

CONNECT Mechanism

- A brief introduction -

***Sharing local and regional governments' expertise
worldwide***

Pilot Phase

January, 2017

1. Context of CONNECT: A framework Partnership Agreement

In January 2015, local government associations representing local and regional government around the world, including the EU, signed five Framework Partnership Agreements with the European Commission where they agreed on joint objectives and priorities of European decentralised development cooperation. The agreements represent an innovative modality that aims to establish strategic and long-term co-operation, based on mutual political interests and common general objectives shared by the Commission and the associations. CEMR-PLATFORMA is a signatory of one of these Agreements.

Under the Framework Partnership Agreement, the European Commission's DEVCO and PLATFORMA signed the Specific Grant Agreement "*Working together towards empowering local and regional governments for effective development outcomes in EU partner countries*" in July 2015¹.

One of the Activities agreed under the Specific Grant Agreement is the development of a mechanism that allows local and regional governments in EU partner countries to find partners in the EU and beyond with relevant expertise to support their actions. More specifically, the creation of such a mechanism is foreseen to contribute to: *Strengthened co-operation linkages and dialogue between EU local and regional governments and local and regional governments and their associations in EU partner countries.*

2. Introducing CONNECT

CONNECT links the need for local and regional governments to be capacitated in order for them to take on this new role in development cooperation with the wish of the European Commission to have local and regional governments (and their associations) play a more active role themselves in contributing to development. The European Commission has expressed its wish to make use of the existing expertise, available in local and regional governments in EU Member States and beyond, in the implementation of EU development policies and in projects and programmes of co-operation with partner countries.

The approach is called colleague-to-colleague learning. Colleagues from different local governments, from various countries and even from diverse continents, understand each other easily. They have a good understanding of the political and administrative context in which policies are implemented, and above all, they are practical problem solvers. EU local and regional governments are involved in many international relations with local and regional governments across the world, in which expertise is developed in a peer-to-peer setting. They are very experienced in this method of capacity development.

What is missing at the moment however, is an instrument providing quick and adequate connections between the demand for and supply of local government expertise. This is how CONNECT came into existence.

¹ Specific Grant Agreement, DCI-NSA/2015/362-870.

3. CONNECT in a nutshell

The aim of Connect

The purpose is to facilitate an effective transfer of specific local and regional government know-how that will allow local and regional governments in partner countries (the demand side) to find available expertise in European countries (*North-South exchange*) or other partner countries (*South-South exchange*) (the supply side) in order to contribute to capacity development and learning.

The added value of Connect

The strength of the CONNECT approach is based on the “colleague-to-colleague” approach, whereby an exchange of knowledge, experience and skills takes place between local/regional government staff or elected officials with the same job or in a comparable position, with similar tasks and responsibilities. Practitioners exchange views and work together in analysing and solving problems. Key factor for success of the approach is the mutual trust and familiarity that exists between “colleagues” working in comparable environments.

In addition, it should be mentioned that PLATFORMA has a very extensive network within the local and regional government sector, and is therefore able to ensure that the expertise provided is always in line with the relevant legislation and processes in the target countries, and in consultation with the local government associations, respectively.

4 types of Connecting

1. [Expert Assignment](#)
2. [Temporary Work Placement](#)
3. [Round Table Expert Meeting](#)
4. [Group Exposure Visit](#)

1. [Expert Assignment](#)

An expert assignment takes place in the EU partner country where the problem has been identified. Therefore, a short-term assignment takes place to exchange expertise on the spot in an EU partner country. European local and regional expertise is delivered to help deal with the problem analysed. The duration of the exchange depends on the request.

Taking into account the experiences in decentralised co-operation in many EU countries, most of the exchanges will take seven to ten days.

The number of deployed experts depends on the complexity of the challenge addressed in the request. In many cases one person will be sufficient; it is plausible that there are cases in which two or even three experts are needed.

The goals, expected results and activities of the exchange are captured in the Terms of Reference (see Annex), which have been developed by the LRG in the partner country with assistance of the Broker.

2. Temporary Work Placement

A temporary work placement is set up when exposure to practices and systems abroad can help tackling the identified challenge/s back home. Consequently, a temporary work placement assignment takes place in a European country. The duration of the placement depends on the request. Taking into account the experiences in decentralised co-operation in many EU countries, most of the exchanges will take seven to fourteen days.

The number of placements in one exposure call depends on the complexity of the challenge addressed in the request. In most of the cases, it relates to two to four persons. Only one person might not be effective enough.

The objective and expected results of the exchange are captured in Terms of Reference, filled in by the requesting local or regional government. The programme of activities is a joint effort of all involved.

3. Round Table Expert Meeting

A round table expert meeting takes place when the challenges addressed are very complex and concern a number of local or regional governments in an EU partner country. The round table brings together expertise from diverse backgrounds, coming from European and EU partner countries. Round table expert meetings are a mixture of workshops and field visits. Depending on the request, expertise can come from local or regional governments, local government associations, training institutions, knowledge institutions such as a university or higher education institute, and the like.

The goals and expected results of the round table meeting are captured in Terms of Reference, put in writing by the recipient local or regional governments. Given the involvement of multiple local governments in the request, the involvement of local government associations can certainly be convenient.

Alternatively, when roundtables are judged too expensive or are difficult to organise, virtual exchanges through webinars could be envisaged.

