



Fourth Assises of Decentralised Cooperation for Development  
*European Committee of the Regions - Brussels, 1-2 June 2015*

**Associated seminar C**  
**Territories and governance**

Regional and local authorities are now acknowledged as important players in cooperation. Their contribution to development, like their crucial role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, has been underlined on many occasions.

In this respect, the 2011 Busan declaration on the global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation recognises the role played by local and regional authorities "linking citizens with government, and in ensuring broad-based and democratic ownership of countries' development agendas". More recently, the final document of the Rio + 20 conference describes local and regional authorities as entities developing strategies, taking decisions and implementing sustainable development policies.

Similarly, in its 2011 Communication on Increasing the impact of EU Development Policy: an Agenda for Change<sup>1</sup> the European Commission states that the EU should earmark resources with a view to utilising the skills of local authorities. The European Parliament, meanwhile, has indicated that it would like the Agenda for Change to specify the important and independent role of regional and local authorities and civil society, not only in implementing development programmes and projects, but also as fundamental players in the process of developing evidence-based development policies<sup>2</sup>.

Led by the United Nations Development Group, the preparatory work for the negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda has paid special attention to the local dimension, drawing lessons from the previous period. More specifically, there is a commitment to debate key aspects of the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda at sub-national level, along with the issue of "localisation".

This approach once more underlines the need for effective local and regional authority involvement when it comes to development. Development programmes can only have a positive impact if they are successfully implemented at local level.

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<sup>1</sup> COM(2011) 637 final.

<sup>2</sup> European Parliament Resolution of 23 October 2012 on An Agenda for Change: the future of EU development policy (2012/2002(INI)).

Decentralised cooperation has therefore been identified as an important vehicle for taking a territorial approach to the future implementation of the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Adopting a similar logic, the European Committee of the Regions adopted a resolution in 2013 which stated that "it is crucial to involve all key players, and in particular sub-national authorities both in developing and in donor countries, in the development and implementation of the necessary policies and programmes to improve their delivery and to contribute to sustainable development and inclusive growth"<sup>3</sup>.

It is in this context that the notion of governance, and more especially of local governance, is attracting renewed and increasing attention in academic, political and administrative circles. Little by little, the centre of gravity is shifting from decentralisation to local governance. This change makes it necessary to consider not only the competences of the various authorities and in particular those of local and regional authorities but also, and more broadly, the interconnecting relationships between the various players. Nowadays, no real social problem can be resolved by just one tier of governance.

Good local and regional governance calls for development policies and strategies based on the involvement and commitment of all stakeholders, in order to rise to the challenges and turn local strengths to account. Good governance also means providing for multi-level strategies that address many aspects of territorial development: cultural, social, economic and environmental.

This territorial governance, based on the interconnecting relationships between authorities is not without consequences for the decentralised cooperation approach. In essence, it implies that the joint framing of local and regional responses in the context of partnerships with third countries is part of the local development process and that this cooperation generates positive results for all parties. It also allows for the study and international comparison of global and also local problems. It also engages local players in the establishment of local and international networks that spur them to act and state their objectives clearly.

The creation of international, multi-stakeholder networks involving for instance local authorities, NGOs, civil society organisations, universities and businesses, encourages the exchange of experience and know-how and opens up new markets and fresh opportunities for development, while at local level it contributes to territorial cohesion and a better understanding of local policies.

The commitment of local authorities, both within the EU and in the partner countries is a necessary condition when it comes moving from a project-based approach to a territorial approach based on long-term strategies. The idea of cooperating on the basis of initiatives that affect the region as a whole becomes an innovative element in designing and implementing local development strategies.

As a contribution to the debate on the implementation of this territorial governance approach, the seminar will touch on the following issues:

1. How should the territorial approach be addressed? Which players should be involved? Do local authorities have the capacity to conduct a dialogue with local stakeholders?

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<sup>3</sup>

CDR2025-2013\_00\_00\_TRA\_RES – RESOL-V-005.

2. What is the best way to develop a process of decentralised cooperation that is based on local strategies and programmes? How can the impact of this cooperation be measured in the long term?
3. How can cooperation relationships and exchanges of experience between local authorities be strengthened at international level, not least by forming new forms of multi-partner association.
4. What is the best form of governance for decentralised cooperation policies in support of local economic development?

