PLATFORMA
LOCAL & REGIONAL INTERNATIONAL ACTION

THE WORK OF EU DELEGATIONS WITH LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Study

The aim of this study is to take stock of views on local and regional governments as partners in development policies as well as EU support in this area from the perspective of the European Union Delegations in charge of its implementation in view of building a path forward to capitalise on the achievements and actions accomplished to date.

The work of EU delegations with local and regional governments for development

STUDY

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific
AIMF	International Association of Francophone Mayors
CEMR	Council of European Municipalities and Regions
CLGF	Commonwealth Local Government Forum
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DAC	OECD's Development Assistance Committee
DEAR	Development Education and Awareness Raising
DECENTRALISED COOPERATION	Development cooperation between sub-national governments
DCI	Development Cooperation Instrument
DG DEVCO	Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development of the European Commission (until 15 January 2021)
DG INTPA	Directorate-General for International Partnerships of the European Commission (new name of DG DEVCO as of 16 January 2021)
EC	European Commission
EDF	European Development Fund
EEAS	European Union External Action Service
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
EP	European Parliament
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
EU	European Union
EUDs	EU Delegations
LAs	Local authorities
LED	Local Economic Development
LRGs	Local and regional governments
LRGAs	Local and regional government associations
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
MIP	Multiannual Indicative Programmes
NDICI	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NIP	National Indicative Programmes
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RIP	Regional Indicative Programmes
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TALD	Territorial Approach to Local Development
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments
UN	United Nations
VNG International	International Cooperation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities

TABLE OF CONTENTS

टि-सर्ट पस्मीना सल उल स्वेटर
ज्याकेट कट्न कुर्था संचालकको ←

FOREWORD

Starting in 2021, the EU's development policy will be entering a new phase, whereby a unique financial instrument will cover the financing of all activities implemented under the EU neighbourhood, development and international cooperation policies. The new provisions in place as of this year will give the EU Delegations greater leeway to determine how best to allocate funds at country level. This "geographisation" of EU programming is a positive development, as it fosters a greater sense of ownership and hence appropriation by the partner countries. At the same time, the thematic budget line dedicated to local and regional governments (LRGs) under the present financial period has been removed from the Neighbourhood, Development, International Cooperation Instrument (impending NDICI). This development has provided us with an opening to rethink how we, local and regional governments and representative associations active in development cooperation, work with the EU Delegations. It also offers us the opportunity to restructure and fine-tune the ways in which LRGs and their associations can be supported, at country level, and by way of a regional approach. The structured dialogue that has been initiated with LRGs needs to be bolstered through updated procedures to strengthen their capacities, allowing them to fully carry out their role at local and regional level.

Local and regional governments, and their representative associations, play a major role as a catalyst and specifically dovetail with what is called for under SDG 17 of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: they coordinate, raise concerns, advise, articulate, and manage the participation of local stakeholders, including academia, civil society organisations, the private sector, and other relevant actors. Indeed, LRGs are vital in ensuring the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs through active awareness-raising initiatives that mobilise their citizens' engagement. They also help to bring together and foster effective cooperation between different stakeholders on the ground, including local businesses, academia, civil society, and the research community. They represent a key partner for the EU Delegations, who also have a major role to fulfil in this process.

Local and regional governments seek to actively contribute to the consolidation of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights. They also wish to improve the quality of life, education, health and the environment as well as expand access to water, energy and, crucially, decent jobs, especially for youth and the most vulnerable populations in partner countries. We believe that the human-centred approach promoted by the EU and the five priorities established for the coming years are a step in the right direction: the Green Deal, digitalisation, an economy that works for people, partnership on migrations, democracy and human rights. These are all priorities that local and regional governments have long been addressing in their day-to-day work all across their own territories and in line with their own mandates. We now look forward to joining forces with the European Union to help transform these priorities into realities and to ensure that no one and no place are left behind.

Frédéric Vallier

Secretary General of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), on behalf of PLATFORMA
Co-Chair of the Policy Forum on Development for local and regional governments

INTRODUCTION

Background

It is now widely accepted that development cooperation is no longer the exclusive purview of national governments or non-governmental organisations (NGOs). As policy and decision makers in their own right, local and regional governments (LRGs) have become key actors in development shaping policies and decisions in the international field as well, either by way of their own capabilities or working in association with other public or private institutions.

The responsibilities that local and regional governments have towards citizens and their proximity to their everyday concerns make them the level most suited to take decisions and action on their behalf. They have the expertise, knowledge and potential to innovate in response to many development challenges. Moreover, local and regional governments are a key pillar of the governance system, performing an essential role in coordinating, mobilising and engaging with other local stakeholders such as the private sector, academia, civil society organisations or even other local and regional governments.

The European Union (EU) is one of the biggest donors of Official Development Assistance, with action and influence in 120 countries.[1] Through the European Union External Action Service (EEAS), EU Delegations (EUDs) are active worldwide promulgating the EU's interests and values, and to manage, finance and implement multi-annual programmes in partner countries. The fields in which the EEAS is active through EU Delegations are very diverse and vary according to the partner country's priorities (diplomacy, trade, security, human rights, election missions, humanitarian aid, culture…). Over a hundred of the 139 EU Delegations in the world also employ staff assigned specifically to development issues. Good governance, water and sanitation, urban development, education, rural development and health are examples of areas where the EU has carried out significant actions.

PLATFORMA works to strengthen local and regional governments and their national associations in partner countries (including through decentralisation reforms and capacity-building) and their work in the field of decentralised cooperation, which encompasses EU local and regional governments' international actions for development, through peer partnerships in these countries.

Decentralised cooperation can take many forms, including mayor-to-mayor, administration-to-administration, national associations to local governments, indirect cooperation, cooperation through funding for municipal development, development education and awareness-raising initiatives, etc.

PLATFORMA aims to promote:

- decentralisation processes as a means of strengthening institutions at the local level, given that sub-national levels have the competences and resources that allow local challenges to be managed locally – support for territorial and public administrative reforms that entrust LRGs with the competences, capacities and the necessary means to exercise their mandate

- the ability to develop adequate local or regional public policies in line with local conditions

- the Territorial Approach to Local Development (TALD), defined as a *"multidimensional national policy that reflects a commitment to territorial development. National governments in decentralising states may want to adopt a TALD, and international development partners may want to support/promote a TALD, in order to unleash the full potential of territories. A TALD should enable autonomous and accountable local authorities to deliver local development which is endogenous, integrated, multi-scalar and incremental".*[2]

From beneficiary to partners in development

This study takes PLATFORMA one step further in its efforts to strengthen the relationship between LRGs and their representative national associations and the EU. EU development policy increasingly promotes policy dialogue and partnerships with local and regional governments and their associations from both Europe and partner countries. The new 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and the forthcoming unique instrument (currently known as the Neighbourhood, Development, International Cooperation Instrument – NDICI) both call for LRGs to be consulted by the EU Delegations and the European Commission as a general rule and at all stages of the policymaking process. Ideally, this consultation will give rise to a permanent policy and political dialogue, from pre-programming through to the implementation and monitoring phases. Moreover, with the 2030 Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a new framework for developing innovative practices, inherently recognising the importance of leveraging SDG localisation and decentralised international action to contribute to the achievement of this global and universal agenda (SDG17). Furthermore, the EU, its Delegations and the Member States have started to develop country roadmaps for engagement with local and regional governments in a few pilot countries, emulating what they have been doing with civil society since 2012, in order

---

EU Member States
Contacted countries
Replying countries

Participant Partner Countries

This study addresses several topics relating to LRGs in development cooperation.

First, the core of the questionnaire focused on decentralisation processes in the country: Were there any? Was the EU Delegation involved, and, if yes, to what extent? EU Delegations can play an active role by funding or politically supporting such processes. Their answers provide an idea of the degree of autonomy of local governments in pursuing their development agendas.

Second, the study looked at the EU Delegations' level of knowledge regarding decentralised cooperation, specifically between European LRGs and the partner countries, and what role the EUDs play in these local-to-local partnerships. This allows us to determine the level of interaction between these two kinds of development actors and how they benefit from it.

Third, the EU Delegations were also asked about any programmes or projects that were implemented during the current programming period with or through local and regional governments and the budget lines, instruments and methods involved. This section is especially useful in helping to analyse and identify innovative approaches and success stories.

The preliminary draft of the report was reviewed by PLATFORMA members, who provided additional input regarding the EU and the decentralised cooperation actors' perspective on the EU Delegations' work, and on the triangular relations between European LRGs, the EU, and local and regional governments in partner countries.

The first section provides some background information and presents the relevant EU instruments. The second section looks at the decentralisation processes in partner countries and then analyses the impact of EU support. The third section describes and disaggregates the work of the EU Delegations with LRGs. Lastly, the final chapter of the study presents the main lessons learned and the principal conclusions.

to establish a structure for efficient policy dialogue. The aim is to take into account the views and specificities of LRGs in each country on key development and governance issues so that they can then be shared with the national authorities to help bring about the development of a joint vision and common framework for engaging with LRGs.

Hence, the overall ambition of this study is to expand the shared knowledge of EU Delegations and LRGs by analysing the approach developed thus far by EU Delegations for working on issues relating to the competences of local and regional governments and supporting decentralisation processes in partner countries, but also by examining how EU Delegations engage with local and regional governments and what their views are on the current work and the potential of engaging local and regional governments as effective actors for development cooperation in the future.

Methodology

In order to assess the collaboration between EU Delegations (EUDs) and local and regional governments, we sent out a survey and then interviewed selected EU Delegations, contacting the ones with a Development Cooperation unit and asking them for feedback on projects as well as their impressions and methods.[3]

The written survey was sent to 105 delegations and 53 responses were received from different countries all around the world. In addition, telephone interviews were conducted with 17 respondents to clarify some concepts or to obtain complementary information and opinions directly from the people in charge of the LRG approach and development programmes.[4] This was carried out in collaboration with the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development's (DG DEVCO) C5 Unit (Cities, Local Authorities, Digitalisation, Infrastructures), which is in charge of the general policy approach to LRGs.[5]

---

[3] Annex page 37: 2020 survey of EU Delegations Empowering Local Authorities in partner countries for enhanced governance and more effective development outcomes

[4] **EU delegations which responded to the survey (Q1 2020):** Afghanistan, Armenia, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Costa Rica + Nicaragua, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guinea (Republic), Haiti, Indonesia, Ivory Coast, Jamaica + Belize, Kazakhstan + Turkmenistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Laos, Lebanon, Madagascar, Mauritius + Comores + Seychelles, Moldova, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, South Africa, Timor Leste, Tunisia, Vietnam
EU delegations which responded to the survey and were interviewed (Q1 2020): Algeria, Belarus, Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Congo (Republic), Fiji + Tonga + Vanuatu + Solomon, Gabon + Sao Tome and Principe, Gambia, Honduras, Lesotho, Mali, Lesotho, Mali, Morocco, Nepal, Sri Lanka + Maldives, Togo, Ukraine.

[5] The Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO) officially became DG International Partnerships on 16 January 2021. C5 Unit became G2 Unit "Local Authorities, Civil Society Organisations and Foundations" https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/news/dg-international-cooperation-and-development-becomes-dg-international-partnerships_en

CHAPTER **1**

CONTEXT AND INSTRUMENTS

CONTEXT AND INSTRUMENTS

The European Union has long developed cooperation policies with its partner countries. The design of its tools, priority countries and objectives have been influenced by many factors such as the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) classification of countries or the strategic interest of Member States, resulting in the existence of several instruments operating with a variety of goals, topics and methodologies.

In 2017, the *New European Consensus on Development*[6] stressed that stronger partnerships should form the backbone of any implementation of SDGs. It also recognised the key roles played by local and regional governments, particularly in decision-making processes.

The Consensus also rightly acknowledged that most SDGs can only be achieved through the active involvement of local and regional governments. With this reality in mind, the Consensus called on the EU and its Member States to support *"transparency, accountability and decentralisation reforms, where appropriate, to empower regional and local authorities for better governance and development impact and better address inequalities within countries. They will support processes to help people interact effectively with local government at all stages of policy planning and implementation and will strengthen their cooperation with local and other sub-national authorities, including through decentralised cooperation."*

The European Commission then initiated the pre-programming phase of the next multiannual period (2021–2027) in 2019, officially launching the programming phase in the beginning of November 2020 by sending the programming guidelines to the EU Delegations. The development of EU roadmaps for engagement with local authorities have also been underway for a few years now in a small number of countries. The roadmaps are jointly drawn up by the country delegation together with the unit in charge of local governments at the European Commission in Brussels. Four countries took part in the first phase of the project: Mali, Ecuador, Colombia and Chad.

