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City-to-City Partnerships to Localise the Sustainable Development Goals



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Preface

We are delighted to introduce the report *City-to-City Partnerships to Localise the Sustainable Development Goals*, a joint initiative of the OECD and the European Commission, as a follow-up to our 2018 joint report on *Reshaping Decentralised Development Co-Operation – The Key Role of Cities and Regions for the 2030 Agenda*. This new publication defines the framework conditions for sustainable city-to-city partnerships and assesses the main challenges to their implementation. It takes stock of the diversity of existing frameworks to enhance city-to-city partnerships, proposes a new systemic monitoring and evaluation framework for city-to-city partnerships to localise the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and suggests policy implications and ways forward to increase their effectiveness, efficiency and impact on territorialising the United Nations 2030 Agenda.

"Partnerships for the Goals" (SDG 17) and "Sustainable Cities and Communities" (SDG 11) are key vehicles to localise the 2030 Agenda, and development co-operation at large. Moreover, because of their key competencies in basic public service delivery (e.g. housing, infrastructure, land use, transport, and water), subnational actors have significant potential to help deliver on more than 65% of the SDGs. In OECD countries, they accounted for 54.6% of public investment and 36.6% of total public spending in 2020. In addition, the G20 Rome High-Level Principles on city-to-city partnerships for localising the SDGs (G20 Principles) emphasise the importance of co-operation between cities from developed and developing countries to reach global and universal goals.

This report provides valuable lessons to guide future engagement in the field of decentralised development co-operation, in particular to align city-to-city partnerships with the 2030 Agenda. In addition, through the proposed monitoring and evaluation framework, it offers an important tool to help analyse city-to-city partnerships and their contribution to the achievement of the SDGs. This study also aims to facilitate further local-national dialogue on decentralised development co-operation (DDC) by raising the profile of cities and regions engaged in partnerships, and providing guidance on the enabling environments set by national governments.

We are confident that the new framework to assess city-to-city partnerships presented in this report will help foster greater transparency and accountability for their contribution to localising SDGs 11 and 17, in particular, as well as the implementation of the G20 Principles. We invite stakeholders and governments at all levels to put into practice the guidance provided in the report to strengthen the effectiveness of their city-to-city partnerships.



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Foreword

Global sustainable development agendas increasingly recognise the crucial role of local and regional governments and partnerships at the subnational level. Two-thirds of the 169 SDG targets will not be achieved without cities and regions deploying their policy and investment prerogatives in areas such as housing, mobility, energy, climate, waste, drinking water and sanitation, among others. International agendas such as the Paris Climate Agreement underline the importance of the subnational level in advancing international co-operation. Subnational governments have been on the frontline of global response efforts with regard to recent humanitarian, health and climate shocks. Through their international development co-operation activities, subnational governments help drive the localisation of such global agendas, notably by sharing knowledge and good practices with their peers.

Since 2017, the OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities (CFE) and the OECD Development Co-operation Directorate (DCD) have carried out joint work on DDC to assess key trends and innovative mechanisms on how cities and regions design, finance, implement, monitor and evaluate their DDC activities with partner countries. This stream of joint work has also provided recommendations on DDC policies, data and reporting, capacity building, multi-level co-ordination and partnerships.

This new report seeks to contribute to the sustainability and effectiveness of city-to-city partnerships. It discusses the framework conditions for effective city-to-city partnerships and takes stock of existing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. It proposes a systemic monitoring and evaluation framework for city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs, combining a self-assessment and a set of SDG indicators. This framework aims to bridge the gap in terms of measuring the progress of cities engaged in partnerships on the 2030 Agenda and their compliance with the G20 Rome High-Level Principles on city-to-city partnerships for localising the SDGs. The report also presents lessons learned from a pilot-testing of this new framework with 27 partnerships supported by the European Commission and highlights policy implications and ways forward to enhance the sustainability, transparency and accountability of city-to-city partnerships, as a shared responsibility across levels of government and stakeholders.

An earlier version of the report was discussed at the 32nd Session of the Working Party on Urban Policy on 29 November 2022. The final report was approved via written procedure by the Regional Development Policy Committee (RDPC) on 5 April 2023 under cote CFE/RDPC/URB(2022)16/REV1.

