

## Report

The Forum *Cities and Regions for Development Cooperation – Local and regional partnerships for sustainable urban development* brought together the EU institutions and more than 500 local and Regional Authorities, their associations, city networks and practitioners from both the EU and partner countries (almost 80 countries were represented).

Co-organised by DEVCO and the European Committee of the Regions, it represented the continuation of “*Les Assises de la Coopération Décentralisée*” organised for the first time in 2009 and taking place every other year.



Compared to the last editions, a new innovative approach was proposed in its structure, methodology, participants and most importantly in its aim. The event was conceived as unique space for policy dialogue on sustainable urban development between EU institutions and local and regional authorities from EU and partner countries:

- i. The debates focused on DEVCO new strategy on integrated urban development and the resultant call for proposal for city partnerships;
- ii. An open space methodology (a participatory approach promoted by the Commission which allows for interactive discussion among stakeholders who suggested themselves the themes for debate) was used;

- iii. There was a serious screening of the invitees/participants in coordination on one side with EUDELS, to get the most active LAs representatives in EU beneficiary countries and on the other with EC partners, the Global and Regional Association of Local Authorities to invite Mayors/Local authorities of relevant EU cities active in decentralized cooperation.



In their opening speeches, Commissioner Neven Mimica, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO), and Karl-Heinz Lambertz, President of the European Committee of the Regions, welcomed the participants and set the ground: by 2050, an additional 2 billion people will live in urban areas – generating exceptional challenges and opportunities. Sustainable urban development is thus one of the greatest challenges ahead of us.

Cities and regions are the backbone of sustainable development and their active involvement is a pre-requisite to the implementation of Agenda 2030 and of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably SDG 11 “Making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”. Local and regional authorities thus require political and financial support, in order to tap their full potential. In this context, the present forum is a unique venue to strengthen policy dialogue between cities, regions and the European institutions.

Cities and regions’ role is particularly inspiring in the aftermath of the Arab springs. Ms. Souad Ben Abderrahim gives a vibrant example in her capacity as first female mayor of Tunis, as Tunisia had its first free democratic municipal elections in 2018 and is going through a decentralization process. Eight years after the revolution, a neighbour country, Libya, is organising its first municipal elections, in a context of insecurity and instability.

Key policy instruments for sustainable urban development at global and regional levels were introduced, e.g. the New Urban Agenda, an accelerator to help cities and regions localise the SDGs worldwide, the European Consensus for Development that foresees SDGs localisation and local authorities’ empowerment for better governance and the European Investment Plan supporting municipalities in terms of finance and risk mitigation.

The EU Local Authorities Thematic Programme aiming at supporting local authorities in the implementation of Agenda 2030 and at sustainable urban development was also discussed. Participants’ insights for the next call of EUR 100 million provided within the open spaces are reflected in the five reports in annex.

Five partnerships involving large cities and small towns were showcased. No matter the size of the projects, all partnerships focus on concrete projects, with tangible impact:

1. Master plan for land-use and access to clean drinking water for all in the partnership Phnom Penh - Paris
2. Public transport, pedestrian streets and access to culture in Buenos Aires and Madrid
3. Sustainable fisheries for better livelihoods in Benghazi and Tripoli
4. Birth registrations in Dogbo, Benin
5. EU peer-to-peer cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe on energy efficiency inter-alia.

**The mayors highlighted the Key factors of success** for those partnership and twinning initiatives:

- Keep it simple with concrete projects, as demonstrated by the Dogbo-Roeselare partnership. Despite a modest budget (EUR 120,000 in 5 years), its impact is obvious. Statistics now enable Dogbo municipality to plan for development, education and health. National Government is getting interested in the municipal pilot implemented.
- Ensure political will and cooperation between civil servants, with the Mayors and the Councils being fully engaged and the teams of the two cities working together
- Invest in advocacy and communication, showing tangible impact to the dwellers on their daily lives, health and well-being
- Give due consideration to indicators, monitoring and evaluation, to measure impact.



