

HLPF 2020

Accelerated Action and Transformative Pathways: Realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.

Theme 6: Bolstering local action to accelerate implementation

Co-convenors: UN-DESA, UN-Habitat, UNODC, UNECE and UNESCAP

Corresponding GSDR Entry point: Urban and peri-urban development

Specific lens: COVID-19 impact and responses.

Each question will be examined from the lens of Policies, actions and trade-offs; Leaving no one behind; Knowledge gaps; Means of implementation and partnerships; and science, technology and innovation.

Responses from the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and PLATFORMA

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[PLATFORMA](#) is the pan-European coalition of towns and regions – and their national, EU and global associations – active in city-to-city and region-to-region development cooperation.

The [Council of European Municipalities and Regions](#) (CEMR) represents the interests of Europe's local and regional governments and their associations in more than 40 countries. It promotes self-government, democracy, citizenship and facilitates the exchange between elected local and regional representatives.

1. How can transparent urban planning and design help in creating inclusive access to housing, basic services and infrastructure, environmental sustainability, improved air and water quality, and healthier communities?

Key recommendations:

- Urban planning needs to be built around integrated strategies, based on the **principles of co-creation and open governance**, involving all stakeholders and different levels of governance to enhance sustainable urban development. A critical factor for the response at local level is that **sub-national governments are given roles and resources that enable local challenges to be managed locally**, together with evidence-based support from a central - and where appropriate regional -level.
- Exchanging local and regional good practices between peers across the globe is essential to encourage inspiration and innovation, provide capacity building as well as give support to ensure inclusive planning and monitoring of urban policies. In this sense, **decentralised cooperation** is a key means of cooperation to connect territories across the globe and ensure **global policy coherence** in our local actions.

- Integrating the 2030 Agenda and **translating the 17 Sustainable Goals into territorial realities**¹ can help ensure a comprehensive, inclusive and sustainable urban planning process. Considering the 5 Ps (People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships) and “**localizing the SDGs**”² is essential to make sure no one and no place will be left behind.

With an increasing part of the global population living in urban areas, local and regional governments are confronted and have to deal with a vast majority of today’s challenges, including housing, demographic and climate change, social segregation, waste management, local economic development, just to cite a few. In this sense, effective and efficient urban planning should be the result of inclusive and participatory decision-making processes, taking into account all the different needs of a territory and its communities.

Principles of open governance should be at the core of decision-making processes contributing to more informed and participated decisions as well as to increased ownership and accountability. This can only be achieved by fostering integrated strategies involving all stakeholders, in particular those impacted by decisions, and different levels of governance to enhance sustainable urban development.

Processes of co-creation allow not only for a better identification of policy needs but also to adopt bottom up urban planning solutions reinforcing the identity of places and enhancing sustainable, resilient and living communities. Providing tools such as the Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities³ allow for the design, implementation and monitoring of integrated and sustainable urban development strategies and plans with the involvement of all stakeholders.

Finally, long term urban planning that is effective, inclusive and sustainable directly includes all the 5 Ps of the 2030 Agenda: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships. For local and regional governments, the SDGs are a transformative agenda that strives to improve the delivery of public services for citizens and enhance people engagement in public policy-making by breaking silos across policy areas and connecting with different stakeholders.

Impact of COVID19:

The pandemic is now spread all over the world and calls for solidarity to leave no one and no place behind. The immediate impact and repercussions of the COVID19 outbreak on municipalities and regions, affected people in their daily life, children and parents contained at home, distressing local healthcare infrastructures, schools and universities, transport and mobility, housing, companies and businesses.

Collaboration is essential, and learning from each other’s approach is crucial: those who were struck first can share their experience in dealing with the crisis. It is of paramount importance to have a coordinated global response, at different levels, and at the different stages: the “emergency phase” and the “recovering phase”. To best respond to the outbreak, city and regional planning needs to also ensure policy coherence to avoid negative impact on partner countries’ societal structures and economies. As such, city-to-city and region-to-region cooperation, also known as decentralised cooperation, is an essential tool to help.

