences, resources and capacity at local level.
- The promotion of green and resilient cities through the use of partnership tools (e.g. Twinning)

Key recommendations made

Despite the importance of cities in the implementation of global development goals, they remain heavily under resourced, also from the international community. It has been calculated that global development funds destined to LAs account for about 2% of the total. At the same time, consultation with LAs remains very limited.

- Adopt national policies addressing the challenges with proper strategies and plans, resulting from consolidated channels of permanent dialogue and trust building between national governments, CSOs and LAs, and to develop instruments to follow-up on progress towards shared goals.
- Keep investing in localising development; empowering local authorities to ensure a bottom-up approach and building links between the activities of civil society, local and central governments.

To the EU:

- Responding to the recognized necessity to localize the implementation of the SDGs, the EU should move beyond the national governments and encourage earmarked budgets for local authorities.

Key remaining questions/dilemmas

- How to link urban policies with national planning?
- How to deal with the particular needs of the urban poor and the most vulnerable groups?
- How to rise revenue and improve the systems of public finance management at local level?
- How to invest in capacity to provide better services and incorporate a longer cycle mentality that overcomes the “quick fix” current one?