



## Cities and Regions for International Partnerships 2023 Forum

### ***“Building **Glocal** Gateways”***

*Connecting **Intermediary** cities and **Investing** together  
for more **Inclusive** and **Innovative** sustainable cities and regions*

Brussels, 30th of November - 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2023

**Concept Note (introduction)**

### **Background and Introduction**

An increasing number of policies have a strong territorial dimension and cover sectors and services that impact on citizens' lives at local level; they are also frequently administered by sub-state public authorities, i.e. regions, cities, and other local administrative entities. Sometimes underestimated, these public policies and actors are in fact central to the functioning of contemporary societies. For instance, in Europe, 75% of public investment falls within the framework of local public policies. Structural and social European funds are in large majority administered at local and regional level and are key to reduce economic and social inequalities within the European Union (EU). Both at the EU and at Partner countries level there is a strong interest and willingness to exchange and interact in order to better achieve the SDGs of the Agenda 2030 and to actively contribute to regional and local concrete implementation of the opportunities opened by the EU **Global Gateway** initiative.

**Connecting** cities and regions both at **physical and digital level** and optimising **Decentralised Cooperation** - as a powerful **Team Europe** asset – in order to favour more **Inclusion, Innovation** and **Investment** at local level, will be the key focus of this year edition of the **International Forum “Cities and Regions for International Partnership”**. The particularly important role that **Intermediary cities** can play will also be at the centre of the discussion.

Co-organised by the European Commission (Directorate-General for International Partnerships in cooperation with other DGs) and the European Committee of the Regions, this Forum builds on the former “*Assises de la Coopération Décentralisée*”. Regular editions are taking place every two years, conceived as

a space for policy dialogue and exchange of experiences on decentralised cooperation and development solutions at local level carried out by European and Partner countries' Local and Regional Authorities.

The ambition of the 2023 Forum is to concretely contribute with a “**territorial approach**” to the **EU Global Gateway agenda**, using the high potentiality of the **decentralised cooperation and partnerships**.

The “**New European Consensus**” had already recognised local and regional authorities as key actors of development policy, supporting and strengthening policies falling under the so called “*5P*”, namely **People, Peace, Partnership, Planet and Prosperity**.

Most underlying policies and investments are a shared responsibility across levels of government. It is estimated that 65% of the 169 targets underlying **the 17 SDGs of the 2030 Global Agenda** will not be reached without proper engagement of and coordination with local and regional governments.

Proper **localisation of the SDGs** and **the role of intermediary cities** are two key global challenges which are increasingly at the centre of international attention. The decision of an important part of the world population and youth about peacefully investing their life in the territory of origin is heavily depending about the possibility of making intermediary cities and segments of megalopolis economically attractive, socially just, culturally interesting and vibrant, educationally motivating and environmentally safe and sustainable.

The key role played by decentralised cooperation and peer-to-peer exchanges between Local and Regional Authorities in supporting intermediary cities' inclusive development and in facilitating innovative and sustainable ‘quality’ investments at local level is considerable. Urban and rural planning, territorial approach, mobility and connectivity, green transition and energy management, inter-cultural dialogue and inclusive access to public spaces and services, youth and women involvement and valorisation of cultural heritage and creative scene, e-administration and service delivery at local level (such as education, health, civil registry), potential power of attraction for youth of intermediary cities, are all key subjects to deal with in the framework of the **working groups** that the Forum participants will be proactively animating and attending.

**In this context, the 2023 Forum dedicated to “Building Glocal Gateways”** would be instrumental - in a very timely context at the time of an increasingly conflictual international situation and, at the EU level, of the Mid-Term Review of the present European Commission external engagements, just few months before the renewal of the EU leaderships - to exchange best practices, propose solutions and recommendations with the partners highlighting the potentiality of decentralized cooperation, and to show how local and territorial policies can innovate in their ways to respond to the increasing demand of their citizens and to the challenges they face.

This debate of the Forum will be organised around the **four “I”** of this 2023 edition:

- **Innovative solutions and proposals for sustainable transition of cities and regions**
- **Inclusive answers for citizens' participation**

- **Investment tools and access to finance and connectivity at Local and Regional level**
- **Intermediary cities attracting youth to develop and prosper there**

Within these four proposed thematic areas the participants - elected local administrators from the European Union and its partner countries - will be free to propose (following a very participatory approach) specific issues and challenges to be discussed at the level of smaller working groups which will be created on the spot and will feed the debate, the exchange and the final results (recommendations) of the Forum.