¹ More detailed information can be found in PLATFORMA’s position paper on “How towns, regions and their associations can speed up the 2030 Agenda” (2019) : https://platforma-dev.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/200116_Position-paper-on-SDGs_EN_FINAL.pdf

² More information can be found in PLATFORMA-CEMR’s publication and study on how Local and Regional Governments’ associations bring the SDGs to life (2019) here : <https://platforma-dev.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/CEMR-PLATFORMA-study-SDGs-2019-EN-ok3.pdf>

³ More information on the official RFSC Website here: <http://app.rfsc.eu/>

Case studies:

- Fons Mallorqui is working with its partner municipalities in Tenado (Burkina Faso) and Pocona (Bolivia) on SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation. With the outbreak, they are further developing some emergency projects related to sanitary material and prevention, with Afghanistan (Kabul), Niger (including prevention workshops), and Nicaragua.
- The Latvian Association of municipalities will discuss its experience with counterpart Associations of municipalities in the Eastern Partnership such as Georgia, Moldova or Ukraine. It will focus on topics of municipal responsibility, e.g. the support in educational provision, work of kindergartens, social services, support for local businesses, waste collection, etc.

2. How can transparent urban and territorial planning and development support economic growth which is diverse, balanced, inclusive, safe, green and sustainable?

Key recommendations:

- Local and regional governments should be **considered as key investors for sustainability**, not just beneficiaries of state aid or international financial development funding.
- **Public private dialogue and partnerships** are key to improve the ways local and regional governments interact and partner with the business community and with civil society, ensuring that investments on the ground are diverse, inclusive and sustainable. Attention should be given to ensure that urban and territorial planning reflects the needs of all members of our societies, taking into account the gender dimension.
- **Decentralised cooperation** can help enhance a prosperous economic development for territories across the globe, by providing support on capacity building through sharing of tools and experiences, as well as making sure that all partners involved acquire an integrated and comprehensive approach to policy making, that is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and doesn't impact negatively other stakeholders and territories

Strategic urban planning plays a key role in the development and transformation of cities. As a crucial instrument of urban and territorial planning it should guide investments of great impact on the economic development of each city. Well planned cities potentially attract more people and investment as they provide more quality of life and job opportunities. Public administrations, in partnership with all local stakeholders, have the ability to identify and promote development clusters and business models able to cope with the societal challenges we face today. Reducing inequalities, in particular gender-based, and promoting spatial equity, ensuring affordable housing, investing in sustainable, accessible and affordable urban mobility, promote innovation and partnerships, encourage sustainable production and consumption are just some of the elements contributing to develop a resilient green and sustainable local economy.

In both developed and developing countries, increasing attention is paid to the role local and regional governments play in improving the business environment and investment climate for private sector development and inclusive growth. While most business environment reform involve changes to national policies, laws and regulations, increasing initiatives have begun to focus on the local business environments.

With the adoption of the Paris Agreement and of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the international community has resolutely engaged in a new approach to sustainable development and economic growth that are more integrated and more participatory. Today, cities and regions are aware that they must face up to challenges that are worldwide in scope, and that they must

strive to preserve global public goods. Thus, solidarity, particularly on climate and economy, are naturally expressed through several cases of decentralised cooperation.

With this in mind, local governments should be empowered to preserve social harmony, create new businesses and thousands of new jobs, as well as become more sustainable. However, there is a growing gap in urban local finances caused by the Corona pandemic, growing transfers of competences, population growth and growing needs for infrastructures and public services on the one hand, and by declining incomes on the other.

Cities and regions should be considered as relevant investors in sustainability, as they contribute a major part of publicly procured services and goods.⁴ Together with businesses, they can work hand in hand to achieve these objectives in an integrated, transparent and long-term approach. Local responses to private sector development promote more inclusive models of development in which the needs and opportunities of local businesses, workers and civil society are considered. Furthermore, the private sector can deal directly with governments as well as through multisector platforms to become agents of local development⁵.

