

Background note

First round table: How do we analyse and increase the effectiveness of decentralised cooperation?

Points for discussion:

1. What evolution of cooperation models?
2. To what extent should a city-to-city cooperation be integrated into a larger scale?
3. What degree of coordination of decentralised cooperation should be promoted?
4. Priorities and objectives – but who decides?
5. What tools and what methodologies could ensure wider knowledge of existing partnerships and increase effectiveness?

1. Context of the discussion

- Local and Regional Authorities (LRA), increasingly recognised contracting authorities of development programmes

The role played by LRAs in national and international cooperation for development policies is today recognised on the international stage. The main financial donors for Official Development Assistance have set up direct funding programmes for decentralised cooperation initiatives (European Commission non-state Actors and Local Authorities budget heading for example).

These programmes recognise the role of action by local authorities in local development, urban management and local governance. This multi-partner management of cooperation for development involving local players, also allows greater involvement of the citizens benefiting from development programmes.

The LRAs which are the levels responsible for the policies having a direct impact on the daily life of the local populations can be seen as relevant players because of their expertise and practices in meeting the development challenges such as the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, the fight against climate change and economic development.

- Decentralised cooperation, cooperation serving local governance

Decentralised cooperation is above all recognised for its ability to meet institutional challenges such as the backing of local governance and assistance with the decentralisation process. The LRA support programmes aimed at strengthening the abilities of partner authorities in fields which can range from making efficient public policies, training of local government officers and access for the population to high quality public services.

This backing of local governance enables greater efficiency to be achieved in development programmes by promoting their planning and management locally and supports the legitimacy of the decentralisation process.

This also enables the abilities of the LRAs to be strengthened in seeking technical and financial partners, by responding for example to European calls for proposals.

The strengthening of joint contracting authorities has in the last ten years become of major importance for local authorities' international cooperation. But what is the true situation? How is this cooperation going ahead in contexts marked by the weakness of human and financial resources in the partner authorities of the South? How can decentralised cooperation meet the challenges and expectations of the towns and cities of the South? How can more importance be given to these cooperative partnerships in international cooperation programmes?

2. Objectives

- Provide our financial partners with elements to measure the effectiveness of our role and our action in the development policies
- Provide some outcomes for particular types of support for local governance and coordination of LRA action.
- Present two types of action working towards improved efficiency: working in networks and bodies monitoring action by decentralised cooperation

3. Working methods

- Getting the means to become more efficient

→ From wishing to work together to actions of coordination: the will of the actors at the centre of the coordination process

→ From the constitution of data bases to decentralised cooperation for implementing joint initiatives

- Developing coordination making the partner authority central to the coordination process and supporting the efforts for coordination led by it

4. Round table programme

Round table discussion: 1 hour 30 minutes

Introduction: Elisabeth Gateau, Secretary General of CGLU (5 minutes)

4 contributions of 10 minutes

35 minutes of discussion and questions from the floor

5 minutes of conclusion by the moderator

Background note

Second round table: How do we contribute to measuring the results of decentralised cooperation?

Points for discussion:

1. What analysis of outputs and outcomes?
2. How should quantity and quality be measured together? What methodology? Who should review it?
3. What use is made of evaluations?

1. Context

Any action between two partners requires time to give perspective to assess and judge this action. This evaluation time is inherent in the culture of a project where a relationship with a financial donor is involved and the use of these funds must be justified.

The diverse public financial donors whether they are States, the European Commission, the United Nations or even local and regional authorities (LRA) make the evaluation of a project a basic component which must prove its quality and its impacts on development in comparison with an initial situation. Evaluation which serves action must enable a possible redirection of this. Designing a tool like the logical framework for example, before starting the project, is aimed at setting the indicators which will demonstrate an action's quality.

Decentralised cooperation being a public policy based on a partnership among peers exercising their local responsibilities is part of a dynamic of technical action but also one which is political and territorial. Its characteristics and its effects on local development may in part lie outside the evaluation scores, often over-quantitative which are imposed by the donors.

Partnerships concentrating on a strengthening of the capacity of the partner local authority are a good example of this. Strengthening capacity of course has a technical dimension (training of local government officers, the improvement of infrastructure etc), but above all an "immaterial" dimension: acquiring greater political legitimacy and capacity for implementing its projects and exercising its responsibilities.