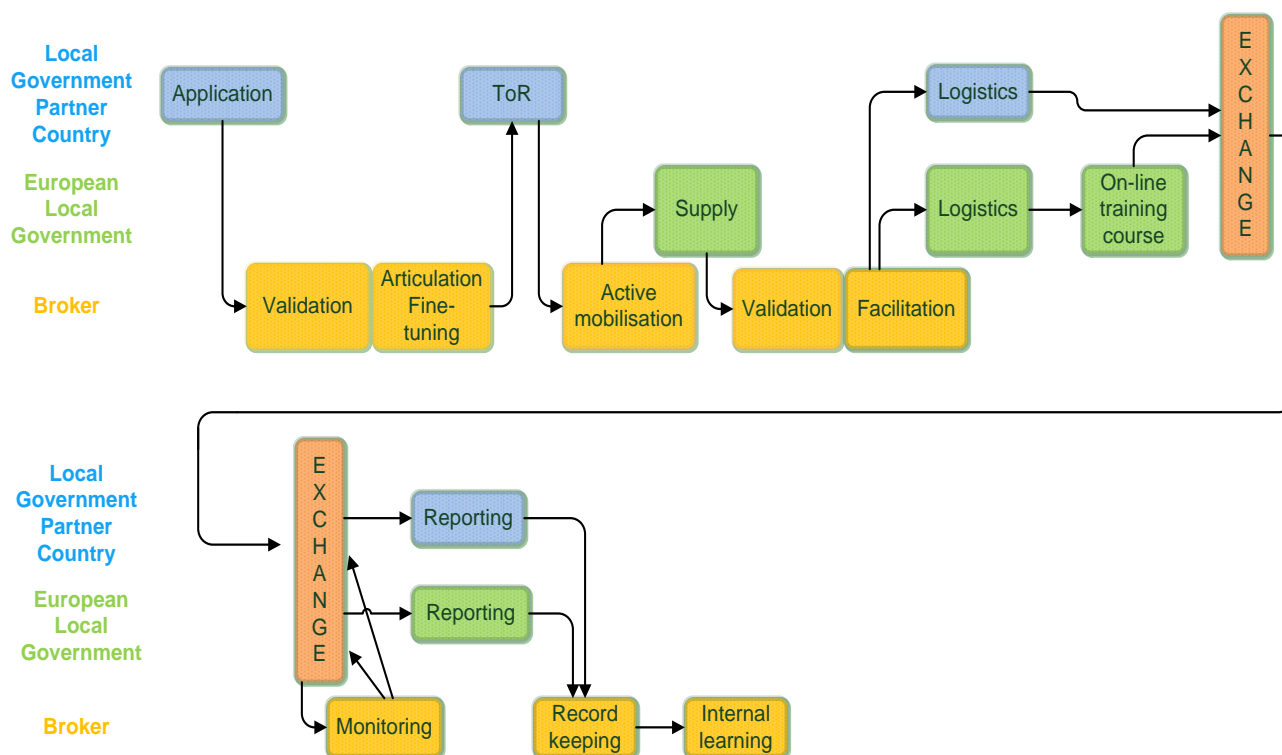
4. Group Exposure Visit

A group exposure visit takes place when the challenge addressed concerns a number of local or regional governments in an EU partner country and exposure to practices and systems abroad can help tackling the identified challenge/s back home. Consequently, a group exposure visit takes place in a European country. The duration of the group exposure visit depends on the request. Taking into account the experiences in decentralised co-operation in many EU countries, exchanges involving administrative staff will take one week whereas for visits by political representatives usually 2–3 focused days are preferred.

The number of participants in one exposure visit depends on the number of local or regional governments encountering the challenge. In most cases, a group starts at five persons, growing to a maximum of fifteen. Beyond fifteen persons, taking part in one exposure visit starts to get ineffective in terms of gaining from a knowledge exchange. As a result, the exchange will be reduced to a one-way presentation of information.

The objective and expected results of the group exposure visit are captured in Terms of Reference, filled in by the requesting local or regional government. The programme of activities is a joint effort of all involved.

4. The process: Flowchart



5. Timeline

The work planning below illustrates the most important dates throughout the pilot phase.

Work Planning								
		Responsibility	Dec '16	Jan '17	Feb '17	Mar '17	Apr '17	May '17
Identify and circulate 1 request for assistance from each of the 4 countries (Cambodia, Colombia, Ghana, Uganda)		VNG-I Platforma	dec					
Selection of best country cases / Developing Terms of Reference				30-jan				
Circulate requests to PLATFORMA members								
Preparing the exchange		VNG-I VNG-I VNG-I VNG-I Supply & Demand			27-feb			
Collection of responses to supply expertise						1-mar		
Selection of supplier based on agreed criteria						2-mar		
Bring both parties into contact with each other, and jointly develop the exchange program						march		
Organize the logistics for the exchange						march	april	
Exchange								
Collection of results								
Collection of reports		VNG-I					28-apr	
Interviews with both the supply and demand side								1-5 may

6. Financial compensation

Financial support and contract	
Financial support CONNECT	<p>CONNECT will cover the following costs of the activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Return flights based on economy class - Compensation for working days @ €200 per day when abroad - DSA according to http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/about-calls-tender/procedures-and-practical-guide-prag/diems_en for all days when abroad - Costs for translation - Costs for local consultants - Costs for transportation - Costs for VISA and Prophylaxis
Contract	<p>A contract will be signed between VNG International and the European local and or regional authority that will detail all contractual obligations</p>