Impact of COVID19:

Without any doubt, as the level of government closest to the citizens, local and regional governments are at the forefront of the provision of this basic yet vital services, and are now also the first in line to deal with crisis management on the ground and ensure the recovery and the continuity of local economic development. For this, ensure the necessary conditions for people to have a good consciousness of what is happening, enable and support solidarity actions from people to people, stimulate and promote innovative and creative initiatives, continue to provide essential services, identify vulnerable groups including women, migrants, caregivers, isolated people, elderly, disabled people, those at risk of domestic violence, workers in essential services, and others.

They continue to provide essential services all the while doing their utmost to limit the risk of further infection. Simultaneously, local governments face huge shortfalls in revenue due to the collapse in business activity and general economic slowdown, as well as the closure of theatres, museums and sports facilities. In Italy alone, cities face a shortfall in revenue⁶ estimated around €3 billion.

As we enter a new phase of gradually withdrawing restriction measures, municipalities and regions will continue to have a crucial role. Social entrepreneurs will play an increasing role in contributing to the recovery of our economies, whilst ensuring that we do in a safe, inclusive and sustainable way that can reach out to the most vulnerable people in the most remote areas.

Case studies:

- ➔ Initiated by the Basque Regional Government, the Africa Basque Challenge initiative aims to be an intercultural community of impact entrepreneurs that encourages the development of socio-business initiatives, promoting inclusive development and contributing to reducing social inequality or environmental impact. The initiative is now working on a digital platform, aiming to connect all the

⁴In the EU every year, over 250 000 public authorities spend around 14% of GDP on the purchase of services, works and supplies. In many sectors such as energy, transport, waste management, social protection and the provision of health or education services, public authorities are the principal buyers: <https://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/public-procurement/>

⁵ More information can be found in PLATFORMA's publication on the Local Business Environment and Decentralised Cooperation (2019) : <https://platforma-dev.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Local-Business-environment.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/coronavirus-comuni-rischiano-buco-almeno-3-miliardi-euro-ADCnh0E>

community to impact investors, sharing opportunities and providing podcasts, webinars and workshops. In addition, the initiative launched the first digital edition where 41 young entrepreneurs from Senegal, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Spain and France are working together creating projects with the aim of reducing the impact covid-19 is having in the communities of Africa and Europe⁷.

3. Which kinds of policies, plans, governance, investments and partnerships can help create transparent, inclusive, healthier and safer cities and communities that are able to withstand destabilizing effects of negative social phenomena, such as corruption, drug and illicit firearms trafficking and terrorism, unregulated migration, lack of access to public goods, widespread public protests etc.?

Key recommendations:

- **Active citizenship** : now, more than ever, there is a strong importance of awareness raising and reaching out to citizens and promote solidarity between people, communities and generations.
- Through **national associations of local and regional governments**, as well as through **decentralised cooperation of local governments**, successful evidence-based practices can be shared, in working with inhabitants and communication campaign techniques, on how to identify and work with the most vulnerable, identify negative social phenomena on time, but also and most importantly, in highlighting to citizens the importance of openness and solidarity in the long term.
- **Governance in partnership** is essential to safeguard the safety of territories and its inhabitants. Multi-level and multi-stakeholder – horizontal and vertical - cooperation are essential to make sure that solutions are inclusive, transparent, future-oriented and long term.
- **Sustainable development must include considerable investments in public services and infrastructure**, including quality healthcare which is accessible and affordable for all. This is key to responding rapidly to citizens' needs and increase local communities' resilience when faced with adversity and crisis.