As will be seen, despite the increased importance that local and regional governments are gaining in the field of development cooperation, EU development cooperation programmes have not yet settled on whether a geographic approach should be used for LRGs, as this greatly depends on the LRGs' autonomy and hierarchical position within the political structure of each country, the capacity and willingness of individual EU Delegations to work with them, and the engagement of the national associations. Decentralisation processes, territorial administrative divisions, public resource management and demographic distribution and concentration are all factors that influence the decision and capacity to have the local level involved in EU programmes. Furthermore, if LRGs do become involved, those same factors also determine the role they play in those programmes (as beneficiaries, as partners, as co-programmers…).

In its most recent Multiannual Financial Framework, the EU introduced several instruments for development cooperation. LRGs are eligible to avail themselves of most and examples of positive outcomes have been highlighted in the section below.[7]

The European Union's External Action Instruments for Development for the 2014-2020 programming period

This study will only focus on development-related instruments and not the ones aimed at humanitarian aid, nuclear safety or security policy. The European funds for development cooperation are allocated under several instruments that have been differentiated according to the goals they aim to achieve.

Each instrument works in accordance with a specific regulation that sets forth its objectives, framework, priorities and budget for the period (2014–2020 in this case). On top of this, there is a common regulation that establishes protocols and procedures for all of the EU's funding instruments.[8]

Most of the instruments are associated with a programme tied to a country or region (continent) or theme, which means that their budgets also operate according to certain priorities and different time periods:

- Strategic plans for the whole financial period (2014–2020 MFF), jointly drafted with the European External Action Service (EEAS).

- Multiannual Indicative Programmes (MIP) covering 2014–2017 and 2017-2020, with a mid-term review between periods. Priorities, objectives, expected results and indicators are laid out, as well as indicative financial allocations for different objectives. The latter are discussed with Members of the European Parliament.

- National or Regional Indicative Programmes (NIP or RIP respectively) for geographical programmes.

- Annual Action Plans for each programme, with concrete actions, an annual budget and processes. In some cases, they can be multiannual.

- Annual work programmes include grants which may be awarded during the year.

Instruments are either **geographic** or **thematic**, with the exception of the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), which combines both geographic and thematic elements. Depending on the characteristics of the instrument, it can concern local authorities to a greater or lesser degree. The EU also coordinates the Union Trust Funds, which will be looked at separately.

EXTERNAL ACTION FINANCING INSTRUMENTS, MFF 2014-2020

European Development Fund
(Africa, Caribbean & Pacific) — 30.5

Development Cooperation Instrument
(Asia, Latin America & the Middle East) — 19.7

European Neighbourhood Instrument
(EU Eastern & Southern Neighbours) — 15.4

Instrument for Pre-accession
(EU accession countries) — 11.7

Instrument for Greenland — 0.2

European Instrument for Democracy & Human Rights — 1.3

Instrument contributing to stability and peace — 2.3

Partnership instrument — 1.0

Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation — 0.2

Humanitarian Aid — 7.1

Common Foreign and Security Policy — 2.3

Guarantee Fund for External Actions — 1.2

Other — 3.5

> *Source:* http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/572708/IPOL_STU(2017)572708_EN.pdf

Development Cooperation Instrument (geographical)

European Development Fund

European Neighbourhood Instrument

Instrument for Pre-Accession

Greenland
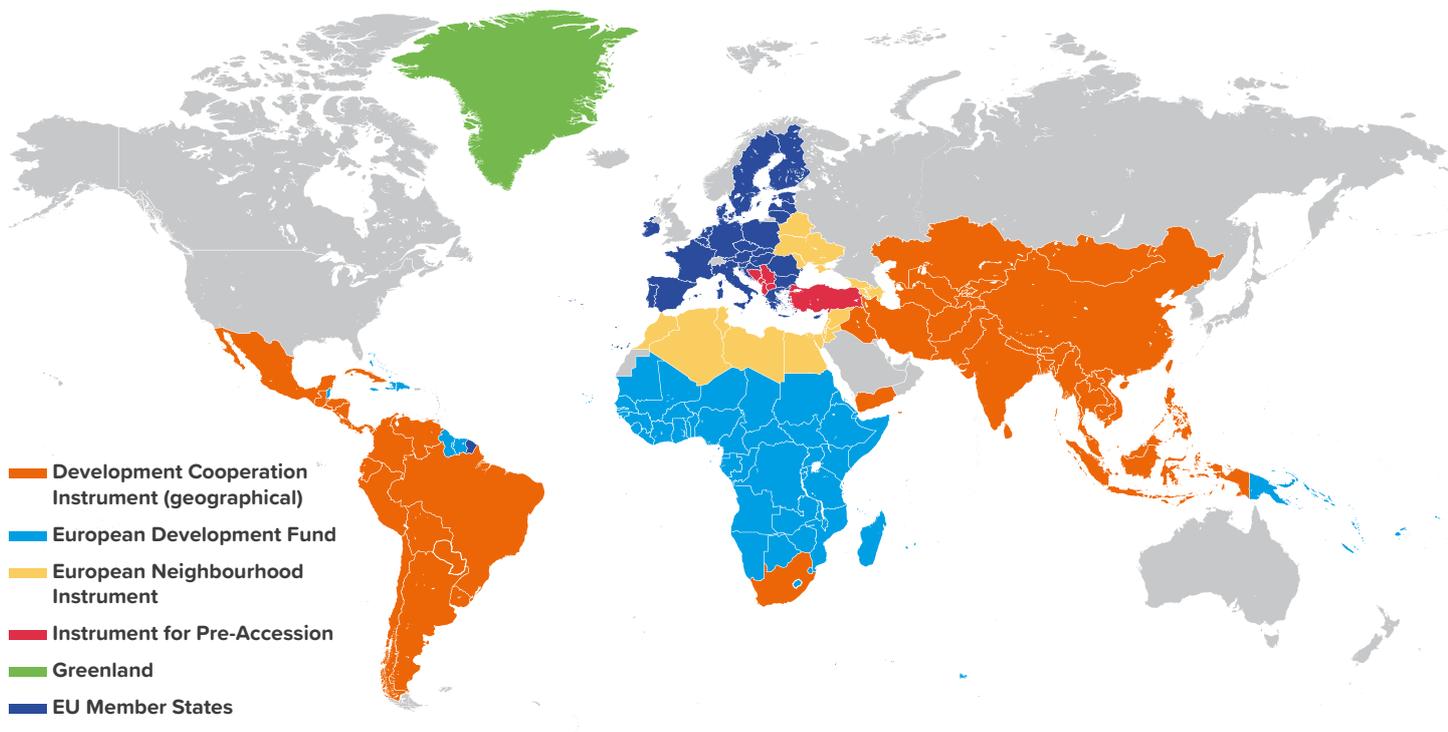
EU Member States

European Development Fund

The European Development Fund (EDF) is a geographical instrument, focusing on countries and territories which have special historical ties with some Member States,[9] grouped together as the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP), made up of 79 countries. It is the biggest geographical instrument in the EU's external policy toolbox. Support is aimed at efforts focused on poverty eradication, sustainable development, rule of law, democracy and human rights. The Least Developed Countries, as defined by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC), are considered a priority.[10] For the 2014–2020 period, € 30.5 billion have already been allocated to the 11th EDF.

Even though it falls under the administration of the European Commission, the financing of the EDF operates for the most part outside the EU, as it is directly financed by the EU Member States, has its own financial regulations, and is managed outside the framework of the EU's general budget. What this means in practice is that it is not subject to parliamentary oversight and can set its own priorities and timetable. In addition, it is managed by a special committee and any changes to the allocations of funds or target issues must first be approved by the Member States.

The EDF supports ACP countries through a variety of approaches, including projects, budget support to national governments, sectoral support or investments, etc. LRGs can be beneficiaries in several ways. If the budget support is conditional upon an enhancement in governance, for example, or attached to a programme for water and sanitation development, LRGs can benefit indirectly from financial support either through the central government, interregional programmes or sector support lines. According to EU Delegations, the EDF generally seeks to boost local development and citizens' participation and support decentralisation processes, all of which call for sub-national actors to play a key role.

One good example of the EDF in action is the PASCAL project in the Dominican Republic. This project was initially designed (in 2007 under the 10th EDF) as a sector reform contract to support national policy for reforming municipal administrations, particularly the management of human resources. It bolstered a state reform process to empower local authorities as effective and accountable actors in development. The project was carried out in 40 pilot municipalities and included the participation of the Ministry of Public Administration (MAP) and local CSOs. Alongside a budget support component, complementary measures included technical assistance provided to the Ministry, capacity support for the national association of local governments, FEDOMU and CSOs. It also made use of a soft tool for local performance monitoring (SISMAP Municipal) and a performance-based grant system to reward well-performing municipalities. The focus on local government has now been integrated into the current National Indicative Programme (2014–2020), which drew inspiration from the 2030 National Development Strategy. It includes a provision for a "territorially balanced and integrated" development.

Another example is the Solomon Islands project on Provincial Governance and Service Delivery (FED/2020/041-544). Given the relatively small population dispersed over a huge area in the Pacific Ocean, geographical remoteness and isolation hamper the efficient delivery of services in the Solomon Islands. This project aims to enhance capacities and the infrastructure of provincial governments to improve the delivery of public services.

[9] Read the EP In-depth analysis of the EDF: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/EPRS/EPRS-IDA-542140-European-Development-Fund-FINAL.pdf

[10] DAC list of ODA recipients http://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/daclist.htm

Development Cooperation Instrument

The Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) is the second biggest one and the widest in scope (€ 19 661.64 million, a share of 1.81% of the Multiannual Financial Framework). Its main objectives are poverty eradication, sustainable social and economic development, governance, human rights and democracy. It has two dimensions: geographic and thematic.

Geographic dimension

The DCI includes all bilateral programmes between the EU and partner countries, including support for individual countries or regions not covered by other geographic instruments (such as the one described above). Latin America, Central Asia, the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa all fall under this category. The geographic budget for the 2014–2020 period amounts to € 11 809 million, more than half of the DCI's overall budget.

> One example of a bilateral agreement under the DCI framework are the projects implemented as part of the EU-Afghanistan Cooperation Agreement supporting sub-national governments and decentralisation in that country. Under these projects, municipalities work as stakeholders alongside the Ministry of Urban Development and the Independent Directorate of Local Governance. The programmes focus both on local institutional and capacity development and support for service delivery to citizens. Capacity-building actions work in tandem with support for the health, agriculture and migration sectors to build up sub-national governance together.

Thematic dimension

The DCI also consists of the **Pan-African Programme, the Global Public Goods and Challenges** (GPGC) and **the Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities** (CSO-LA) strands. It has a budget line of € 7 843 million.

The CSO-LA programme is the main instrument in the EU external policy arsenal used by the EUDs to directly support LRGs worldwide.

Taking advantage of a structure that directly supports LRGs, more than half of the 273 LRG-related projects mentioned by the EU Delegations were funded by the CSO-LA budget line.

The thematic budget line for CSO-LA is made up of three components (Civil Society Organisations, Local Authorities and Development Education and Awareness Raising). The LA line has been earmarked to promote local authorities' role as policy and decision makers in order to increase accountable policymaking and service delivery at the local level.

According to the EU Delegations, the original appeal of the CSO-LA strand (€ 1 907 million in MFF 2014–2020) is that it was conceived to support local initiatives, twinning, partnerships between CSOs and LAs and improved cooperation between local authori-

ties more directly and effectively than the bilateral or geographical programmes. This also meant that national associations of local governments could benefit from this instrument. This has led to more focused, innovative and flexible projects, targeting a wide range of issues from water and sanitation or infrastructure to citizen's participation and democracy. Although its effects were often limited by constraints tied to the budget amount, the short duration or the competences that LRGs lacked in each country, the instrument seems to have been widely used by a large number of EU Delegations in every region: Latin America, Southern and Central Asia, Central and Southern Africa, the Middle East and the Pacific. The European Neighbourhood Policy[11] covers countries that benefit the least from the CSO-LA budget line (with a few exceptions), notably wherever the Neighbourhood Instrument and the bilateral programmes have more leeway to fund LRGs.