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The 2-year policy dialogue with the European Commission and 100+ stakeholders underpinning the project was managed by Stefano Marta, Co-ordinator of the OECD Programme on A Territorial Approach to the SDGs, and Lorenz Gross, Junior Economist/Policy Analyst, CFE, under the supervision of Aziza Akhmouch, Head of the Cities, Urban Policies and Sustainable Development Division in the CFE, and Soo-Jin Kim, Deputy Head of Division. The report was drafted by Lorenz Gross, CFE, with valuable inputs and comments from Paolo Veneri and Marcos Diaz Ramirez, CFE (guidance on indicators), as well as Rachel Morris and Christian Steidl from the OECD Directorate for Co-operation and Development (DCD) (ODA data and analysis). Special thanks are herein conveyed to several members of the European Commission's Unit of Local Authorities, Civil Society Organisations and Foundations (INTPA.G.2) for their excellent co-operation throughout the implementation phase, in particular Marlene Holzner, Head of Unit, Andrea Ferrari Bravo, Team Leader, Local Authorities, Ferruccio Barazutti, Lucia Bernardo Fernandez and Lisa Bosotti, Policy Officers.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ANCI	*Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani,* National Association of Italian Municipalities
BLP	*Bund-Länder Programm*, German Federal Government and Federal States Programme
CIB	Capacity and Institution Building
CNCD	*Commission nationale de la coopération décentralisée*, French National Commission for Decentralised Co-operation
CRS	Creditor Reporting System
CSO	Civil society organisation
DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
DDC	Decentralised development co-operation
DG DEVCO	EC Directorate-General for International Co-operation and Development
DG INTPA	EC Directorate-General for International Partnerships
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
EvalNet	Network on Development Evaluation
GDP	Gross domestic product
GIZ	*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH*
GPEDC	Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation
ISIC	International Standard Industrial Classification
JRC	EC Joint Research Centre
LRG	Local and regional government
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NSDS	National strategies for the development of statistics
ODA	Official development assistance
OOF	Other official flows
PCT	Patent Cooperation Treaty
PM	Particulate matter
PPP	Purchasing power parity
RDPC	Regional Development Policy Committee
RFSC	Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities
SDG	UN Sustainable Development Goal
SKEW	*Servicestelle Kommunen in der einen Welt*, Service Agency Communities in One World
SME	Small- and medium-sized enterprise
SPFV	Subnational pooled financing vehicle
TADAT	Tax Administration Diagnostic Assessment Tool
TIWB	Tax Inspectors Without Borders
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments
UMF	Urban Monitoring Framework
UN	United Nations
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USD	United States Dollar
VLR	Voluntary local review
VNR	Voluntary national review
VVSG	*Vereniging van Vlaamse Steden en Gemeenten*, Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities

Executive summary

City-to-city partnerships and decentralised development co-operation (DDC) play a key role in advancing global agendas, preparing for global megatrends and adapting to a wide range of crises and shocks. The adoption of global agendas such as the Paris Climate Agreement, the 2030 Agenda and the G20 Rome High-Level Principles on city-to-city partnerships for localising the SDGs has emphasised the importance of cities and regions for sustainable development. For example, cities and regions can support each other through peer-to-peer learning and capacity building on key territorial development issues where they have the technical competency, such as education, health and water. This report discusses the framework conditions for effective city-to-city partnerships and takes stock of existing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms. Finally, it proposes a systemic M&E framework for city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs, combining self-assessment and SDG indicators.

Key findings

City-to-city partnerships are a key vehicle of decentralised development co-operation

- Between 2015 and 2021, the total volume of DDC activities, measured through official development assistance (ODA) data, increased by 38% from USD 2 051 million to USD 2 831 million. Germany (USD 1 901 million in 2021) and Spain (USD 389 million in 2021) were the top 2 ODA providers.
- City-to-city partnerships, which are a modality of DDC, often go beyond financial flows and transfers and include in-kind contributions such as peer-to-peer learning and capacity building. Recently, they have evolved from bilateral twinning to more sophisticated and comprehensive modalities including multi-stakeholder partnerships with civil society, academia and the private sector.

The right enabling conditions can help city-to-city partnerships advance sustainable development

- Several tools and checklists (e.g. the OECD Checklist for Public Action to localise the SDGs and the G20 Principles) define the relevant framework conditions for city-to-city partnerships. In particular, such guidelines call for a clear strategy for city-to-city partnerships, outlining their rationale and aim. To be effective and sustainable, city-to-city partnerships need an enabling multi-level governance structure, legal and institutional frameworks as well as local capacity and technical skills to advance the collaboration on joint policy priorities with partners in the Global South. Data collection and information sharing as well as stakeholder engagement are also crucial to promote transparency and ownership.
- However, there is currently no framework to measure the extent to which cities engaged in city-to-city partnerships have such framework conditions in place and how much progress they are making towards achieving the SDGs.

There are however challenges to their effective implementation

- Many city-to-city partnerships face challenges, which range from the lack of data and reporting, weak co-ordination across levels of government, actors and departments due to the lack of clarity regarding the competency for DDC between local, regional and national levels, the lack of accountability and transparency due to weak M&E through to insufficient local capacities, which affects project management, that can result in the delivery of predominantly small-scale projects, and in turn, missed opportunities to create economies of scale, and ultimately negatively impact their effectiveness.
- More specifically, a critical challenge for city-to-city partnerships is the lack of a quantitative M&E component measuring the impact of partnerships on sustainable development outcomes. Even in the partnerships where M&E frameworks exist, they are primarily focused on assessing input results, whereas attention to outcomes and impact remains limited.