2. Objectives

- Demonstrate the evaluation efforts made by the LRAs in their decentralised cooperation projects.
- Highlight the need, beyond the projects, of judging processes and partnerships
- Debate the notion of quality and measuring it (how, by whom, what type of indicator to use to measure the impact of cooperation action, for what use)

3. Working methods

- Aim at partners' autonomy: one of the main indicators of quality and efficiency of decentralised cooperation would surely be ultimately technical and financial autonomy of a LRA from the South in implementing its public service mission

Evaluating a project for the supply of drinking water for example is relatively simple: checking the operation of the infrastructure constructed as well as usage capacity and the maintenance of the system. However, financial and technical support to a city of the South in its public service mission in this area of water sanitation would, in the short term, present results which are more difficult to quantify, but in the medium term would allow for repercussions on the collection as well as the processing and disposal of waste. Structuring decentralised cooperation actions in a territory and over time are factors which aid the assimilation of these actions by the local partners but also a multiplication of the impacts they have on target populations.

- Consider evaluation as a part of the overall monitoring and planning process whose conclusions must be taken into account, in particular by a redirection of the partnerships if necessary.
- Improve understanding by the financial donors of the importance of the evaluation of decentralised cooperation and establish common ways of improving this evaluation process.

4. Round table programme

Duration: 1 hour 15 minutes

Introduction by the moderator, Peter Knip (5 minutes)

4 contributions of 10 minutes

25 minutes of discussion with the floor

5 minutes of conclusion by the moderator

Background note

Third round table: Actors – Donors: Assessing together projects of decentralised cooperation

Feedback from local/regional authorities which are leading projects co-financed by European programmes, in particular the Non State Actors and Local Authorities programme.
Feedback from donors associated to local/regional authorities in their decentralised cooperation: the European Commission and Member States.

1. Context

Central to the relationship between actors / contracting authorities and financial donors, the convergence of objectives is sought. However, contradictory priorities may appear: alignment to the financial backers' priorities but also the principle of subsidiarity and the right of initiative by the actor. In the case of decentralised cooperation, LRAs may both be actors and donors of their initiatives and for this purpose have a responsibility for policy shared with the outside financial donors in implementing these public policies and in the obligation of evaluation.

The process of evaluation which is important for judging the quality of an action and required for accounting for the use of funds, figures among the main priorities of the financial donors and is consequently structurally influenced by a quantitative logic, or indeed a balance sheet one, in justifying public spending. The LRAs share this obligation linked to the use of public money. But in the monitoring of their partnerships over the long-term, a qualitative dimension for evaluation seems to be of the utmost importance as well as taking into account processes more than projects.

Evaluation is therefore the fruit of collaborative work where the standpoints of each confront each other alongside the constraints of each stakeholder but it must however remain a tool for promoting local development.

Among the key questions of this joint work:

- What evaluation criteria may be selected jointly by both actors and financial donors?
- How much space for manoeuvre should be given to the project managers in conducting and evaluating their actions?
- What place is accorded to the development objectives set by the partner LRA as well as the local development dynamic (wider than the project dynamic)?

2. Objectives

- Provide experience of leading and evaluating a project by a LRA from the South co-financed by the European Commission
- Discuss the quality of exchanges between actors and financial backers, in particular for evaluating the jointly led initiatives (the context of this exchange – programmes and procedures – is it beneficial to the effectiveness of the cooperation? how to improve it)?

- Starting from the bases of this evaluation, launch a debate on the evolution of the European programmes dedicated to the LRAs in order to allow a greater effectiveness of the partnerships and on the role of the European Platform in this process.

3. Working methods

This round table will consider two levels of discussion:

- Micro level: the evaluation of a project, in particular within the framework of co-financing by the European Commission
- Macro level: determined by the micro level, the evaluation of European development programmes for the LRAs

Although the European Commission currently launches a half-way review of its thematic programmes and prepares a discussion forum about its instruments and their implementations with actors such as the LRAs, this discussion about measuring the effectiveness of the actors/financial backers relationship will provide scope for a reflection by the Platform in preparing these two processes.

4. Round table programme

Duration: 1 hour 15 minutes

Introduction by the moderator, Marc Lévy (5 minutes)

4 contributions of 10 minutes

25 minutes of discussion with the floor

5 minutes of conclusion by the moderator