PROJECTS WITH LAs MENTIONED BY EUDs
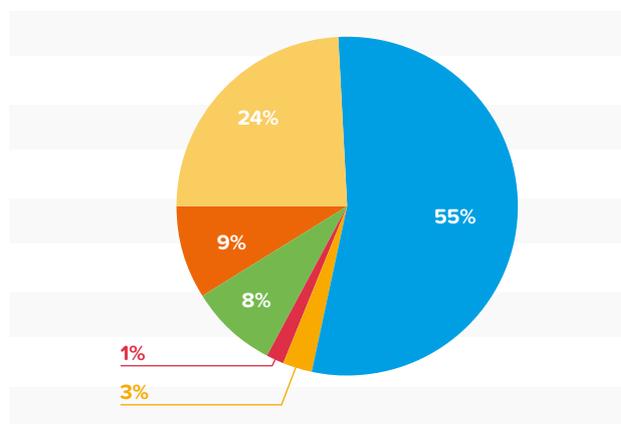
- CSO-LA thematic line — 55%
- EDF — 8%
- Trust Funds — 3%
- ENI — 9%
- EIDHR — 1%
- Bilateral programmes and other — 24%

> Eleven projects in Cape Verde provide good examples of what funding under this budget line can help achieve. They targeted a very specific set of goals, namely sustainable tourism (an important economic sector in the country), urban development, management and land use planning. Two projects involving the country's National Association of Local Authorities were especially remarkable. The recently completed project "Building Safe and Sustainable Cities" contributed to improved urban and land use planning and management by promoting good urban practices in 22 Cape Verde municipalities. The National Association also benefited from funding for the action "Valuing our public space", an initiative aimed at promoting sustainable local territorial development and strengthening municipal self-government in territorial management, thus building up the capacities of local authorities in order to tackle long-term sustainable and inclusive urban planning.

11 The EU Neighbourhood policy was launched in 2003/2004 to govern the relations between the EU and 16 of its closest neighbours in the East: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine; and in the South: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia.

Another example where a partner country's national association of local authorities played a major role can be found in Jamaica. Under a partnership between the Association of Local Government Authorities of Jamaica (ALGAJ) and the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF), SDG-focused pilot projects were implemented in three municipalities: Trelawny Municipality ("Small Scale Agriculture and Local Tourism"), St Thomas Municipality ("Local Economic Development and Land-use Planning") and St James Municipality ("Pre-feasibility Composting for Montego Bay"). The ALCAJ was the main project manager and received support from the CLGF's regional office.

An example of international cooperation under the aegis of the Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) programme is the ongoing *"Amitié Code"*, an innovative project on awareness and learning about migration, development and human rights being carried out by the Andalusian Fund of Municipalities for International Solidarity (FAMSI, lead coordinator of the partners from the Andalusia Region), together with the region of Emilia Romagna and eight cities (Bologna, Hamburg, Reggio Emilia, Riga, Loures, Lisbon, Toulouse, Seville). The experience of peers working as partners on DEAR projects in the field of international cooperation has led to other work with a broad impact, engaging teachers and civil servants working in local authorities as well as teachers and students in the wider local community through the use of online visual material. As a result of the project "Don't waste our future" (2015–2018), FAMSI was able to mobilise local elected representatives to draft and sign a pan-European charter on the need to fight food waste,[12] which was later presented to the EU institutions and led to an important shift in public opinion. Tackling a similar topic, the project "No Planet B" allowed FAMSI to actively mobilise a wide range of community stakeholders, including schools, the social economy sector, private companies and local and regional governments in the region of Andalusia, to help find innovative solutions to reduce our environmental impact.

European Neighbourhood Instrument

The European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI)[13] is a geographical instrument designed not only to strengthen relations but also to bring tangible benefits to both the EU and its Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood partners, including through support for regional and local initiatives focused on development, poverty reduction, internal economic, social and territorial cohesion, rural development, actions tackling climate change and disaster resilience. LRGs can benefit from various bilateral support, regional programmes and direct actions implemented under this programme, which has a budget totalling €15.4 billion for the 2014–2020 period.

In areas where the EU and Neighbourhood countries share borders, **cross-border cooperation** is jointly financed by the ENI and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

The methodology and objectives vary from one country to another, depending on the level of autonomy of the local and regional governments and the partner country's priorities. However, according to the EU Delegations responding to the survey, a general trend can be detected in these countries whereby funds are usually channelled (with a few exceptions) through the highly centralised territorial systems, i.e., they have to go through the central government institutions or at least receive their prior authorisation. This is also the case of funding originating from the CSO-LA line.

---
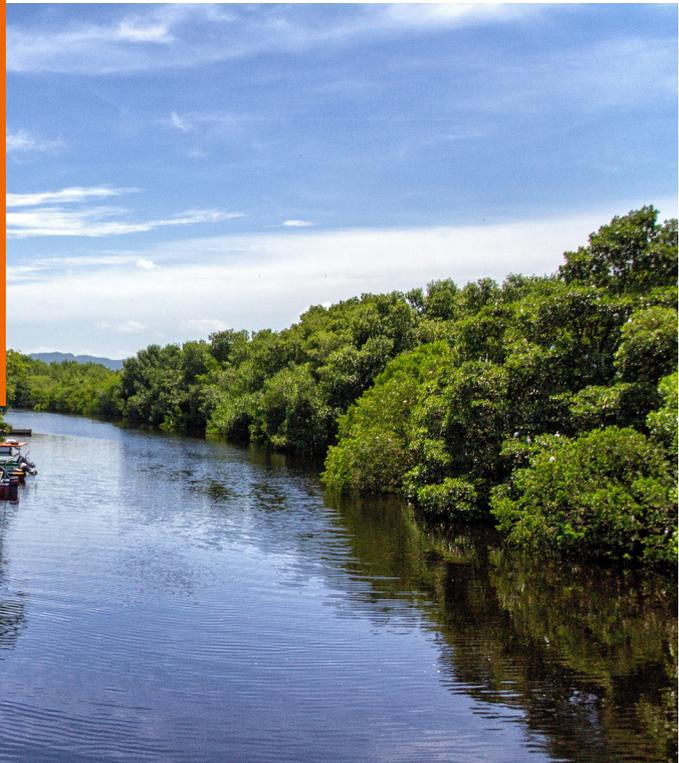
12 "Don't waste our future" Charter, 2015. https://www.acrplus.org/images/project/DWOF/ DWOF_Charter_2015.pdf

13 https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/what/glossary/e/european-neighbourhood-investment

One example of this is the Belarus Regional Investment and Competitiveness Programme (BRIC – ENI/2019/042-030), which seeks to close the regional economic gap in Belarus. The project's goals are to contribute to more effective public policies to improve economic growth and employment in the regions and districts, thus reducing geographical and social disparities. Grants for local authorities, in partnership with local stakeholders, exist to support priority economic and social actions in these centres of economic growth, but first need to be approved by the national government. There has been a strong focus not only on implementing the programme, but on improving institutional capacities at the national level to benefit regional economic analysis, policy formulation and training for public servants and other stakeholders in local development. Apparently, the local response has been very positive and the Belarus delegation has asked for more support from the Ministry of the Economy to broaden the reach to more municipalities.

In Lebanon, where the Syrian crisis has deepened the socio-economic differences between regions, a number of EU programmes (for example, RELOC[14]) have been established to improve local governance, socio-economic development and the local job market for young people, with the approval and/or collaboration of the central government. The programmes also seek to strengthen the capacities of municipalities to deliver basic services such as water supplies and solid waste management. At the same time, the EU supports Lebanon's efforts to decentralise its administrative system.

European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights

The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) is a thematic programme that aims to promote democracy and human rights worldwide through support for civil society initiatives.

The programme uses a call-for-proposals methodology and almost every legal entity (including local authorities but excluding political parties) is able to participate. This has made the EIDHR instrument a useful one in promoting participation, transparency and democracy at the local level, usually in collaboration with other stakeholders like CSOs or multilateral organisations.

One EIDHR example is the Cambodian project "Supporting meaningful civic engagement for improved accountability by leveraging digital technologies" (EIDHR 2019/410-632), which ran on a grant contract awarded to a partnership led by CARE Germany to support the implementation and digitalisation of Integrated Social Accountability (ISAF) processes in the communities. According to the EU Delegation there, the Sub-National Democratic Development programme (geographical) worked well in this case, leading to success stories of citizen's empowerment.

As a result of the legacy of shrinking civic space, youth are cautious about participating in political activities. Civic engagement and political involvement are widely associated with risk, which leads to a lack of support and encouragement from parents and communities. The project sought to build the capacity of 14 CSOs, municipal councils, district offices, municipalities, health centres, operational districts, primary schools, secondary schools, and other institutions including the Ministry of Environment, provincial departments of environment in their role as service providers in 30 districts and 120 communes in Mondul Kiri, Ratanak Kiri and Koh Kong. Young citizens (15-30 years old) were selected who became Community Accountability Facilitators (CAFs) to facilitate community dialogue with the local government.

Another example is the "Spaces for Peace" project, aimed at strengthening the protection of children in the province of Maguindanao in the Philippines (EIDHR/2016/380-194). The main focus was on human rights, and the stakeholders implementing it were local authorities and local CSOs. The country EU Delegation considered it to be a very successful project.

14 "Recovery of Local Economy in Lebanon

Union Trust Funds

Union Trust Funds are made up from a common pool, to which different donors, inside and outside the EU (including international organisations), have contributed funds for emergency and post-emergency purposes, or for thematic actions. All the current requirements for establishing a Union Trust Fund are set forth in Article 234 of the 2018 EU Financial Regulation. This relatively recent exceptional fund must adhere to specific financial guidelines and is administrated by an ad-hoc steering committee or board. The board is chaired by the European Commission but includes a representative for each donor, even those outside of the EU. The board is governed by specific rules established during the constitutive meeting of the funds.

Union Trust Funds were first established under the 2013 EU Financial Regulation, they are not part of the EU budget and offer the possibility to blend different means of external assistance. Hence, this is a way to customise financial tools and means to an emergency or specific conditions, to provide the support needed under the circumstances. In contrast to the other means of funding offered by the EU Institutions, trust funds are a quicker and more targeted way to mobilise resources. The European Commission administers them and reports on their use to the European Parliament and the Council (sometimes even seeking their approval beforehand).

Union Trust Funds are only established and implemented after certain conditions have been met:

- "When there is added value of the Union intervention: the objectives of Union trust funds, in particular because of their scale and potential effects, may be better achieved at Union level than at national level and the use of the existing financing instruments would not be sufficient to achieve policy objectives of the Union;

- If the Union trust funds bring clear political visibility for the Union and managerial advantages as well as better control by the Union of risks and disbursements of the Union and other donors' contributions;

- If Union trust funds do not duplicate other existing funding channels or similar instruments without providing any additionality;

- When the objectives of Union trust funds are aligned with the objectives of the Union instrument or budgetary item from which they are funded."