The 2030 Agenda calls for stronger, accountable and capable local and regional governments and institutions and for a renewed governance model that involves citizens and strengthens trust in the local public sector as cornerstones, not only for public service provision, but for the overall democratic system to work. Therefore, the localization process of the 2030 Agenda needs of an approach where dialogue and complementary actions between public sector and civil society are constructive and regular and where trust among them is strong and stable. Lack of transparency and accountability from national governments are increasingly leading to social unrest and civil protests. New mechanisms of dialogues with local public administrations; the sound engagement of civil society in the delivery of the SDGs has become a prerequisite for the 2030 Agenda to be successfully achieved, and to safeguard peace and inclusiveness. It will be particularly relevant to include representatives of the younger generations since the transformation of our societies and economies will mainly concern them. Issues such as digitalization, communication, mobility, education, but also policy making in general, the value of democracy and what it entails, require active participation and contribution from the younger age groups.

In consequence, open government and SDG16 have become essential to the achievement of 2030 Agenda as a whole, as the sustainable agenda will not be achieved without fair, accountable, transparent and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Impact of COVID19:

Awareness raising is a key element of the current crisis management: to citizens, but also to local governments about how to prevent COVID through sanitary measures (clean hands, stay at home...), sharing action protocols

⁷ More information on <https://africabasque.org/>

on specific evidence-based actions: containment issues, health assistance, prioritize vulnerable population groups to be helped or isolated.

Women are currently very exposed, and gender-sensitive responses and solutions are crucial. The most vulnerable part of the population must be particularly targeted, as we can see an outbreak of domestic and intra-familial violence, for instance. COVID-19 also particularly affects older people. There is a need to support citizens' initiatives, enhancing cooperation and solidarity between generations as well as recognizing the value of their respective identities and contributions to society. COVID19 is particularly affecting migrant communities. Migrants and refugees live in overcrowded apartments, increasing the risks for their health and the spreading of the pandemic. They also experience more discrimination, increased poverty rates, and difficulties to access the labour market as a result of the pandemic. In this context, guaranteeing access to education, housing and basic services for refugees and migrants is essential.

Most affected countries are those with a poor public health policy and infrastructures. In places where people face difficulties in accessing health services and emergency reliefs, the impact of the crisis is stronger. Likewise, how to address the containment, when around half of the economy is informal, and when the population lacks social security, living from informal activities that provide them their daily income? Targeted support to the local level will be essential in order to reach those more in need, but also to maintain measures for local economic development backed up by public services. Any international development action at all governance levels should focus on the strengthening of public services, and in particular on public health infrastructures as well as in ensuring conditions for sustainable local economic development.

Associations of local and regional governments are central players given their ability to provide local and regional governments with concrete recommendations and examples on how to act in and manage the current situation. Local governments also have a key role to play through their decentralised cooperation and in partnership with civil society to promote global citizenship and solidarity, in order to avoid that in the aftermath of the outbreak, EU communities remain withdrawn into themselves and do not want to cooperate with international partners.

4. [What is the role of science, technology, communication and innovation in the transformation to sustainable and equitable urban systems, which also incorporate and address informality and help overcome the digital divide?](#)

Key recommendations:

- ➔ Innovative public policies and technological means can be solutions **to help reach out to citizens**, for communication campaign and to provide e-learning support to municipalities. Targeted support measures can be taken to address the digital gap between people and territories. These measures should be addressed not only by local and regional governments themselves, but also and especially by national governments and the international community. The private sector is also a crucial partner in this process.
- ➔ **Successful innovation in public policies should be better promoted** across different levels of government and also among different partners.
- ➔ **Social innovation, which goes beyond technologies**, should also accompany this new digital era.
- ➔ **Decentralised cooperation** is a means to innovate and experiment with new technologies, as well as a key tool to continuously connect different territories across the globe, even the most remote areas when possible.

Science and technology are crucial means to encourage local and regional governments to experiment and test new innovative solutions. However, technological means are a solution when municipalities are equipped and

the population able to access technologies. Information can in this case reach people electronically and better communication can be developed.

