

A group of photographers and videographers are positioned behind a white and yellow striped barrier, ready to capture footage. They are equipped with professional cameras, many with large telephoto lenses, mounted on tripods. Some individuals are also using handheld cameras or smartphones. The background features a wall with a brick-like pattern and a green exit sign. The scene is set at a formal event, likely a summit or conference.

“The ability of local and regional governments to cope with the crisis by using the SDGs as a policy-making framework is among the main new challenges that face the 2030 Agenda. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, more than 80% of the regions in OECD countries were not keeping on track on any of their 17 goals.”

– Stefano MARTA, OECD, Paris

Image Source: The media at the final plenary of the Habitat III Summit in Quito, Ecuador, in October 2016. Image by Nicolas J.A. BUCHOUD, all rights reserved ©.





Stefano MARTA  
Organization for Economic  
Cooperation and  
Development (OECD)  
Paris, France

## The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) after 2020

Investment is a specific and key aspect of OECD's work on the SDGs, and countries, cities and regions would benefit by referring to the 2030 Agenda in order to recover from Covid-19 pandemic. In this context, we believe that decentralized development cooperation (DDC) is an undervalued asset that could come in support of local government, particularly in developing countries, and could contribute to the local implementation of the SDGs.

Decentralized development cooperation represents only a fraction of annual official development assistance (ODA) with about 6% of the total ODA, but volumes have grown by 25% over the last 15 years, reaching \$2.4 billion as of 2018. In some countries the DCC volumes can be significant, such as in Austria, Canada or Spain, where DDC represents between 23% and 16% of total national ODA.

As numerous local and regional governments in Europe are working on territorialized approaches to the SDGs, DDC can be a relevant driver of SDGs localization all the more as local and regional governments should be on the frontline of the implementation of long-term Covid-19 recovery plans. Among the 17 SDGs, SDG 3 (health) and SDG 11 (cities) were the main targets of DCC, making the connection between DCC, SDGs and Covid-19 recovery all the more relevant.

Partnership is another key dimension of DCC, which finds further relevance in the Covid-19 crisis context. In the past decade, the approach has gradually shifted from classical North to South ODA and financial transfers to models based upon knowledge transfer, peer-to-peer and capacity building among local governments. Territorial partnerships models have emerged and illustrate the development of DDC based on a network of actors, with local or regional governments as anchors that catalyse the engagement of civil society and the private sector. This model has been applied in the region of Tuscany in Italy, which has focused its decentralized development cooperation policies upon health and circular economy, in support of partner cities and regions overseas.

The city of New-York is structuring a number of global partnerships through its 'Voluntary Local Review' of the SDGs, a process that has gained in visibility and impact in the past 2 years with over 200 cities aiming at preparing local reviews in addition to the countries national reviews. The

cities of Bonn in Germany and of Kitakyushu in Japan offer two other good examples of how the SDGs are nurturing and structuring local policies and investments.

The city of Bonn has been using the SDGs to develop and formulate its Sustainability Strategy 2019. In that sense, the SDGs are no longer a rigid framework of 169 targets but a policy-framework that allows to manage trade-offs even between competing priorities such as between increasing and strengthening sustainable mobility and reducing CO2 emissions in the city, providing affordable housing and maintaining the green spaces in the city. Lately, Bonn has also started to use the SDGs as a budgeting tool and to engage the private sector in support of a comprehensive sustainability strategy. The SDGs can provide a universal language that allows to strengthen private-public-partnerships to enhance sustainability. As many local governments, especially in lower-income countries, cannot benefit from the same levels of resources than in developed or some emerging countries, the SDGs should become an accelerator of decentralized cooperation and support.

The city of Kitakyushu in Japan is using the SDG framework to strengthen and value its green economy assets and in particular circular economy, out of a long heavy industries history. The city is using the SDGs to address social and economic challenges such as the need to provide more attractive job opportunities for the youth to meet Tokyo's competition or to provide opportunities to the elder popula-

tion that is left out of job markets.

The Covid-19 crisis will be the real stress test for the SDGs, especially for cities and regions. To recover from the economic shock of the Covid-19 pandemic, local and regional governments will need national and multilateral support to implement sustainable recovery strategies and continue to foster effective decentralized development cooperation. The ability of local and regional governments to cope with the crisis by using the SDGs as a policy-making framework is among the main new challenges that face the 2030 Agenda. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, more than 80% of the regions in OECD countries were not keeping on track on any of their 17 goals. Unless coordinated local and global efforts are undertaken to reposition the SDGs at the core of Covid-19 recovery strategies, there are risks that the delivery of the Agenda 2030 is slowed down for a long time, combined with rising disparities among local and regional governments, that might also hamper global climate and carbon neutrality goals.