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WORKSHOP D – Territorial development

Starting from the territories to achieve sustainable development

Co-leaders

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Abstract

Building on good practice examples of decentralised cooperation between European local governments and their peers in pre-accession countries, Latin America, West- and Southern Africa this workshop will discuss the practical contribution that direct cooperation between subnational governments brings to territorial development and to the global goals.

Background information

In 2015, the international community has begun its path towards the advancement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, an ambitious plan of action to eradicate poverty, protect the planet and achieve prosperity for all. The new Agenda is universal and indivisible. Through its SDGs, the 2030 Agenda offers a common framework of action gathering and guiding all actors from the globe towards the achievement of inclusive and sustainable development. The SDGs are at the same time global goals to be attained and a unique resource to improve development capacities.

Nevertheless, lessons learned from the implementation of the previous framework (Millennium Development Goals) proved that if the new universal Agenda wants to be truly transformative, it needs to be implemented and fully realized at the local level: the territories. This needs the definition of integrated strategies – at all levels – able to overcome the “silos” approach and to promote sustainable development transversally, in all of its dimensions and with a longer-term perspective. Such *localization* concept refers to the process of designing, implementing and monitoring development strategies in coherence with the SDGs within territorial settings. A territorial approach to development as presented by different institutions, amongst which the European Union and the

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United Nations has since long been the implicit practice in which local and regional governments cooperate.

Content

The concept of territory goes beyond its geographical definition; it refers to a multi-dimensional reality (the functional area of a locality) where social and economic processes and dynamics are produced between a variety of stakeholders of different nature, with Local and Regional Governments (LRGs) playing a critical coordinating role.

By nature, the territorial approach is integrated: locally all dimensions of sustainable development interact and need to be dealt with simultaneously. It therefore represents a potential strategy to localize the SDGs and to address the global challenges. It focuses on long-term development processes that allow to 'unlock' the potential of the territories. It articulates all territorial stakeholders (public and private), defines common priorities and joins their efforts and resources to achieve them.

By empowering local and regional governments to be the pivotal actor, it has the potential to be a catalyst of transparency, accountability and coherence. A territorial approach promotes endogenous

and inclusive development by: (i) Capitalizing on the potential of the different stakeholders – public and private; (ii) Fostering dialogue and effective multi-actor and multi-level governance; (iii) Promoting cross-sectoral interaction; (iv) Promoting co-responsibility. It is based on a culture of shared responsibility and centered on the leading role of Local and Regional Governments, on multi-level coordination, the respect of the principle of subsidiarity, and synergetic planning and implementation among all levels of governance.

The functional and interaction approach to the territory poses in itself a set of challenges for Local Governments, used to define their scope of work to administrative boundaries. As such a territorial approach is a learning arena for good governance, co-creation, multi-level and multi-stakeholder coordination. An ideal field for interaction and peer-support between local and regional governments across borders.

In decentralised cooperation multi-stakeholder involvement and multi-level coordination is a much sought-for feature of the partnerships between European subnational governments and their peers. A particular case are the Local Economic Development strategies (LED). When understood as a unique means of implementation of the SDGs and if successfully put into place in coordination between multiple actors, they represents a successful translation of the Territorial Approach into concrete and integrated development solutions. It is, however, not in all cases self-evident for local governments, their more central levels or government, or NGO's and other stakeholders in the territories to reach this ambition. Effective learning agendas between the partners and transposition of project outcomes into public policies guarantee sustainability in time and scaling up beyond the sphere of the territories involved in exchanges.

In this regards, Decentralized Cooperation could represent an important source of support to LRGs in delivering their development mandate and in making a Territorial Approach to Sustainable Development successful:

- It helps building local governance capacities that are embedded in regional and local dynamics;
- It facilitates the sharing of innovations, experiences and practices;

- It enhances public service delivery, Local Governance and Local Economic Development systems;
- It facilitates engagement with national governments for the creation of enabling environments.

Building on good practice examples of decentralised cooperation between European local governments and their peers in pre-accession countries, West- and Southern Africa this workshop will discuss the practical contribution direct cooperation between subnational governments brings to territorial development and to the global goals. It will look at different modalities of territorial approaches and of decentralised cooperation.

Questions

- 1) *Looking at the different good practices on local economic development, multi-stakeholder involvement in local self-government, service delivery and articulation to national policies; what modalities of decentralised cooperation have proved to be more successful in positioning the local government as pivotal actor in the development of its territories?*
- 2) *The need for inclusive an integrated development strategies centered on the territory has emerged as the key for a successful development delivery from the local level. Nevertheless, many development partners around the globe still work on single initiatives, often without an explicit or purposely designed longer-term sustainable perspective. How can Decentralized Cooperation help to overcome the “project approach”, thereby promoting an integrated Territorial Approach?*
- 3) *The Territorial Approach to Local Development (TALD) explicitly recognizes the importance of having an enabling national environment in which Local and Regional Governments can take on their responsibilities. However, this requires a conducive national environment (decentralisation) and the necessary resources to deliver and monitor development policies – which many LRGs are missing. What can we learn from practice about the potential contribution of Decentralized Cooperation to improve both the national context and the local capabilities?*