Entrepreneurship and the private sector in Africa were also discussed, together with the role of the EU, namely enhance dialogue and provide guarantees to attract investments and mitigate risks (European Investment Plan). Simultaneously, national and local governments need to create an enabling environment in terms of infrastructures, education and health, if they want to attract investors.

Young Africa is on the move. 40% of Africans are below age 15; the percentage reaches up to 60% in the largest cities of the continent, like Lagos, Nigeria, compared with 18% in London and 14% in Paris. Demography is expanding and Africa will become home to 2.4 million inhabitants in 2050 versus 1.3 million today. People move from rural to urban areas, first to small towns, then to large and capital cities, and sometimes beyond the borders. Today Africa is the largest continent for migration, with 70% of internal migration and 30% going beyond the borders. The debate on migration was passionate and migrants' right reminded, but all agree on the central question: How to tap the full potential of youth?



The Monday afternoon was vibrant thanks to an interactive “open space” methodology.

In order to address the many facets of sustainable urban development, participants proposed 70 topics of their interest, before breaking into groups, to interact and generate recommendations.

Participants demonstrated genuine interest and full commitment to this new participatory methodology, thus taking ownership of the forum. They produced 63 group reports that were then combined and clustered around the 5Ps. Partnership was clearly THE topic of interest with up to 21 working groups formed on the matter, followed with Planet (14), Prosperity (12), People (12) and Peace (4). The outcomes of the discussions were captured by the five rapporteurs who then discussed their recommendations with EU institutions. A summary of the policy recommendations on sustainable urban development is included below.

### **Women and youth empowerment**

- Gender mainstreaming - giving the voice to women and the youth
- Support women networks, enhance women entrepreneurship and include women in the labour market, from improved public services for women to public employment policies
- Consider quota, to achieve gender balance in our municipalities and so that women can reach senior positions including as elected representatives
- Put an end to violence against women and children and educate on women’s rights in schools and public space

### **Governance**

- Clear decentralisation policies, to allow for better regulations and transfer of funds from the national to the local level – with local authorities being accountable for their actions and expenditures
- Engage policy-makers, practitioners and citizens including vulnerable groups in policy-making on mobility, urban planning, waste management, access to water, energy, sanitation, etc.
- Build on partnerships and decentralised cooperation to fight stereotypes and change the perception of migration, looking at migration as an opportunity
- Transfer competences to the local level in a circular economy; Integrate ecosystems as a criteria in local authorities’ proposals; Consider new models that include protection of nature and green growth and; Sensitise all citizens on environmental issues
- Promote digitalisation at all levels: from digital government to cyber security

- Set appropriate indicators, to assess progress beyond political mandates of mayors

### **Resource mobilisation**

- The European Commission to simplify its procedures and to provide technical support, to facilitate local authorities' access to funding
- Regions accessing financial markets and regional authorities identifying potential sources of tax revenues
- Appropriate public and private funding mechanisms to facilitate infrastructure development and the set-up of transparent services by SMEs

### **Human resources & Capacity-building**

- Strengthen local authorities' capacities on gender, governance, integrated urban transport, urban planning respectful of ecosystems, waste management, biodiversity, food security, etc.
- Build on territorial approach and multi-stakeholder partnerships with CSOs and the private sector, to mobilise existing human (and financial) resources



Conclusions by the EU institutions were inspiring. Linda McAvan, Chair of the Committee on Development at the European Parliament, reminded us of the need to advocate for multilateralism, at a time when Paris Agreement and even the SDGs are questioned by some. She also invited local and regional authorities to ask their national governments what they do on the SDGs.



Stefano Manservigi, Director-General, DEVCO, welcomed participants' recommendations: He fully shares the commitment to women, the youth and the planet as transversal and central to all EU activities. Mr Manservigi emphasised the need for a road map, a structured dialogue and a long-term plan to frame cooperation between the EU, local and regional authorities worldwide. He also proposed the establishment of a pillar to support cities, local authorities and territories.

Ms McAvan and Mr Manservigi were joined by high-level representatives from the European Committee of the Regions, DG REGIO and the Romanian Presidency, who thanked the participants for their exceptional commitment and contributions. All look forward for the joint implementation of those policy recommendations for sustainable urban development.

Brussels, 6 February 2019