

Pursuing the values of the EYD2015 & promoting decentralized cooperation as a tool for development

Last EU Barometer shows that 9 out of 10 EU citizens support development (89% - a 4 percentage point increase since 2014.) More than half say that promised the EU should deliver levels of aid, with a further 16% saying aid should be increased beyond what is already promised. The vast majority of Europeans hold a positive view about the benefits of international cooperation and development. Almost three quarters of those participating in the survey agreed that development aid is an effective way to tackle irregular migration (73%) and 80% of Europeans believe that development is in the EU's own interest.

Further to this 2015 Eurobarometer, still 55% of citizens declared knowing nothing “about where EU aid goes”. The **European Year for Development 2015** (hereinafter “EYD2015”) came to an end, leaving behind a legacy of good practices and principles! It aimed at informing on development cooperation, fostering critical thinking and direct involvement in development cooperation as well as raising their awareness of the EU's development policy.

It consisted of more than 3.800 events all over Europe and a constant online sharing of information and promotion. Working together with different stakeholders and partners from both the public and private sector and involving civil society, the EYD2015 proved to be a successful initiative. As 2016 is also being a crucial year for development globally, with the start of the implementation of the 2030 Development Agenda And its Sustainable Development Goals, it is important to continue capitalizing on the EYD2015 to boost development processes at global, regional, national, and local level.

Therefore, its outcomes and results shall be pursued and promoted.

- **Local Authorities** (hereinafter ‘LAs’) and **Civil Society Organizations** (hereinafter ‘CSOs’) constitute, undoubtedly, major stakeholders for development. They have a key potential to reach out to citizens and create impact and to create a change and to promote development policies and practices. Therefore, they should be recognized and their actions and involvement supported.
- There is a consensus on the fact that the **local level**, and in particular Local and Regional Governments should play a crucial role in the implementation of the 2030 development agenda. The scope of their commitment is clearly aimed at fighting poverty, securing nutrition, ensuring health and education, promoting gender equality, managing water, sanitation, waste and energy resources, promoting economic development, decent jobs, and fighting climate change. They can also offer opportunities to promote values linked with human rights, democracy and freedom of conscience. The local level has

been recognised a cross cutting element as “localizing development” in the Sustainable Development Goals.

- Thus, it constitutes a strategic **level for effective action** for development that can facilitate coherent and concrete implementation of the development policies. In particular, they can empower citizens and promote initiatives of LAs & CSOs that aim at developing strong links between people on the principles of mutual respect, understanding & solidarity and in line with the sustainable development dimension, in order to find innovative common solutions to common challenges linked to SDGs localization.
- Local stakeholders face critical **challenges**, many of which are global concerns with a strong local dimension. On the one hand, localizing SDGs means providing smart targets and indicators to measure the impact of development initiatives at local level. On the other hand, it means proposing mechanisms and tools to facilitate an efficient involvement of LRGs in the implementation process.
- Local Development is not an accessory part of development but represents a fundamental asset from a national and international perspective. Development generated at the local level represents a genuine and sustainable element of the global development dynamics, as part of the global development framework and the newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals. It has to be supported in an integrated way, involving all relevant stakeholders in local development processes: the EU, national governments, local authorities, civil society organizations, Universities, the private sector, and others. This can be done through the territorial approach to development promoted by the EU through its DG DEVCO.
- In that sense, **decentralized cooperation as** partnerships and cooperation schemes between local and regional authorities shall be promoted, supported and strengthened. They offer a relevant model of synergy between stakeholders & entities and between actors who can make change happen. The excellent costs/benefit of decentralised cooperation and community approach. The possibility of being change makers in development policies through joint actions set up by local and regional authorities is particularly high as they request relatively low level of resources for very high and long standing and tangible results.

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