At the request of the Colombian government, the EU created the Trust Fund for Colombia in 2016. It was set up to give the country some technical and financial support for implementing the Peace Agreement. Through the projects it financed, the Fund has helped to stimulate economic activity and productivity, strengthen the legitimising presence of the official administration in territories previously under guerrilla control, rebuild the social fabric and support the reconciliation and social and economic reintegration of ex-combatants. Local rural areas have been the priority because the damage inflicted by the conflict have had a disproportionate effect there. In fact, the first goal of the trust fund is to "support rural development projects with a territorial approach". By introducing a consultation mechanism between national institutions, LRGs and local CSOs, it promotes a bottom-up approach to local economic development. The central government has since established a list of around 200 municipalities deemed priority during the post-conflict implementation phase of 30–40 development plans that target different sectors using a territorial approach.
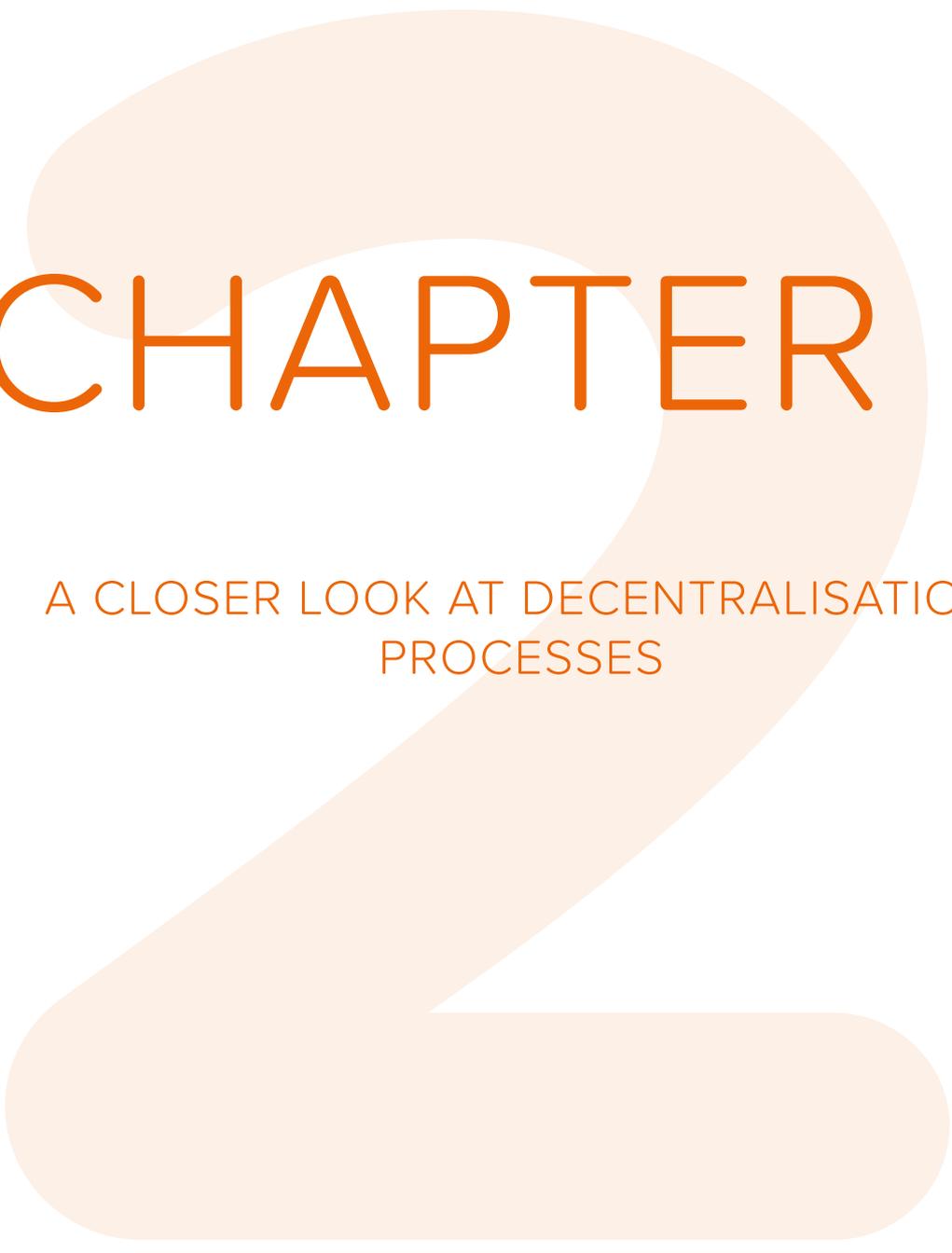
CHAPTER **2**

A CLOSER LOOK AT DECENTRALISATION
PROCESSES

A CLOSER LOOK AT DECENTRALISATION PROCESSES

Concepts

The development of appropriate public policies and the provision of adequate public services by local and regional governments depend widely on both the political and territorial structure of each country, and how competences and resources are distributed between territories. To fully grasp why it is critical to collaborate with LRGs on development cooperation, we must first look at the status of decentralisation, the processes at play and how they have evolved in different partner countries.

Decentralisation is the process of political devolution, the transfer of fiscal and decision-making powers from the central government to local and regional levels.[15] It is an element that cannot be overlooked in any discussion of development cooperation with LRGs or even any approach to local and regional governments. The greater the degree of autonomy and the adequacy of resources a local government has, the greater its capability to come up with personalised, innovative and accountable actions for development,[16] ushering in turn more freedom to engage in partnership with other actors. Different levels of decentralisation mean different levels of autonomy and accountability or, put another way, levels of central government controls or restrictions. There are as many models of decentralisation as there are countries, which means that each national process is unique on account of historical, economic, cultural and social factors.[17]

Notwithstanding the fact that decentralisation processes and decisions are conditioned by many factors (limited resources, institutional capacities…), they are first and foremost a political choice. Decentralisation offers huge potential in terms of strengthening the principles of transparency and accountability.[18] The principle of accountability works best at local level, as the devolution of power makes it easier to hold government accountable for how it carries out delivery of public services or development reform policies aimed at citizens. Decentralisation also increases the possibilities for open and direct citizen participation in community life. As an integral part of democratisation, this process is closely linked to the strengthening of citizen participation in decision making.

In this respect, local CSOs, the private sector, academia, or other LRGs are in a position more suited to interacting with institutions in proximity than with the more distant central ones. The capacity of LRGs to cooperate with other players allows them to create a network in which capabilities, resources and innovation can create synergies focused around common development goals.

The principle of subsidiarity is one of the basic concepts of decentralisation. It enables the bigger countries to have public services and an administrative presence throughout their territory, creating a geographical focus at the local level for coordinating national, state, provincial, district, and local programs more effectively and ensuring better opportunities for local residents to participate in decision-making.[19] Even though they are responsible for such a wide variety of territories presenting different issues and circumstances, local and regional governments are ideally situated to formulate more effective public policies that are attuned to citizens' needs, leaving no one behind.

In addition, as the institutions closest to citizens, local governments can more easily translate issues of human development into tangible realities: water and sanitation, public mobility, waste management or local economic development, for example.[20]

Adequate autonomy and competences at the local and regional levels, sufficient capacities of civil servants, and accountable, transparent and efficient local and regional governments are all fundamental prerequisites underpinning effective democratic governance and the efficient provision of sub-national public services, both in Europe and in the partner countries.

To get a truly comprehensive overview of decentralisation processes, it is worthwhile to look at the decentralisation trends underway in the partner countries.

15 "Concept paper: Decentralisation processes at a crossroads: State of affairs and perspectives". UCLG. http://www.uclg-decentralisation.org/sites/default/files/concept_paper_cglu_comision_descentralizacion_EN.pdf
16 The World Bank on Decentralisation http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/decentralization/what.htm
17 For a more detailed description of decentralisation processes: https://www.oecd.org/cfe/Policy%20highlights_decentralisation-Final.pdf
18 See "12 principles of good governance" EU Council. https://www.coe.int/en/web/good-governance/12-principles

19 The World Bank on Decentralisation http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/decentralization/what.htm
20 VNG & PLATFORMA: How EU Member States national and regional programmes support local governments development activities in partner countries. http://platforma-dev.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/VNG_001_publication_WEB_01a.pdf and OCDE: Reshaping Decentralised Development Co-operation, the key role of cities and regions for the 2030 Agenda https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/urban-rural-and-regional-development/reshaping-decentralised-development-co-operation_9789264302914-en#page1

Results and analysis by region

From our sample of 54 countries (which includes the responses to our questions about decentralisation from 53 EU Delegations), we can rather assuredly state that decentralisation is a growing trend worldwide. Even so, this trend presents substantial variations in form and speed, given that 34 out of the 53 EU Delegations (EUDs) state that decentralisation processes are underway in the partner countries where they are based, but that for at least 8 of them, the situation has been defined as "complicated". These complicated situations could be due to a wide variety of circumstances. Let us start by taking a brief look at some decentralisation trends in certain regions that mirror what the EUD responses reveal.

The situation in the **Southern Neighbourhood** has been described as "delicate" by the EU Delegations responding to the survey, with reports of significant support from the EU for LRG advocacy efforts and a legal framework for decentralisation, but procedures have been slow and there has been a general lack of national political will to decentralise further. The political instability in some countries also makes it difficult to initiate extensive reforms.

According to the EUDs, most of the **Eastern Neighbourhood and Central Asia** countries are highly centralised and decentralisation is occurring at different speeds depending on the country's size and population, advancing or faltering in step with the latest political changes. Different reforms such as the amalgamation of LRGs (in Armenia) are worth keeping tabs on because of the change in political power, which may give LRGs greater leeway and competences, particularly with regard to distribution of resources.

African countries (setting aside those in the Maghreb), with a few exceptions, have undertaken wide-reaching decentralisation reforms (the bigger countries at a slower pace than smaller ones), and although they started out from vastly different initial structures, they are facing similar problems and obstacles in the actual implementation of these reforms. We will take a closer look at this later.

Central and South American countries have recently been undergoing recentralisation processes, on account of the general political instability many face, resulting in fragile local and regional governments. However, even in the cases where the central governments are reluctant to give up any political power or resources, it is not unusual for LRGs to be burdened with a disproportionate share of responsibilities. EU Delegations provide support to them in most of these cases, building up their capabilities to handle local problems and deliver basic services.[21]

Asian countries are, for the most part, currently in the process of decentralising. There are huge differences amongst them, however. For example, Indonesia is a large country with a high level of decentralisation in place; the country has five layers of governance and holds elections for the top three. Nepal is currently in the process of federalisation and already held its first local elections in 2017 under the new constitution, whereas Myanmar is undergoing major changes that could be considered recentralisation, with national and regional but no local elections.

In more insular regions, such as the **Caribbean and Pacific**, decentralisation is not seen as a priority or as a better way to implement development policies. According to EU Delegations, this is attributable to either limited territory (in the case of Belize for instance, or of one-island states like Jamaica) or having vast areas to manage (in island countries such as Fiji or Micronesia).

A general trend towards decentralisation is slowly moving forward in partner countries. Among the cases included in this study, two cases in particular merit an in-depth look: Indonesia and Armenia.

EXTERNAL ACTION FINANCING INSTRUMENTS, MFF 2014-2020
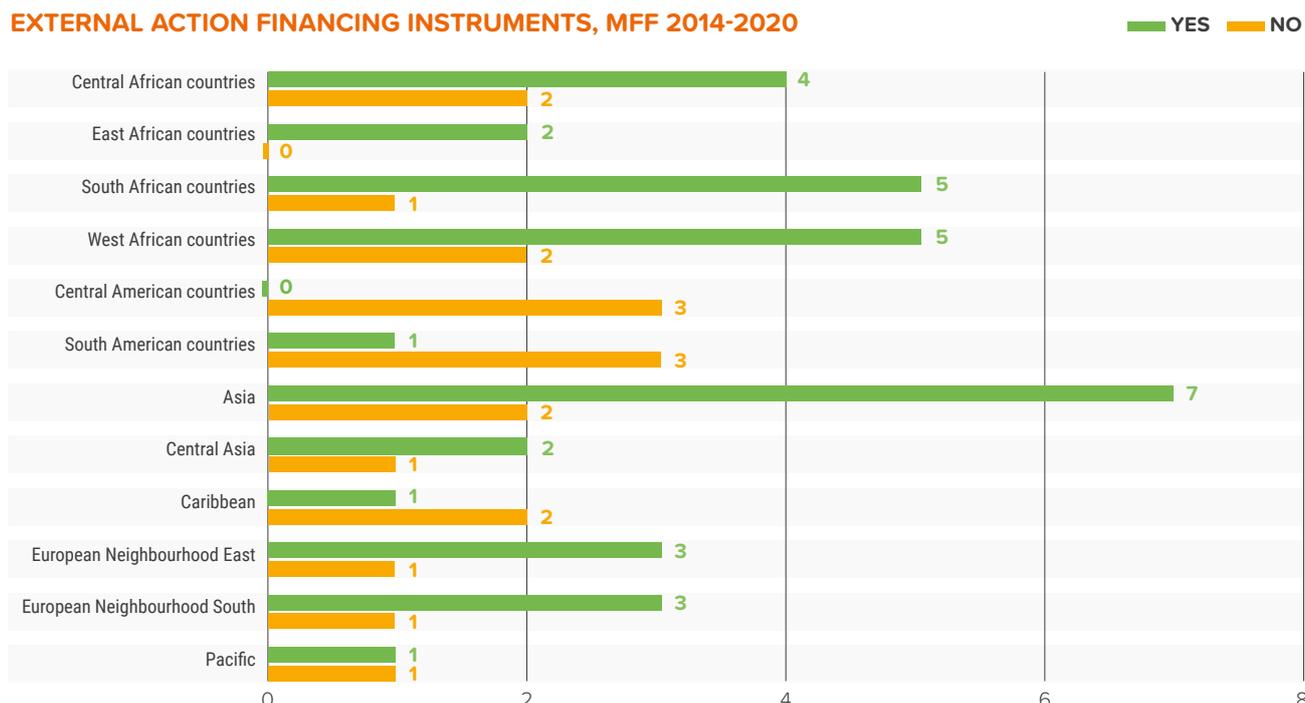
■ YES ■ NO

Indonesia

Indonesia is a unitary Republic divided into six layers of government: central, 34 provinces, 416 districts (kabupaten), 98 cities (kota), 7,217 sub-districts (kecamatan) and 83,344 villages (desa/kelurahan) as of 2019.

Since 1999, the introduction of regional autonomy legislation has devolved a wide range of public service delivery functions to the regions, while also providing the elected regional councils with extra powers to supervise and control the regional administrations. Local governments are now responsible for planning, financing and implementing policies for sectors such as public works, health, education, agriculture, transport, industry and trade, investment and the environment. The central government retains its responsibility only over areas of national security, foreign and monetary policy, justice, defence and religious affairs. Before the reform, local governments had mainly functioned as agencies that implemented national policies and programmes. In 2014, a new regulation granted greater autonomy to villages and the right to receive a "village fund".

