



Assises de la Coopération Décentralisée
Regions and Cities for Development
Brussels, 10-11 July 2017

WORKSHOP B on Humanitarian Crises

*Cooperation between Local and Regional Authorities:
A tool in addressing humanitarian crises*

Abstract

Based on concrete cases, this workshop is focused on decentralised cooperation as a tool addressing humanitarian crises. Resilience at local level will be addressed. The CoR's Nicosia initiative of support to Libyan municipalities will be presented.

Co-leaders

Fons Mallorquí de Solidaritat i Cooperació
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Background information

By 2030, the majority of the world's poor will be concentrated in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Poverty, violence, conflict, fragility and forced displacement are inter-linked and must be addressed in a coherent and comprehensive way. According to the OECD, the number of people living in extreme poverty will fall globally, but the number of extremely poor people living in fragile contexts will increase from 480 million in 2015 to 542 million in 2035.

Protracted crises and conflicts place a huge burden on national and international resources and on the fulfilment of human rights. The Global Strategy for EU external action supports resilience at all levels, addressing the ability of states and societies to withstand and recover from internal and external shocks and crises. Consistent with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the Paris Agreement on climate change, the broad concept of resilience involves dealing with vulnerability to risks from socioeconomic conditions and climate change as well as disasters and conflicts.

Co-leaders:



Urban Community of Al-Fayaa
Lebanon

Most conflicts today are rooted in inequalities and exclusions experienced in communities and in the resulting loss of trust in the state to address these issues. Local government remains the most accessible level of engagement with public authority and decision-makers affecting people's daily lives. Therefore, in fragile and conflict-affected settings, the local level plays a critical role in shaping state-society relations and in contributing to sustainable peacebuilding.

Humanitarian crises are complex. According to UNOCHA, they concern almost 90 million people all over the world, demanding concrete life-saving interventions and sustainable solutions to address the root causes of the crises. Maintaining a firm commitment to the sustainable development of territories is extremely important: the European response must be global, in coordination with all decision-making levels (European, national, regional, local). At the same time, cooperation between territories, involving local administrations and civil society organisations, represents a valuable answer to address needs and challenges.

The European approach towards the localisation of humanitarian aid is fundamentally guided by the care for the most vulnerable populations. Where there is insufficient confidence that the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality are being pursued, and where local, national and regional actors do not have sufficient capacity or willingness to respond to the needs of affected populations, the international humanitarian community has the responsibility to step in, based on the twin principles of subsidiarity and solidarity.

As highlighted by the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, the role and responsibility of local actors in humanitarian action is gaining increasing recognition, due to their closeness to local communities and to their ability to respond quickly to disasters and in a culturally sensitive, context-specific, and sustainable manner ("as local as possible, as international as necessary").

The importance of continuing to strengthen local capacities as well as national disaster management and civil protection structures working at field level is therefore a critical investment to ensure effective delivery, addressing disaster-affected people and building the resilience of states and societies. To achieve these medium-term objectives, but as well in the context of crisis, international cooperation between local authorities constitutes an effective tool, as a model arising from the community level, involving local resources and fostering local actors.

Decentralised cooperation empowers local authorities and local institutions. It creates not only links among actors that have the same competencies and challenges, but also stable bonds of cooperation between territories that help to increase awareness among communities and local stakeholders about global challenges and the related causes of humanitarian crises, such as climate change, inequalities, and food insecurity.

Content

Local authorities are at the forefront of humanitarian crises, but due to often limited financial and human resources, they can be rapidly exceeded by the exceptional circumstances. They also lack specific competences and capacities to manage the crises as well as sufficient advocacy capacity at national and international levels on the needs and challenges of the situation. In this context, decentralised cooperation can constitute a valuable mechanism to support and strengthen local authorities in their capacity of addressing urgent needs.

The aim of the workshop is to analyse decentralised cooperation as a tool in the context of humanitarian crises, contributing to strengthening a demand-driven approach, with coherent actions implemented with coordination among the different actors involved.

Three case studies will be discussed:

- The case of Chios (GR) and Mallorca (ES) in the management of the migration crisis in 2016.
- The case of Tripoli (Lebanon) and Catalonia (ES).
- The CoR's Nicosia initiative of support to Libyan municipalities.

Questions

- 1) *What can be the added value of decentralised cooperation in the context of humanitarian crises?*
- 2) *How can we build resilience at local level, e.g. through decentralisation processes?*
- 3) *How can synergies among local authorities be successfully created in order to give quick, coherent and coordinated answers to emergency situations?*
- 4) *How could local authorities be better involved in international and national decision-making processes about resolution of crises in which they are directly involved?*