ICT can help cities and territories to be smarter, more connected and achieve the desired results in urban development for instance by using the benefits of real-time information to optimise the city's infrastructure and services, by opening data sources with no or marginal cost to foster the development of applications that make it easier for citizens to live and work in the city, by delivering city services and applications to end-users through technical platforms (public services digitalisation).

Whilst it is a key means to connect cities, communities and regions together and improve urban systems, it can also be a cause for increasing the digital divide and deepen inequalities, especially between for remote areas and citizens with limited skills and tools to be able to properly make use of the technology.

Introducing new technologies and science to urban planning also requires adapting the relevant infrastructure, know-how and capacity building of cities and their inhabitants, to make sure that innovation isn't misused and most importantly, doesn't leave anyone or any territory behind.

Impact of COVID19:

For instance, since the beginning of the COVID19 outbreak, national associations have also been developing many services such as e-courses in local languages & targeted webinars, awareness raising campaigns, to help reassure citizens and continue to provide some of the basic public services. For the moment, these actions are essentially soft measures related to containing the outbreak.

However, in many countries, there is poor technology infrastructure which does not favor continued business at local level for instance and physical meetings are sometimes inevitable. The access is even more limited in rural areas. Investment in local innovation is necessary, beyond the use of technology, in order to promote innovative public policies.

Case studies:

- The Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS) has developed e-learning courses on disaster risk management and Disaster Risk Reduction in local language, targeting Western Balkans as well as local governments in the Eastern Partnership.

5. [How can local and national governments work together to ensure adequate resources are available for sustainable, inclusive, safe and transparent urban development? How can local government financing be made more predictable and robust?](#)

Recommendations:

- Integrated coordination between national governments with local and regional governments notably through the **support of national associations of local authorities**, is essential from the start to the end of the urban planning processes.
- The partnership is better when there was **already a good cooperation during the programming phase**; it forms a good basis and ensures continuity of dialogue. Local authorities need to be involved early and not after the adoption of policies, otherwise projects will not respond well enough to local needs.
- **Clear and shared decentralization reforms** is also crucial to empower local and regional governments with the right tools and financial capacity to implement sustainable urban development projects.

Local and regional governments and their representative associations must play a meaningful part in designing country-specific recommendations, rural development strategic plans, and in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the programmes. More than a policy objective, the territorial approach must be a driving concern and should be mainstreamed through all policy objectives, at all stages of its conception and implementation. For this, clear and shared decentralization reforms is also crucial to empower local and regional governments with the right tools and financial capacity to implement sustainable urban development projects. These reforms should mainstream Youth, Gender equality and Climate action in programmes and further develop decentralised cooperation projects.

It can be harmful for local development when unilateral non-concerted changes are undertaken on the role of local areas, especially if contrary to what they want, such as being downgraded to a simple advisory status. It is important for local authorities and their associations to receive regular information, to participate in a frequent dialogue with the Managing Authorities, but also to have bilateral meetings to fulfil their interface role⁸. Regular national multi-stakeholder dialogues between local governments, their national associations and the national government can help make sure that towns and regions become key players and partners of national governments in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in a spirit of win-win-win partnerships⁹.

However, regarding local financing, even if partnership looks good in some cases, it is not always very substantial when allocated funds are mainly used for central government's purpose. The effective and sustainable long-term development of territories should not be erased by shorter term domestic priorities which may or may not truly meet the needs of the local area. The representative body of local and regional authorities in a country should also form part of the central government negotiating team, when it comes to policy designing, implementation and monitoring. Local and regional governments need to be sure that they can benefit from multi-funds so as to better answer the different challenges and priorities experienced on the ground through integrated territorial development. In particular Community Led Local Development (CLLD) and Integrated Territorial Investments (ITIs) should remain available through multi-funding, including for rural territories.

In Europe, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)¹⁰ is a key network that help local and regional government associations exchange with each other, to best identify how to work closer with national governments on vital issues, including local finances.