Regional heads of government are now directly elected, in line with the direct election of the President at national level. However, the complexity of the legal framework has led to some confusion in the exact roles, responsibilities and accountabilities assigned to the multiple layers of government. Revenues and budgets are often sources of contention, as the resources assigned to LRGs sometimes do not match up to their new level of responsibilities.

The country's EU Delegation runs a support programme operating under a Trust Fund managed by the UNPD. The project is called "Partnership for Governance Reform in Indonesia". It aims to promote democracy and good governance in Indonesia through the development of transparent and accountable systems and the operations necessary in Indonesian social institutions to ensure that the democratic process becomes irreversibly anchored in the fabric of Indonesian society. With respect to decentralisation, the project has ensured the smooth and effective introduction of new administrative regimes, real oversight by local parliaments, and an effectual engagement between local governments and local communities. In a few genuinely participative local governments, new opportunities have opened up for disadvantaged groups to play a greater role in the policymaking process at local level through organised entities such as citizens' forums, networks of village councils, and social movements.

Armenia

Up until 2015, Armenia had 915 local governments, which were considered too many to efficiently decentralise competences and resources. Since 2015, a process of territorial administrative reform has been underway in the country that involves the consolidation of small and fragmented local governments into larger and more viable administrative units capable of managing a larger number of competences. As a result, the number of local governments has since been reduced to 502. The reform is expected to continue in 2020–2021, further slashing the number of local governments to approximately 200–250.

The Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure has announced that the final goal of the territorial-administrative reform is to transfer yet more power and finances to the consolidated local governments. This commitment to decentralisation was also laid out in the governmental programme adopted in 2019. A decentralisation roadmap focusing on devolving powers in the areas of education, healthcare and agriculture was drafted by the ministry in 2018–19, but has not yet been adopted by the Government.

The EU Delegation in Armenia is not directly involved in the decentralisation reform process. The main focus of the Delegation has been to support the capacity-building of regional and local authorities and help promote more efficient governance, energy efficiency and local economic development.

What are the main obstacles to decentralisation according to the EU Delegations?

- **It is not a political priority.** This is the reason most frequently mentioned by EU Delegations. In some countries, even with legal frameworks or constitutional mandates aimed at implementing nominal decentralisation, processes can remain stalled for years or even suffer reversals. Moments of political instability or a fragile context can lead central governments to question the devolving of competences or resources to the local levels, which are not viewed as being entirely trustworthy when it comes to managing public affairs efficiently.

- **Limited resources.** Far-reaching decentralising reforms call for huge amounts of resources; not only in economic terms, but also trained and skilled human resources and structures equipped and organised enough to be able to build new administrative units, from the ground up in some cases. Many times, specific competences (e.g., mobility or health sectors) require experienced and specialised professionals that the local entities simply do not have. Some of the limitations mentioned by the EU Delegations were corruption and misuse of funds, two arguments used by national governments to limit the decentralisation of resources and decision-making powers.

- **Fragility.** Some countries need greater social and political stability before decentralisation processes can be implemented. Whether because of conflicts, recent crises or tensions between territories, governments can reasonably have qualms about decentralising power and resources if the underlying social cohesion or peace necessary does not exist.

How do the EU Delegations support these processes?

EU Delegations have adopted many different approaches towards decentralisation processes, and 34 out of 53 survey respondents say that they support decentralisation processes in some way. Some have been more proactive, whereas others have been supportive using more indirect methods while still others are not able to do it properly at all. It all depends fundamentally on the Delegation's capacity, the relationship with the partner country and the central government's views regarding "foreign support". In general, decentralisation processes are seen by the EU Delegations as a positive change for furthering democracy and accountability and they therefore usually devise a programme to support these processes.

In some cases, EU Delegations have had to be quite innovative in their support of decentralisation processes; in others, they have been working towards building better relations with the government; and in a few others, they are waiting for the political environment to improve before putting decentralisation on the public agenda. According to the EU Delegations, in countries where decentralisation receives less support, the main hurdle could in fact be the lower priority it is given in these countries. However, it is also worth noting that other causes are also at play, such as the lack of resources and personnel, unfamiliarity with local systems, mistrust arising from local corruption or simply the absence of any clear support plan.

The EU Delegations' support of decentralisation processes can be broken down into three levels of engagement:

- **Bilateral: support decentralisation through the central government**

In centralised countries or in countries where foreign investment and development aid are considered very political, any support for decentralisation usually goes through the central government.

Sometimes, the situation only allows for budget support (as in Guinea Conakry or Timor Leste); in other cases, it goes through a fund that supports local governments during the decentralisation process (Nepal), and in other instances, it needs to be implemented with the approval or collaboration of the central government.

The case of Togo is a telling example. In June 2019, the country held its first local elections since 1987 with a complete overhaul of its territorial administrative division. In less than a year, the country amended its Constitution, redefined local government (from "prefectures" to "municipalities and regions"), held elections, elected mayors, planned the budget regulations, created a support fund and trained senior officers. On account of the speed of this process, the local governments had neither the proper infrastructure nor the human resources to manage all the new responsibilities. The EU Delegation has assisted the central government in this respect by building the capacity of the Secretaries General of the new municipal administrations (with a focus on gender equality), creating a Fund of Support for Local Communities (FACT) and providing budget support for local management and infrastructure.

- **Multi-stakeholder support**

Some EU Delegations have adopted a more comprehensive approach, working with a mix of stakeholders and different levels of government. The combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches is noteworthy and seems to have achieved better results in countries that have undertaken deeper reforms, where support at all levels is needed.

Moreover, the combined use of instruments, which not only supports the public sector, but also facilitates engagement with civil society and other local players, helps to foster a notion of ownership of the reforms by the community. Under a multi-stakeholder approach, more substantial efforts can be undertaken to tackle the goal of ensuring better accountability under decentralisation. Generally speaking, development policies promoting societal integration in the decentralisation process usually prove more effective and increase citizens' participation once they see that local governments are capable of handling their public competences and responsibilities to develop the local level. These conclusions, reached by the EUDs based on their own experiences, are in line with the European Commission's 2013 Communication on "Empowering Local Authorities in partner countries for enhanced governance and more effective development outcomes".[22]

- **No intervention at all**

In some cases, the EU Delegations are not able to support or promote decentralisation processes or simply do not consider it a priority. In the Dominican Republic, Ivory Coast and Nicaragua, for instance, there is no decentralisation process to speak of at all. In the case of Lebanon or Fiji, it is too complex given the population distribution or it is legally prohibited to intervene, compelling the EU Delegations to focus instead on other development-related issues, like citizen's participation, environmental issues or basic public services like water and sanitation.

The case of Nepal, where the government has undertaken extensive federalisation, illustrates this approach quite well, making use of the three most widely used means of support whenever central governments do not allow for direct funding to local governments.

Under the Nepalese Constitution, local and provincial levels have the autonomy to engage in dialogue, although any support funds must still go through the central level. The country's EUD has progressively increased its work with those levels, creating partnerships with CSOs and building new participatory mechanisms. All CSO-LA projects however are secondary to the principal effort of ensuring budget support for decentralisation by the central government.

Budget support that goes directly to the central government

This decision supports the federalisation of the country through budget support for the federal government plan. The National Association of Rural Municipalities in Nepal (NARMIN) and the Municipal Association of Nepal (MuAN) have been consulted and will be indirectly supported by this plan, e.g., through their participation in some capacity-building programmes.

A contract with the Town Development Fund (from the CSO-LA thematic line)

The Town Development Fund is the public fund set aside for municipal development, through which the EUD is able to engage with 15 municipalities on various thematic issues linked to their newly acquired competences.

Contracts through CSOs working with local authorities

As previously mentioned, local CSOs are not considered public entities and are therefore allowed to receive external support by the central government. Funding received under the CSO-LA thematic line supporting municipalities tackling issues of governance and citizen participation in Nepal for three projects have benefited local governments through partnerships existing between provinces and three different CSOs.

22 EC Communication 2013: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.
do?uri=COM:2013:0280:FIN:EN:PDF

CHAPTER **3**

THE EU DELEGATIONS' WORK WITH LRGs

THE EU DELEGATIONS' WORK WITH LRGs

As was stated in the Introduction, development cooperation with LRGs presents a lot of advantages and brings with it differential value to targeted territories, which should be taken into consideration when preparing the EU programming phase. The results of this study can help provide insights in this regard.

Differential value of working with LRGs

Enhance institutional and governance capacity

Development cooperation is distinct from humanitarian aid. It aims to bring about longer-term change for improved welfare and development, thus bettering living conditions for citizens. Public governance is therefore one issue that cannot be overlooked as it contributes to institutional adaptation and the capacity-building of a country's public administration.

Development cooperation programmes generate new skills, new capacities and new structures in a way that will help with adjusting to new realities once the changes have been implemented. While the EUDs' experiences involve a project conducted over a short duration, the outcomes of capacity-building for civil servants will subsist in the long-term. The EUDs' experiences have led them to believe that this can best be achieved through the strengthening of governance capacity to such a degree that it becomes an integral key element of public policy.

Moreover, the strengthening of an LRG's capacity for governance through a development cooperation programme can open up previously inaccessible and improved pathways, allowing it to scale up to subsequent programmes and policies, building up its stability and capabilities each time. Transparency measures and protocols introduced to instil trust between international partners on certain projects could become permanent institutional transparency features. It would help encourage new partners and funding for future cooperation.
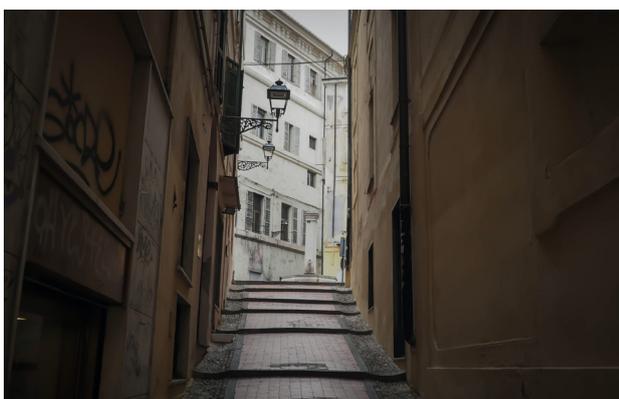
Key players in providing public services

Water and sanitation, waste management, street lighting and basic infrastructure are all examples of public services that exist to meet the basic needs of any population. Usually, their implementation, management and/or maintenance fall under the responsibility of the local or regional government. In many countries, health, local economic development, environmental protection, or education can be added to sub-national competences.

Development policies necessarily involve local and regional governments, even in cases where competences are highly centralised. We have already mentioned that the more autonomy an LRG has, the easier it proves for other actors (like the EU, other LRGs or CSOs) to collaborate with them, as this foregoes the need for approval from higher levels and the bureaucratic burden this represents. As most recently highlighted by the COVID-19 crisis, there are many issues on which mayors find themselves on the front lines and have the final say on decisions taken. Yet, many policies developed at the local level also depend on the national legislative framework, thereby making multilevel coordination essential. This is why it is crucial and appropriate that LRG perspectives be taken into account, beginning with the programming phase and during each subsequent stage of implementing and evaluating policies and programmes that affect them.

Level closest to the citizens

Both the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action,[23] key frameworks for development and international cooperation policies, included the term "ownership" in their principles and in the areas listed for improvement. Later, the 2011 OECD Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation[24] established the conditions for more effective aid delivery, consisting namely of four principles: ownership, a focus on results, partnerships for development, transparency and shared responsibility. These principles go beyond the institutional term of "partner countries": to deliver better and more sustainable results in development policies, the population of the partner countries should determine their own strategies for reducing poverty, improving their institutions and tackling corruption, particularly through wider participation in development policy formulation, stronger leadership on aid coordination and greater use of the systems for aid delivery.

The 2030 Agenda lists targets that are directly or indirectly related to the daily work of local and regional governments. From this perspective, local governments should not be viewed as mere implementers of the Agenda but as policy makers, catalysts of change and the level of government best suited to form a bridge between the global goals and the realities of local communities.[25]

23 The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action (2008) https://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/34428351.pdf
24 Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation https://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/49650173.pdf
25 "The Sustainable Development Goals: What Local Governments Need to Know" UCLG (2015) https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/the_sdgs_what_localgov_need_to_know_0.pdf

It was the opinion of many EU Delegations that the involvement of local and regional governments facilitates the participation of citizens, a critical factor for transparency and ownership of the development programmes. The participation of different stakeholders not only bolsters local debate but can give rise to shared solutions inspired by proximity to the needs or problems, thus likely increasing their effectiveness and long-term sustainability.[26]

Engagement with local players and networks

An important concern now in international development cooperation is how to overcome the duality of donor-receptor aid and the North-South vision.[27] As a first step, the formulation of goals, agreement on methods and policies, and consensus with stakeholders in the field are considered new key elements of any development strategy.

