



SECOND GLOBAL MEETING OF THE PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE CITIES

(Barcelona, 12-14 March 2024)

CONCEPT NOTE

Background

In the framework of its partnership with local authorities (LAs), the EU (DG INTPA) decided in 2018 to support an innovative initiative of decentralised cooperation. The overall objective of the resulting “*Partnerships for Sustainable Cities*” programme is to promote integrated urban development by fostering peer-to-peer exchanges among Local Authorities of EU Member States and in partner countries around shared challenges. 57 city-to-city partnerships have been launched in the framework of that program.

Beyond providing funding for demand-driven activities of the various partnerships, ***the programme also seeks to promote joint learning*** among all actors involved (i.e. the cities, local constituencies, EU Delegations and HQs) and use the lessons learnt in the process to ***shape future EU policies and practices towards cities and decentralized cooperation***. To this end, the programme foresees the organisation of ***two global meetings of all the city-to-city partnerships***. The first such global gathering took place from 7-9 March 2023 in Brussels. It allowed to build relations between the actors involved in the various partnerships, exchange on a set of common implementation challenges and concrete project experiences as well as to engage in a dialogue with different EU stakeholders on relevant forms of support. The [proceedings of this first global meeting can be found here](#).

The ***second and final global meeting is planned for the period of 12-14 March 2024 in Barcelona***. It is organized in partnership with the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona (AMB). Below the objectives and expected outcomes of the meeting are spelled out. They will guide the further planning and organisation of the various sessions of the conference.

Objectives of the second global meeting

As this was the case during the first global meeting, the **primary target group** of the event are the representatives from the various city-to-city partnerships. A **wider range of other EU and international actors will equally be invited** in order to exchange with the participants.

The second gathering comes at an ***interesting moment*** as for many city-to-city partnerships, 2024 will be the last year of implementation. This creates suitable conditions, on one hand, for stocktaking of achievements and results and, on the other hand, for jointly examining the sustainability of the programme and possible options for EU future support to decentralised cooperation. Within the EU, important internal processes will be concluded by the time of the Barcelona meeting, including the mid-term review of the programming process and the mid-term evaluation of the new European Financing Instruments (EFIs). Both processes could lead to changes in priorities and budget allocations, some of which may have direct implications for cities and local authorities.

In this context, four main **objectives** are pursued in the framework of the second Global Meeting:

- 1) To deepen collective learning and showcase the **RESULTS** achieved by the decentralised cooperation projects in the various thematic areas covered, amongst others to demonstrate the added value of this specific instrument.
- 2) To inform participants about **EVOLVING EU POLICIES** and practices towards cities/LAs.

- 3) To have structured exchanges on how to foster the **SUSTAINABILITY** of decentralised cooperation processes through the efforts of the cities themselves and support from the EU.
- 4) To formulate a clear set of **RECOMMENDATIONS** for the EU on how to further foster decentralised cooperation approaches in its external action in the future.

The above-mentioned objectives will structure the different content sessions of the workshop spread over two days. The aim is to dedicate **Day 1 to exchange on concrete results achieved** by the city-to-city partnerships. The [first draft Strategic & Monitoring Report](#) (shared in December 2023 with the different partnerships and also available on the platform forum for discussions) will serve as a guide to these debates as it provides a wealth of information on project achievements and challenges. Plenary sessions and working groups will be combined during Day 1, resulting in a shared list of max 10 lessons learnt which demonstrate the added value of the decentralised cooperation instrument.

Building on these outcomes, **Day 2** will focus on **relevant sustainability strategies** for decentralised cooperation partnerships in the future, with sessions looking at this question from different perspectives and taking into account recent EU policy developments. These include: (i) the role of cities themselves in mobilizing resources and fostering sustainability (based notably on good practices observed in the program); (ii) the role of EU Delegations in terms of potentially integrating decentralised cooperation in their overall geographic portfolio (based on research done by the Coordination Support team in preparation of the event) and (iii) other possible options to be provided by EU headquarters and other actors. A [policy note on the involvement of cities and local authorities in the EU Global Gateway](#) initiative has been prepared by the city-to-city coordination facility notably to that effect.

The **third day** (morning) will mirror this first global meeting experience by organising visits to interesting urban projects in the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona. Several thematic options have been proposed, including: (1) public spaces; (2) sustainable mobility; (3) housing; (4) waste and water management.

The detailed final agenda of the event will be shared in the course of January 2024.

Expected outcomes

The event should yield **three key outcomes**:

- 1) Evidence-based demonstration of the impact and added value that decentralised cooperation partnerships can bring to achieve core EU external action objectives.
- 2) Better informed participating cities on overall EU policies, strategies, approaches and instruments towards LAs and cities.
- 3) Elaboration of a concrete advocacy agenda -underpinned by clear recommendations- to further promote the integration of decentralised cooperation in the EU toolbox for external action.