Impact of COVID19:

The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the local and regional level is tremendous and, currently, the proposed support from national governments around the EU and the world will not be sufficient to address it completely.

Without any coordination with the local and regional governments, the response that national governments would like to provide to deal with the COVID19 outbreak, both short and long term, will not have the same impact. For instance, many municipalities in Africa have already been confronted with dealing with sanitary crisis and Ebola for instance; they have developed their own responses which needs to be backed up. As it has been

⁸ Topic further developed in the CEMR publication and study on the use of central-local partnerships to ensure territorial development and cohesion (2015) :

https://ccre.org/img/uploads/piecesjointe/filename/CEMR_study_partnership_principle_study_EN-0.pdf

⁹ Different examples of successful multi-level partnerships can be found in PLATFORMA's publication on National Multistakeholder Dialogues on Development (2018) : https://platforma-dev.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/NMSDD_summary_EN.pdf

¹⁰ The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) represents the interests of Europe's local and regional governments and their associations in more than 40 countries. It promotes citizenship and exchange between elected representatives / more information on <https://ccre.org/>

put in place in many Member States across the European Union, an inclusive coordination mechanism could be set up by national governments to increase the efficiency of the support and find the right channels for the support to go rapidly and efficiently in the territories, to the people, including the most vulnerable ones.

Case studies:

- ➔ The International solidarity fund launched by Cités Unies France (CUF) aims at supporting municipalities in African countries (including in the Sahel Region) and in Haïti,
- ➔ The Cooperation Fund of the Association of French-speaking Mayors (AIMF)
- ➔ For the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP), a concrete action is to "redirect" their actions towards measures that prevent and mitigate the effects of health crises in the partner countries of Spanish cooperation and therefore, since the beginning of the crisis, it has been in permanent contact and dialogue with the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) and with the Secretary of State for Cooperation, to achieve this objective.

6. How can urban, peri-urban and rural areas be connected through infrastructure that is resilient and integrated with transparent, urban and territorial development plans, focusing on access, affordability, inclusivity, resource-efficiency and innovation?

Key recommendations:

- ➔ There is a need for **integrated and place-based policies**, that reflect the diversity of territories across different nations.
- ➔ Urban development programmes, which in some national governments prove to be genuine place-based multi-fund programmes, should be **managed by local authorities themselves in order to achieve their full potential**.
- ➔ It is crucial that decisions at national, EU, UN levels **be based on real evidence**, maximising knowledge of policies already in place, and of the obstacles local governments face on the ground. It will help recognise and develop in a proper way the local dimension of national, EU and international policies¹¹.

Many aspects of urban development relate to policy areas that fall under national responsibility, such as noise, air pollution, state aids, climate and energy, etc., but affect directly or indirectly local authorities. Therefore, better cooperation during the different stages of preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation between different levels of government regarding common challenges is essential.

Municipalities and regions have a wealth of experience and expertise of practical management in our territories. Good urban and territorial planning accompanied with land use policies and instruments can contribute to limiting urban sprawl, by prioritising recycling of land, favoring compact planning and preserving green fields and natural areas. Adopting an integrated and place-based approach to sustainable urban planning means reconciling the policies and location of housing, business or social activities, public facilities and infrastructures, together with land use.

On the same hand, implementing integrated territorial development policies towards an increased focus on functional areas is key to ensure urban rural linkages and providing sustainable, accessible and affordable infrastructure capable of fostering connectivity between people and places. In order to work, these planning policies have to be implemented on the right scale, with a broader governance in an inclusive and participatory

¹¹ More information in CEMR's position paper on Territorial development, an EU Urban Agenda should facilitate local authorities' action on the ground (2015)

https://www.ccre.org/img/uploads/piecesjointe/filename/CEMR_position_paper_EU_Urban_Agenda_EN.pdf

way, building and benefiting from existing trade-offs and ensuring economic and financial fairness to those impacted by decisions.