However, local players sometimes have limited capacity or are too 'small' to discuss or hold a dialogue directly with national governments. Local unions, CSOs, academia and the private sector are all valuable allies in different fields of action that intersect with the work of local and regional governments, often on a daily basis. LRGs can therefore act as their voice to represent them in the dialogue with EU Delegations and national governments, increasing their impact. The multi-stakeholder approach at the local level has great potential for taking the development goals' achievements to the next level and ensuring the results are sustainable. This explains why many projects and programmes are focusing specifically on building such multi-stakeholder networks.

Reduce territorial imbalances

The aim of many bilateral programmes of maximising the impact of funds and projects often results in the channelling of funds and efforts to the capitals or main cities in the partner countries since this is where they can reach the most people at one time. In the long term, this can cause or aggravate territorial inequalities between regions in terms of development, access to public services, infrastructure investments and opportunities. In addition, the flow of internal migration and resulting demographic concentration, limited to a few urban areas, create new problems for the countries. Ensuring that all local and regional governments are represented through their national associations have made these national associations strategic potential partners for development. Encouraging national associations to get involved in policies and programmes is a good strategy, taking rural or isolated areas into consideration, to reduce the gaps between territories.

Bigger countries with demographic dispersion or insular systems often have to deal with the issue of urban concentration, but it is potentially a problem in all countries.

Issues

Having provided the relevant background context and highlighted the advantages of cooperating directly with LRGs, this study now wishes to take a closer look at the sectors of development that usually constitute the main focus of EU projects involving local and regional governments. For this study, 273 projects were mentioned and analysed that were either implemented directly or indirectly by the EU Delegations. We took into consideration the wide variety and different perspectives and the fact that projects can usually have multiple objectives, for example, improved decentralisation and local economic development

PROJECTS MENTIONED BY EUDs BY SECTOR OF INTERVENTION

- Governance — 38%
- LED — 30%
- Participation — 10%
- Decentralisation — 8%
- Water & Sanitation/ Health/Other — 14%
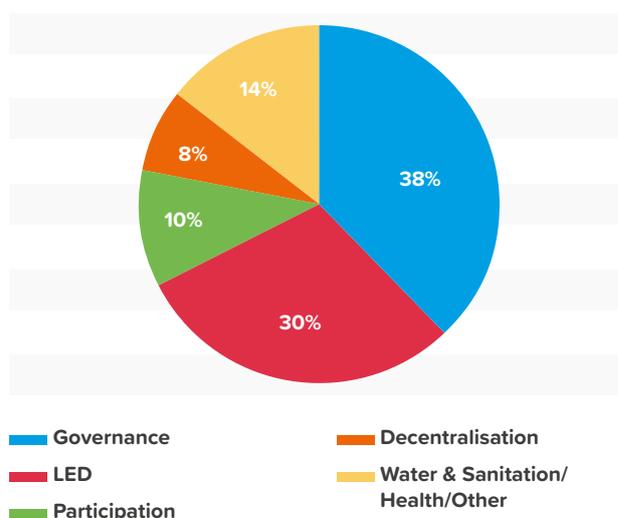
When asked about their experiences with LRGs during the last MFF, 38% of the projects mentioned by the EU Delegations broadly touched on some variance of "governance", and this was the case in almost every country. The second most common sector of intervention was Local Economic Development (LED), which could involve different approaches or sub-sectors, depending on the country (agriculture, tourism, etc.). One project could also address different sectors; oftentimes, governance and LED were tackled together.

Different regions might rank certain topics as higher in priority. For example, throughout the Neighbourhood region, there was a high percentage of LED projects. Development of water supply and sanitation, health systems and other public services are more prevalent in the ACP countries, but still account for less than 15%. Increasing "citizen's participation" is a direct goal in 10% of projects and "decentralisation" is the stated aim in more than 7% of the cases. However, under the parameters of many governance and public services programmes, both of these themes are often qualified indirect goals.

In Congo, for example, there are two main cities that receive the bulk of projects' interest and focus from the central government. The EU Delegation is currently trying to direct more efforts to secondary cities to restore some balance and offset population concentration in the main ones.

26 Accra Agenda for Action (2008) https://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/34428351.pdf
27 Busan Partnership for effective development cooperation https://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/49650173.pdf

Who are the actors involved so far?

The role of the National Associations

Finding a way to approach local and regional governments is not always easy. There are usually too many and/or too widely dispersed within the country for an EU Delegation to engage in a proper dialogue or instigate feedback and follow-up on development needs and opportunities with all of them.

This is where national associations of local governments can be incredibly useful. Out of the 53 EU Delegation respondents, 45 stated that they knew of the existence of a national association operating in their country, but only 23 had developed any dialogue, coordination mechanisms or partnerships with any.

Whenever contact is successfully made, the collaboration with the local and regional governments has borne real advantages. From capacity building and other forms of direct collaboration with the associations themselves to feedback on data for the programming or evaluation of projects, the majority of partnerships with national associations of local governments were positively evaluated by the EU Delegations.

Relations between the EU Delegations and Associations can take on different forms. Examples include: South Africa, with regular dialogue (at least once a month); Moldova, with topical discussions; Indonesia, collaboration takes place with five levels of subnational government; in Botswana, local and international CSOs act as intermediaries in the collaboration between the EU Delegation and the National Associations of Local Governments.

Sometimes, there are obstacles that hinder collaboration such as weak structures or the association may be lacking in resources, for example. Looking ahead, an action for the future could therefore be projects that support the strengthening of the national associations in partner countries in view of their delivering services to their members, instituting the exchange of practices amongst municipalities, and engaging in a constructive and regular dialogue with the national government and the EU.

There is great potential for the national associations to act as representatives, a common voice and as coordinators for learning initiatives, integrating local, national, regional and global agendas.

The role of peer-to-peer cooperation

Out of 53 respondents, 41 EU Delegations declared they knew about the existence of peer-to-peer decentralised cooperation between LRGs from the EU and those in the partner country. However, in most cases, they were not involved in any or had received limited information.

Nevertheless, there were a few examples where the EU Delegations had provided some funding, assistance or some form of support (funding, technical assistance, political support) to this decentralised cooperation.

The partnership between Banjul (Gambia) and Ostend (Belgium) has been funded by a CSO-LA thematic line and involves the EU Delegation. The purpose of the 3M EUR funding was to transform the Banjul City Council into an efficient, transparent and service delivery-oriented local authority. The city of Ostend is the lead partner on this project. The EUD funds it and provides guidance support. The working areas of the partnership are capacity building for governance, waste management, energy and health.

As experienced accomplished actors in the field, the partners of PLATFORMA have been recognised by EU Delegations as key players skilled at establishing innovative projects, approaches and sustainable relationships for development in the partner countries.

The International Cooperation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG International) was mentioned by EU Delegations in Algeria, Lebanon, Myanmar, South Africa, Benin, Ethiopia, Mali and Burundi. The International Association of Francophone Mayors (AIMF) was cited for their work in countries like Cambodia, Djibouti, Gabon, Guinea Republic and Ivory Coast.

In this respect, much more can still be accomplished by continuing to work on specific local policies through peer learning among local and regional governments and associations, allowing for an articulation on topics ranging from local policy cooperation to the global agenda's goals and indicators. By getting more actors and LRGs involved, new forms of peer learning, such as triangular cooperation, can be introduced, as well as work with cities from the Global South, giving them a way to share, structure and apply their knowledge, experience and political transformation.

Another example is the MaGeTV project in Cameroon begun in 2014. It was implemented by the municipality of Dschang with the support of the city of Nantes (France) and funded by the CSO-LA budget line. Building on previous actions from 2008, which included building a landfill and improving the collection of waste in the city, the project has continued to work on enhancing the system of waste collection and treatment knowledge and management in Dschang by encouraging the sorting of waste at household level, later sharing their training and findings, for example on composting or finding a sustainable financial model for the projects, with other municipalities in Cameroon. By the end of 2019, the project had already achieved many successful results in Dschang, including the embellishment of public spaces, better waste collection and a sustainable model for the production of bio fertilizers.

An interesting case is the triangular cooperation project "Decentralized cooperation to democratize the cities" involving 6 Brazilian and 8 Mozambique cities, funded mostly by the EU and the government of Norway, with Cities Alliance and the city of Barcelona also taking part from 2012 to 2015.

The national association of local governments of Mozambique (ANAMM), Frente de Prefeitos and UCLG implemented the project with Architects without Borders and the University of Lerida, acting as main partners, enabling support and technical as well as political exchange among the peers in the cities.

This peer project focused on applicable technical tools in Mozambique cities for strategic urban planning, inclusive cadastre and participatory budgeting.

Development cooperation through multilateral organisations or CSOs

In some cases, multilateral organisations and CSOs are in a better position than local authorities to take the lead in implementing programmes, according to the EU Delegations. This might be due in some instances to a perception of more "political neutrality". In some cases, development cooperation programmes are seen as a political step and an intermediary between the final beneficiary and the funding stakeholder is required. In other cases, multilateral entities or civil society organisations simply have greater capacities and are capable of implementing it more efficiently or effectively than the LRGs themselves.

This holds particularly true in the case of local CSOs, as they

are not public entities, even if central governments provide them with external support. In complex situations where LRGs cannot benefit directly from external assistance, joint programmes between CSOs and LAs allow local development projects to be funded.

Algeria is a highly centralised country, but the main project with local authorities, CAPDEL, is also implemented by the UNDP and designed to enhance participatory democracy by also working with eight pilot municipalities. This project is willing to test how decentralisation would unfold in this political and cultural environment, to seed local power to enhance capacities. For now, the long-term sustainability of the results obtained through this project remain to be proven. There are also questions surrounding the possibility of successfully replicating this project in other municipalities or regions.

In Afghanistan, the Municipal Governance Support Programme (MGSP) is being implemented by UN–Habitat in 12 Afghan municipalities: Kabul, Herat, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Mazar-i-Sharif, Farah, Bamyan, Nili, Mirbachakot, Balkh, Spin Boldak and Enjil. The overall objective of the programme is to improve stability and stimulate local economic development in these cities by enhancing municipal governance and strengthening the social contract between citizens and the state.

The Philippines is a particular case, due to the aforementioned characteristics of the Pacific countries.[28] The country launched an ambitious decentralization programme in 1991 in order to strengthen democratic processes and enhance economic growth. The national government devolved major responsibilities and revenues to local governments. A process of decentralisation, however, needs to go beyond the transfer of responsibilities and resources to local governments. It also requires reforming governance and empowering the community to participate in advocacy and decision-making. These are the current challenges for local governments since traditional power structures exist alongside the official institutions and the latter's relations with the central government are described as deeply dependent. Efforts to mobilise its own revenues are not sufficiently strong and "Local Government Units" (LGUs), the country's equivalent of local governments, are dependent on transfers from the central government. Sound policies, political will, systemic reforms and community involvement are key factors in governance. CSOs appear as the main beneficiaries of most of these projects funded under the CSO/LA thematic line because of the low capacity of actual LAs to participate in the calls for proposals. The CSOs then conduct these projects in partnership with local governments. The project "Reinforcing, Instituting and Scaling Up Efficient CSO-LGU interaction towards Enhanced Local Governance",[29] implemented by Action Against Hunger (November 2017 to October 2020) is a good example of how this partnership approach between CSOs and LAs operates. Other projects, such as the project "Spaces for Peace" involving the province of Mindanao, do involve local governments by working under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights.

