

Regional meeting Europe

15-16 January 2018

Ghent, Belgium

On 15 and 16 January 2018, the first regional Policy Forum on Development (PFD)¹ for Europe will take place in Ghent, Belgium. Participants from all countries of the Council of Europe will represent the different constituencies: civil society, cooperatives, private sector, local and regional governments and trade unions. The meeting fits within the global PFD process that is facilitated by the European Commission and aims at accommodating and strengthening multi-stakeholder exchange and collaboration, as well as facilitating dialogue with the EU institutions on EU external policies and practices.

Focus:

Throughout 2016 and 2017 the European Union adopted key policy documents that bring the UN 2030 Agenda framework and the EU Global Strategy closer to practice - in particular the EU Consensus on Development, the Urban Agenda for the EU and the Joint EU Communication on Resilience, a new impetus for partnership with the African Union and a communication on a sustainable future for Europe. From 2018 onwards, the EU needs to put these policies into operational programmes.

In its policy documents for external action, the European Union emphasises values of democracy, defence of human rights, subsidiarity and sustainability. The PFD has repeatedly assessed the implementation of these values and specifically discussed the state of play of civic space, of the enabling environment for civil society organizations to participate in public life and for local governments to participate in national development planning in the EU's partner countries.

Given the massive urbanisation phenomenon which mostly regards the developing world (till 2050 this may bring 2 billion additional urban dwellers, 90% of which in Africa and Asia) global challenges including poverty alleviation, climate change and migration will mainly take place in urban locations. The EU answer will therefore focus on a stronger action to strengthen the capacities of local authorities in urban areas.

The European Regional PFD will mainly discuss:

- the coherence in policies and practice as well as civic space and how this affects democracy, local self-governance and citizens' participation.
- the role of Local Authorities in responding to the urbanisation challenges in the developing world.

¹ For more information about the PFD and its work, please see: <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/policy-forum-development>

A special focus will be given to private sector accountability in development, security, migration and peacebuilding:

Objectives:

Within its mandate and goals, the European PFD meeting will assess what this means for EU's external action and for the European civil society and local governments actors to engage in international cooperation. The meeting objectives include:

- Facilitating dialogue between grass-roots organisations, local governments and civil society at large;
- Facilitating European civil society and local governments' input into EU development policies;
- Analysing the enabling environment for development actors;
- Exchanging with international partners in the PFD process on the challenges European actors face in engaging in international cooperation; and
- Reflecting on how to achieve a sustainable and inclusive urban development by using, amongst others, partnerships/twinning to strengthen the capacities of LAs to promote good urban governance, innovative, inclusive and resilient cities.

Debates:

The forum debates will assess how reality relates to the narrative. What is happening on the ground? What are the concrete support-programmes and initiatives the EU is developing? What new multi-stakeholder partnerships are growing within this context? What are the roles for different stakeholders?

Specifically, the meeting will look into 4 areas:

1. The SDGs as trigger for increased policy coherence for development

2015 was an important year for development with the adoption by the United Nations Member States of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Since then, the European Union has worked to translate the Agenda into its development policy framework. This process led to the adoption of the new European Consensus on Development, which recognises the role of different stakeholders in the development agenda. The concrete implementation of the new Consensus in EU's external policies is a particularly important topic for PFD members.

This session will cover:

- The EU's commitment to Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development, and the need to ensure that the EU's internal policies do not contradict but benefit developing countries and increase the effectiveness of development cooperation.

- SDG ambitions and the new, more holistic approach with the aim of leaving no one behind, and what this means in reality.
 - The current context of fragility and crisis, specifically the movement of populations due to poverty and conflict, and the subsequent responses by governments, civil society and local authorities and municipalities and the upholding of human rights.
2. How enabling is the context for civil society and for local government actors to contribute to international sustainable development?

Despite the great political and policy acknowledgement of the role and value-added of civil society, the reality is evermore shrinking space and a lack of enabling environment for civil society to play its role. This manifests itself at the level of political debate, in restrictive legislation, violations of human rights, shrinking space for media and in decreasing operational space (including funding) for civil society organisations.

Similarly, the key role of local and regional governments to deliver sustainable development for all – particularly through their potential to step-up citizens' participation in democratic state building - has been increasingly recognised in political commitment documents at the levels of the EU. The European Union has been a natural ally to those advocating for place-based approaches to development: territorial development, subsidiarity and multi-level partnerships form the basis of the EU project.

This session will promote a better understanding of the challenges to the preservation of civic space and their effects on the working environment of development actors in Europe.

3. Cities: how can urban centres foster inclusive sustainable development?

The session aims to debate how sustainable urban development can be achieved through addressing urban governance challenges (city management, need for land management, urban planning, urban design, urban mobility, etc.) and fostering multi-stakeholder exchanges with civil society, private sector, workers and social entrepreneurs. Panellists will discuss possible new ways to boost the development of inclusive and sustainable cities and elaborate about the use of twinning/partnerships: is this a valid tool to support cooperation?

The following questions will guide the discussions:

- Multi-stakeholder partnerships involving local governments, civil society and private sector - such as in the PFD are specifically encouraged in the Agenda 2030. How are such partnerships, notably with civil society and private sector, developing at the city level? How have they evolved and what practices have worked best to overcome well known challenges? What needs

to be done by the different stakeholders involved to strengthen and deepen these partnerships?

- What are the current challenges to promoting good governance and fostering civic engagement at the local level? Which mechanisms (institutional, legal, programmatic) are used to overcome such challenges?
- What could be the added value and challenge of twinning/pairing schemes between of EU and partner countries' Local authorities to overcome the urbanisation challenges? What place can or should civil society, private sector, cooperatives and/or trade unions take in such a collaborative efforts towards sustainable cities.
- How has twinning so far worked concretely to develop capacity, foster more strategic and long-term goals, transfer know-how and enhance political leverage?
- How have local authorities action plans worked to localise the SDGs?

4. Review of recent trends in EU External Action policies and programmes, particularly:

Private sector accountability in development:

The EU External Investment Plan (EIP) will complement EU development aid by catalysing investment in Africa and the EU Neighbourhood. This responds to a funding gap for realising the SDGs, and also to an increased interest in the private sector as an actor for sustainable development. The private sector makes an important contribution to job and growth creation, but how to guarantee that jobs are decent and growth is sustainable? The debate will explore how to ensure private sector interventions in development are a matter of multi-stakeholder dialogue in donor and recipient countries. It will also explore how PFD constituents can engage in EU initiatives on innovative development financing (e.g. blended finance) and how to ensure these mechanisms abide by development effectiveness principles.

Security, migration and peacebuilding:

More than 2 billion people live in countries where development is affected by fragility and armed conflict. By 2030 the share of global poor living in fragile and conflict-affected situations is projected to reach 46%.² Currently 65 million people have left their homes, seeking refuge elsewhere. More than before in recent history, global dynamics are driven by insecurity, forced migration and inequality, as well as by climate change and increasing natural hazards. Development programming needs to better reflect this new situation in order to realise the SDGs for all.

² World Bank

This session will discuss:

- The value added of whole of society approach - based on strong multi-stakeholder actions.
- The role that Europe can play to further the peace and security agenda in and around Europe.
- The role of CSOs and local governments, and particularly of the PFD community, in contributing meaningfully to the broader aim.