---

28 See Chapter II: decentralisation processes. It is made up of many islands dispersed over a very wide area.
29 November 2017 - October 2020, with a budget of € 600 000.
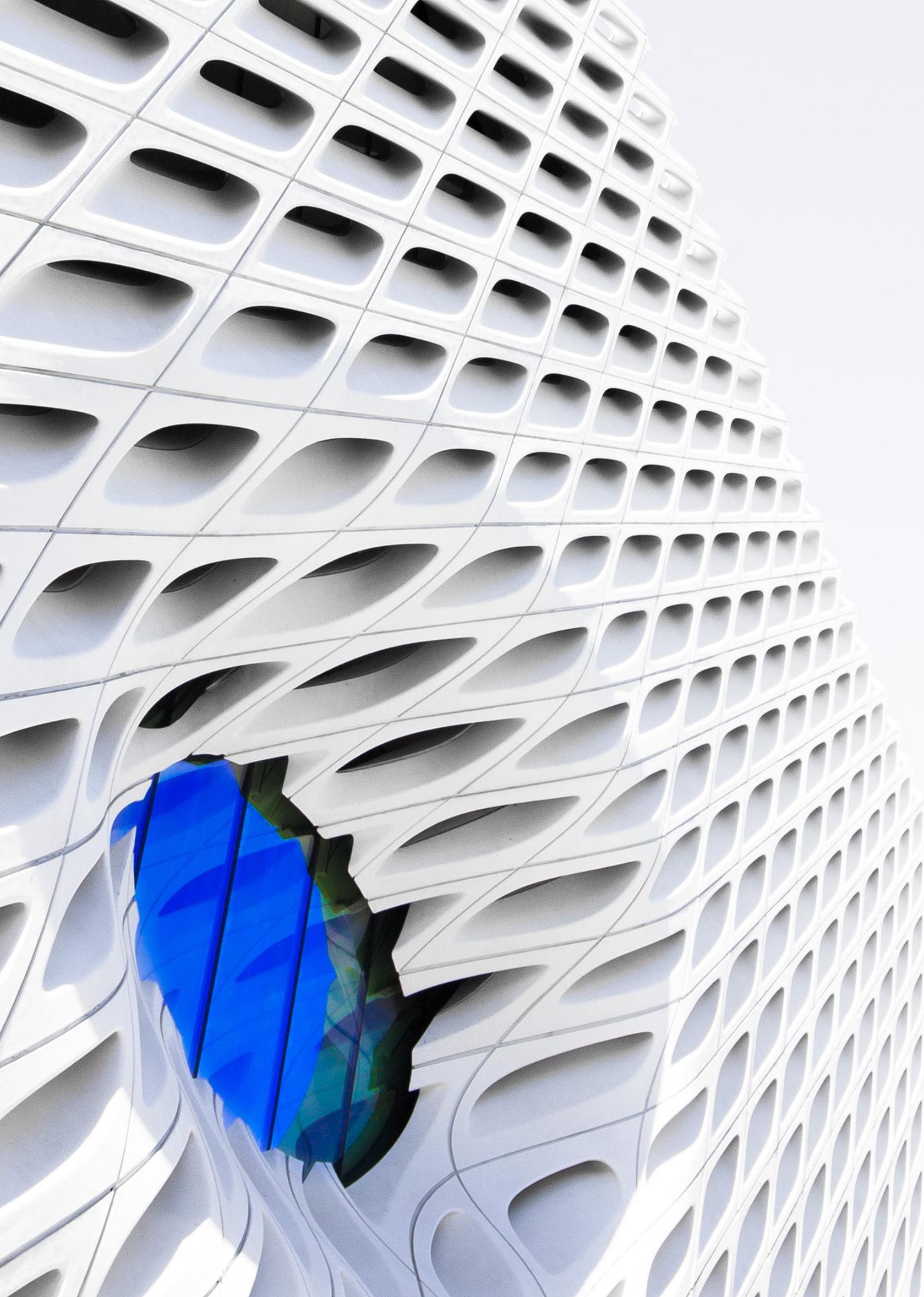
CHAPTER **4**

PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE
AND THE POTENTIAL OF WORKING WITH LRGs

PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE AND THE POTENTIAL OF WORKING WITH LRGs

Lessons learned

We have seen all the advantages of working with LRGs on development and how the EU Delegations have managed to do it thus far. The general feeling though is that the full potential of LRGs as development cooperation partners is still too recent and has not yet been fully realized or achieved.

So, what are the main **obstacles** to working with the local level?

We have already mentioned that the degree to which competences and resources have been decentralised can limit the possibilities for EU Delegations to operate at the local level (See Chapter II).

Yet, even with political decentralisation, there are certain problems that seem to be commonplace to some groups of countries.

In the countries where the management capacities of territorial institutions are weak (administratively and financially), they usually face difficulties in implementing larger-scale investment projects, even under inter-municipal cooperation frameworks. Elsewhere, extreme territorial fragmentation in certain countries can present a huge obstacle to providing public services for citizens. There are examples of it in all regions, but it is especially true in the archipelago countries (Fiji and Indonesia, for example).

Another common obstacle is the lack of political will to grant LRGs the autonomy or resources to act as policymakers. This applies to many parts of Africa and the Eastern countries but is also sometimes the case in Latin America, even where the government has expressed the political will for decentralisation. However, there are also fears about loosening control over the territory. Territorial development and direct foreign "interventions" are, in some places, still a highly sensitive matter. Often, governments will direct aid to reduce interregional inequality gaps, and they appreciate the funds received in this respect, but they have no real interest in introducing further reforms. Any attempts by the EU Delegations to push could put their relations with the central governments at risk.

According to the EU Delegations, however, the most pervasive problem is usually the lack of human resources in the public sector to carry out effective decentralisation or development programmes. Insufficient management capacities, language skills, etc. also prevent the local levels from being able at times to efficiently implement the contracts. In some cases, corruption and the misuse of funds have been an important issue, which resulted in a termination of funding.

Despite these many obstacles, some important lessons have been learned during the years spent by the EU Delegations implementing projects and work with the local and regional authorities.

Even though they have had to face the hurdles of local authorities' weak project and financial management capacities in many countries, some EUDs have chosen to respond by focusing more on capacity building at local level, so they can ensure a long-term impact on institutional systems and better implementation of the programmes being jointly developed.

In cases where misuse has led to an interruption in funding, this turn of events has sometimes resulted in major staff changes, better oversight procedures and a stated political commitment by the new government to fight corruption. Even better, these efforts and procedures have sometimes proven successful, leading to new opportunities for LAs, as was the case in the municipality of Yerevan in Armenia, which resulted in a new regional project being awarded through the LA call for proposals.

This is not always the situation though in other countries, where the central government's bureaucracy or lack of political will tends to hold back, slow down or even completely stall the local government's initiatives. In those instances, a wide variety of solutions have been proposed or implemented. One practical solution has been having recourse to EU regional funds (for example, the "Central Africa" in the European Development Fund) to fund LRGs. It is not the most straightforward path, but it provides a technical way to give local authorities access to funds.

Other solutions to overcome insufficient capacity or to get around central government bureaucracy is the fostering of local CSO alliances with local authorities. In some regions, local CSOs have evolved, becoming more organised and professional, not to mention quite skilled at successfully using calls for proposals to secure funding, much more so than the local authorities. They have established strong networks and some local authorities have even opened their participatory plans to them. In the areas where there are shared common actions and agreements, CSOs secure EU funds and implement the projects with the LRGs acting as principal stakeholders. Strengthening people-based partnerships with local elected units for local development planning is expected to lead to a virtuous circle of accountability as well as an improvement in quality of services with the potential to increase demands for more efficient decentralisation.

In the cases where demographic dispersion and the immense size of a territory present obstacles (Brazil or Indonesia, for example), the EU Delegations have learned to work through the regional or national associations of local governments in order to concentrate the impact of actions and be more efficient.

Some cases in the study stand out as being particularly innovative or for having adopted a very specific approach in response to special circumstances and are worthy of detailed study. Examples of these good practices are:

Brazil – Work with the LA associations

In a country with such a vast territorial expanse and lopsided population distribution, the work with LRGs called for a different approach in order to be able to cover as much of the population as possible. EUD experiences showed that it is very difficult to implement projects managed directly by local authorities in Brazil, on account of the wide reach of the territory and the huge distances between population centres, which incur added costs in terms of time, human and economic resources. In Brazil, it is therefore advisable to work with associations of municipalities. They present the added advantage of having operational autonomy to implement activities within the deadlines established by the projects and can usually cover a much larger geographical area. They also have the capacity to disseminate information, promote exchange of experiences and best practices among local governments. Most projects implemented by associations have achieved good results, according to the EUD in Brazil.

A good example of this is the project "Reinsert: local integration project for the social reintegration of drug users" carried out with the National Confederation of Municipalities (CNM). Its objective was to support actions facilitating dialogue between local authorities and civil society to help prevent drug use and promote the socioeconomic reintegration of drug addicts in situation of vulnerability and social risk. More specifically, the project sought to contribute to the integration of social assistance, health and support networks for the social reintegration of drug users in the 4th Region of the State of Paraíba.

South Africa - Innovation

Being able to introduce innovation is one of the main advantages of working at the local level. It allows enough flexibility to test creative solutions that respond to everyday problems citizens face. Even better, innovative solutions can provide useful insights for LRGs in the EU as well.

Under an EU-funded grant, the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) developed and launched a mobile application to act as a municipal barometer, providing data and information in the form of an unrest risk scale. This innovation proved invaluable to local authorities, community leaders and citizens. The Mobile App provides data and serves as an early warning mechanism for unrest at community level. Citizens can alert authorities to deteriorated infrastructure, an accident or even just a claim that they have.

Another good example is the partnership between VNG (the Association of Netherlands Municipalities) and the local Centre for Local Capacity Building (CLCB). South African mining towns have been faced with declining economies and various socio-economic ills whilst mining companies continue to make profits off of the mineral wealth of these localities. The Revised Social Labour Plan Guidelines (from October 2014) encourages mining companies to contribute towards community development in order to retain their social licences to operate. It is common practice among mining companies not to align their Social and Labour Plans (SLP) to local authorities' five-year Integrated Development Plans (IDP) and Spatial Development Frameworks (SDFs). Municipalities lack the sufficient skills and capacities to ensure that mining companies deliver on their legislated mandate. Through EU funding, VNG has been working in partnership with the CLCB to support municipalities in their interactions and negotiations with the mining houses. The goal is to develop well-aligned SLPs in five municipalities and ensure integrated planning processes that speak to the needs articulated by communities. Thus far, successfully negotiated plans have been developed in three of the five locations. The project is ongoing.

Madagascar – Develop capacity building with long-term prospects for local development

The ACORDS programme (Support to the Municipalities and Rural Associations) was implemented under the framework of the 9th European Development Fund (2004-2011) using indirect management. It was recognized at the national level as being the most important laboratory for the implementation of decentralization in Madagascar. Having supported nearly 400 municipalities and a hundred intermunicipal organizations, the program has been a pioneer in terms of implementing municipal project management, providing direct subsidies to municipalities and inspiring the most support for decentralization and local governance to date.

Training

Knowledge pertaining to a territorial approach is not a simple matter or even easy to find. The staff of EU Delegations have to tackle issues that they may not even necessarily know how to manage: they have to learn on the job through practice. It is important to know about the specific training they undergo regarding a local and regional government approach and whether they have specific training requests relating to topics or issues they would like to understand better.

Development approach through local and regional governments can prove very complex. Projects, timetables, personal treatment, concerns and thematic issues work completely differently. For example, citizens' participation and institutional accountability play a major role. When an EU Delegation need to engage LRGs, they require proper tools to do it. Local governance, decentralisation, a territorial approach to local development (TALD), functional assignment, subsidiarity, policy dialogue, SDG localisation are all concepts that an LRG officer must be able to grasp and manage.

One undeniable conclusion can be reached from the survey: EU Delegations value training. 60% of respondents claimed they never had any training on working with LRGs (or it was insufficient), 8% felt they needed additional or more specific training while 32% stated they had been trained or, at least, they worked with someone in the delegation who had. Nearly all of them had ideas regarding what training sessions should focus on or how they could be improved. Examples included how to engage in policy dialogue for decentralisation, the TALD approach, subsidiarity, policy dialogue, SDGs and their localisation…

The EU Delegations suggested some topics on which additional training could be helpful: contacts with LRGs for the calls for proposals, engagement with local stakeholders (CSOs, businesses, ethnic or religious differences…), which EU instruments were most suited for the work with LRGs and how to involve LRGs within the context of development in fragile countries.

One purpose of the Framework Partnership Agreements (FPAs) signed between associations of local governments and the European Commission is to support regional and institutional advocacy. FPAs also play a prominent role in supporting LRGs as development players and policy makers. They can also help their members to share best practices, any lessons learned and to coordinate their efforts under development initiatives.

Roadmaps

The European Commission is currently developing country roadmaps for the work with LRGs in partner countries. So far, the pilot projects are taking place in Mali, Colombia, Ecuador and Chad.

The Country Roadmaps for engagement with Local and Regional Governments are aimed at ensuring an efficient policy dialogue. They need to take into account the views and specificities of LRGs in each country regarding key development and governance issues, and then shared with the national authorities in order to contribute to the development of a joint vision and common framework for engaging with LRGs.

At this stage, the relations between local and regional governments and EU Delegations still need to be institutionalised. This would avoid any need to rely on the personal implication of the EU Delegation staff in charge of the LRGs. This would also naturally strengthen the institutional link between the EU and subnational governments at country level. The roadmaps can support the establishment of longer-term relationships by setting out customised goals and methodologies.

It should be noted however that nearly half of the EU Delegations expressed reservations regarding whether their work would be improved by the roadmaps. Some of them argued that they required more flexibility, particularly since a roadmap could make work lines more rigid. Others were convinced that the European Commission has not been taking all the important stakeholders into account. Finally, some said that the timing was not right for a roadmap in their constituency.

Other significant cases include:

Honduras

The EU Delegation in Honduras considers that the work with the local authorities has potential, especially in the area of climate change. But there is still a problem of high "politicisation" whereby the political atmosphere manages to condition the priorities of the municipalities. The future is necessarily coloured by the prism of job creation and the fight against organised crime and drug trafficking.

So, while local decentralisation for example is not a direct priority for the EU in Honduras, it might be instrumental for the implementation of EU action in other sectors like the environment, local economic development for the employment sector, food security and social service delivery. The roadmap for this kind of environment needs to be flexible, and adaptable to fit the country's realities.

Mali

The EU Delegation in Mali has shown good results in areas where there has been engagement with local authorities in development cooperation. An LA-specific budget would therefore be welcomed, or even an integrated programme along sectoral budget lines that includes the decentralisation processes as a sector. The roadmap for this fragile context should take into account the need for some flexibility in the programmes, and the processes should be as responsive as possible to avoid any friction between programming and implementation owing to a rapidly changing environment.

Conclusions

The EU Delegations' work with local and regional governments has generated some new opportunities for the EU's and the partner countries' development cooperation policies. Fostering closer cooperation between LRGs and their associations on one side and with the EU Delegations on the other has shown mutual benefits but this study has also revealed some of the limits of the exercise.

The EU Delegations can benefit from partnerships with decentralised cooperation actors by developing:

- **Training of EU Delegation staff.** The need for training regarding local approaches voiced by the EU Delegations could be provided by FPA partners and LRG associations in the partner countries where they are active. LRGs can share their experiences as decentralised cooperation actors and provide input on how best to adapt any training strategy to individual country specifics. The need for other types of training covering, for example, participatory mechanisms, financing for subnational levels, infrastructure and SDG localisation was also mentioned.

- **Political closeness.** For elected representatives of LRGs, it is often easier to cultivate better understanding with their peers (mayors, council members…). FPA partners work with their elected representants on a daily basis and they are actively involved in decentralised cooperation policies.

- **Networks.** Every stakeholder has their own network of known LRGs, local CSOs, experts in the field and in the private sector (for example, suppliers). It is helpful to encourage multi-stakeholder work through exchanges and networking, taking advantage of the previous work and experience with those actors.

- **Development education and awareness raising.** This EU external action policy is probably one of the least known among EU and partner countries' citizens. LRGs, on the other hand, must always be accountable to their citizens and they often use the results of their external actions in decentralised cooperation to raise awareness among population about global challenges. Their proximity to the citizens and local actors makes them the ideal link between the global and the local perspectives.

- Relationship with **local authority associations.** Working with LRG associations in partner countries produces remarkable results in terms of strengthening LRGs capacities as actors of development. In spite of this, nearly half of the EU Delegations who responded to our study did not engage in any dialogue or enjoy any relations with LA associations. Peer learning, cooperation, and targeted projects aimed at strengthening these associations could have a positive impact on their sustainability and their capacity to assist their members, local and regional governments.

- Expertise and innovation. Local and regional governments know how their peers work. This does not imply that one local public policy is applicable everywhere every time, but it means that the accumulated experience of towns and cities or even rural communities can be shared to bolster innovation, comparative results and lessons learned, based on a shared diagnosis, mutual trust and knowledge. Moreover, in many cases, when working with LRGs, EU Delegations have ranked the capacity building of public servants and institutions as a priority. This objective would allow the projects to be scaled up at a later stage. Other LRGs would be the perfect actors to make that happen.

Let us look at this approach now from the other side: how could LRGs from EU Member States active in development cooperation benefit from a closer relationship with EU Delegations?

- **EU diplomacy.** Maintaining contacts and being consulted by the EU Delegations can provide LRGs with some credibility vis-à-vis other stakeholders like central governments, multilateral organisations or international CSOs. For the purposes of advocacy or network building and coordination, this is invaluable. One in four of the EU Delegation projects are linked to governance support through partnerships or reform dialogue.

- **Landing zone.** EU Delegations have long-term experience working in the partner countries. They know the environment, the CSOs, the governments and the challenges regarding the development of the area where they work. LRGs starting new local partnerships can benefit from advice on context, support and networking.

- **Resources.** Some of the funds allocated by EU Delegations to calls for proposals at country level may remain unused. This is one result of the difficulty in finding the right approach for working with local authorities. For LRGs, one limitation of the calls is being able to find co-applicants or partners for certain types of projects. Given the number of success stories already identified (Banjul/Ostend, Quelimane/Milan or Lubumbashi/Liège to mention just a few), there are indeed many innovative models of decentralised cooperation funded by the EUs that need to be further explored.

Under the Sustainable Development Goals framework, the multi-stakeholder approach is both a mainstreamed issue and a specific goal (SDG17). Localising the SDGs means transposing the priorities and needs from the global agenda to the local level, and ensuring that the global stakes of sustainable development are made real for citizens in their local lives.

The EU Delegations have been mandated with mainstreaming the SGDs in all areas of action. Local and regional governments can be a strong asset in helping to implement this mandate. Indeed, they already have the relevant experience in most of the SDG fields. Under the 2030 Agenda, decentralised cooperation should be pushed up to the top of the agenda of development cooperation. As a tool, decentralised cooperation is key in transforming this policy into reality, and also enables multi-level perspectives, multi-stakeholder planning and implementation by mobilising territorial stakeholders and their expertise on behalf of an integrated, inclusive, coherent and sustainable territorial development.

To achieve this result, the signatories of Framework Partnership Agreements could play a major role by engaging in triangular discussions involving EU Delegations, national governments, and national or regional associations of local governments. As experienced actors in both development cooperation and local government management, they already master the language, skills and knowledge needed.

In this respect, LRG associations are very important in ensuring the widespread dissemination of results, outputs and global impacts of local actions, but also in building up the notion of global citizenship. They already play a key role in encouraging dialogue between citizens, civil society organisations, the academia and the private sector. Hence, LRGs and their associations are key partners in implementing EU development policies in partner countries. The programmes should take this into account in view of increasing the effectiveness and impact of the development goals. It is possible to build more comprehensive and targeted programmes, through the EU Delegations, making better use of peer-to-peer cooperation, joint programming, roadmaps and multi-stakeholder partnerships. The EU Delegations have been working with local and regional governments for a while as decentralised cooperation actors. The cooperation and coordination between them should not be taken for granted, but instead supported through concrete instruments, network building, goals and/or participatory mechanisms. As we have already seen, the local perspective in development is widely considered to be crucial by the institutions; this needs to be reflected more in the programmes.

2020 SURVEY OF EU DELEGATIONS

Empowering Local Authorities in partner countries for enhanced governance and more effective development outcomes

GETTING TO KNOW THE EU DELEGATION

1 **Who is the person in charge of decentralisation, local governance or local development within the EU Delegation?**

SUPPORTING DECENTRALISATION REFORM AND STRENGTHENING LOCAL AUTHORITIES AS ACTORS OF GOVERNANCE

2 **Is decentralisation reform one of the country's priorities?** YES / NO
If yes, how is the EU Delegation supporting decentralisation? And since when?
Is there a recentralisation process in the country?

3 **Is the EU Delegation aware of any EU local authorities having already cooperated with your country's local authorities?** YES / NO
If yes, please specify who and how the EU Delegation is working with them.

4 **Has the EU Delegation already worked with local authorities under the framework of the 2014-2020 MFF (Bilateral Programmes, Thematic Programme, Joint Programming)?** YES / NO
If yes, could you please specify project names, budget line, CRIS number, themes (focal sector) and the stakeholders involved?

5 **What form of means of assistance does the EU Delegation use to work with local authorities (budget support, call for proposals, other)?**

6 **Does the EU Delegation have any "success stories" and/or lessons learnt from your work with local authorities? Is there an evaluation report?**

7 **Does the EU Delegation know and/or is it working with any National Associations of Local Authorities in the country?** YES / NO
If yes, please specify which association and how the EU Delegation is working with them.

8 **Are local authorities and their national associations involved in some consultation and/or structured dialogue with the EU Delegation?** YES / NO
If yes, how often? On what topics?
Going forward

9 **Would the EU Delegation be in favour of drafting an EU roadmap for engagement with local authorities with the support of DG DEVCO (Unit C5)?** YES / NO
If yes, what would you expect from it?

10 **Have the personnel of the EU Delegation been trained on how to work with local and regional governments?** YES / NO
If yes, how would you improve the training content for EU Delegation staff?
If no, what would be needed?

11 **If you have any other comments on these issues, please feel free to add them.**

PLATFORMA

PLATFORMA is the pan-European coalition of towns and regions – and their associations – active in city-to-city and region-to-region development cooperation. All are engaged in international cooperation for sustainable development. PLATFORMA is a hub of expertise on local and regional governments' international action, gathering towns and regions, their European and global networks, and regional and national associations.

With its partners, PLATFORMA defends the role of towns and regions in EU development policies, promotes international cooperation between cities and regions across the world and facilitates knowledge exchanges and peer-learning between towns and regions and their associations.

In 2015, PLATFORMA signed a Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) with the European Union. Its signatories commit to take action based on common values and objectives to tackle global poverty and inequalities, while promoting local democracy and sustainable development.

The PLATFORMA secretariat is hosted by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR).

www.platforma-dev.eu

AEXCID: Extremadura Agency for International Cooperation for Development

www.juntaex.es/aexcid

AFCCRE: French Association of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions

www.afccre.org

AICCRE: Italian Association of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions

www.aiccre.it

AIMF: International Association of French-speaking Mayors

www.aimf.asso.fr

ALAL: Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania

www.lsa.lt/en

AUC: Association of Ukrainian cities

www.auc.org.ua/en

Région de Bruxelles-Capitale: Brussels-Capital Region

https://international.brussels/

CALM: Congress of Local Authorities of Moldova

www.calm.md

CEMR: Council of European Municipalities and Regions

www.ccre.org

CLGF: Commonwealth Local Government Forum

www.clgf.org.uk

CUF: Cités Unies France

www.cites-unies-france.org

DIBA: Province of Barcelona

www.diba.cat

EUSKADI - Basque Country: Basque Agency for Development Cooperation (Basque government) and Euskal Fondoa/Basque Local Authorities Cooperation Fund

euskalankidetza.hegoa.ehu.eus

Famsi: Andalusian Fund of Municipalities for International Solidarity

www.andaluciasolidaria.org

FEMP: Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces

www.femp.es

Fons Mallorquí: Majorcan Fund for Solidarity and Cooperation

www.fonsmallorqui.org/ca

Generalitat de Catalunya: Autonomous community of Catalonia

www.gencat.cat

LALRG: Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments

www.lps.lv/en

Land Niedersachsen: Lower Saxony

www.niedersachsen.de

LBSNN: National Town-Twinning Council Netherlands-Nicaragua

NALAG: National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia

www.nala.ge

NALAS: Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe

www.nalas.eu

Nantes métropole: Nantes Metropolis

www.nantesmetropole.fr

Österreichischer Städtebund: Austrian Association of Cities and Towns

www.staedtebund.gv.at

Région Sud-Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur: Region of South-Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur

www.maregionsud.fr/

Regione Toscana: Region of Tuscany

www.regione.toscana.it

RGRE: German Association of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions

www.rgre.de

Stadt Dortmund: City of Dortmund

international.dortmund.de

SMO ČR: Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic

www.smocr.cz

SKR: Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions

www.skr.se

UCLG/CGLU: United Cities and Local Governments

www.uclg.org

Ville de Paris: City of Paris

www.paris.fr

VNG International: International Cooperation agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities

www.afccre.org

VVSG: Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities

www.vvsg.be

This study takes PLATFORMA one step further in its efforts to strengthen the relationship between local and regional governments and their representative national associations and the EU.

It examins how EU Delegations engage with local and regional governments and what their views are on the current work and the potential of engaging towns and regions as effective actors for development cooperation in the future.

PLATFORMA

Square de Meeûs 1
1000 Brussels
Belgium

+32 (0)2 265 09 30
platforma@ccre-cemr.org
@Platforma4Dev
www.platforma-dev.eu