A new systemic M&E framework for city-to-city partnerships addresses the need for a complementary tool to assess the sustainability of partnerships

- This report proposes a systemic M&E framework for city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs. It includes two components:
  - First, it offers a self-assessment tool with 57 questions, which is intended to be used during workshops with territorial stakeholders, to assess the state of play of relevant enabling conditions (e.g. place-based policies, data, peer-to-peer learning, stakeholder engagement, multi-level governance) and the extent to which city-to-city partnerships comply with each of the ten G20 Rome High-Level Principles. For each of the questions related to a specific Principle, stakeholders can rate the level of its implementation or achievement based on a rating system (ranging from 1 to 5).
  - Second, it proposes a set of 59 SDG indicators to measure the progress of the involved cities on the SDGs. The indicators cover all 17 SDGs, with a particular focus on “Sustainable Cities and Communities” (SDG 11) and “Partnerships for the Goals” (SDG 17). They were selected based an extensive mapping of existing SDG indicator frameworks to best fit the case of city-to-city partnerships.
  - By combining a self-assessment and a list of indicators, the M&E framework allows for analysing the sustainability of city-to-city partnerships both in terms of process (compliance with the G20 Principles) and outcomes (progress on the SDGs).
- A pilot testing of the self-assessment framework with 27 city-to-city partnerships supported by the European Commission (EC) highlights that among the ten G20 Principles, partnerships show the best results on peer-to-peer learning (average self-assessment of 3.7 points on a scale from 1 to 5) and a territorial approach (3.44). By contrast, partnerships are lagging the most on financing (2.44), mainly due to difficulties in mobilising sufficient funding to shape their activities according to the needs of the local stakeholders and project partners and limited leeway to manage revenues.

Proposed ways forward

The report suggests ways forward to leverage the proposed M&E framework within their city-to-city partnerships in order to:

- **Improve transparency and accountability**
  - Use the M&E framework to help improve the transparency of city-to-city partnerships, reduce information asymmetries and corruption risks and enhance accountability of the cities and

stakeholders engaged in the collaboration. To that end, set up a mechanism to verify that stakeholders' inputs were considered and make monitoring and evaluation results available to the general public, e.g. through the disclosure of quantitative and qualitative data on partnerships and their impacts in social media and dedicated web pages.

- **Develop evidence-based territorial policies to achieve the SDGs**
  - Leverage the M&E framework to define local urban development needs and priorities and SDGs that can benefit the most from city-to-city partnerships.
- **Expand data collection on the partnerships to monitor cities' progress towards achieving the SDGs and identify the framework conditions to advance sustainable development**
  - Use the M&E framework to expand data collection efforts, for example via joint working groups with experts from statistical offices and other key actors to develop strategies on how to collect data on the outputs and outcomes of the partnerships.
  - Monitor progress towards achieving the SDGs through the 59 indicators. Use the results from the indicator framework to assess cities' strengths and weaknesses to define future priorities of city-to-city partnerships to help address them.
  - Assess the coherence of city-to-city partnerships with the G20 Principles through the self-assessment framework. That analysis should help develop follow-up actions to advance the partnerships' objectives and be repeated on a regular basis to track progress made over time.
- **Strengthen multi-level governance to foster sustainable development and engage stakeholders to create ownership around the M&E framework**
  - Strengthen multi-level governance to achieve the SDGs through the M&E framework, e.g. by leveraging the self-assessment process to foster dialogue and communication across departments and with other levels of government to align sustainable development policies and partnerships. Engage territorial stakeholders in the M&E of the partnership to improve their ownership of the evaluation process, shift towards a demand-driven, need-oriented approach and increase social and political acceptance of the partnership.
- **Build capacity and facilitate peer-to-peer learning**
  - Help territorial stakeholders build technical capacities, e.g. by exchanging with other actors involved in the partnership to acquire the necessary knowledge to collect evidence of the impact of the activities of the partnership. Furthermore, harness the self-assessment process to facilitate peer-to-peer learning with other partnerships to learn how they have overcome similar obstacles and challenges.

1 City-to-city partnerships: The road to sustainability

City-to-city partnerships are a modality of decentralised development co-operation (DDC) and have evolved from traditional bilateral twinning to more sophisticated arrangements. They go beyond financial flows and transfers and also include in-kind contributions such as capacity building and peer-to-peer learning. Although between 2015 and 2021 total DDC volumes increased by 30%, there has been little evidence of the framework conditions required to deliver effective and sustainable city-to-city partnerships, including sufficient financing, effective multi-level governance and co-ordination, local skills and capacity as well as the availability of data to foster transparency and accountability. This chapter addresses this gap by shedding light on those framework conditions required to make city-to-city partnerships work.

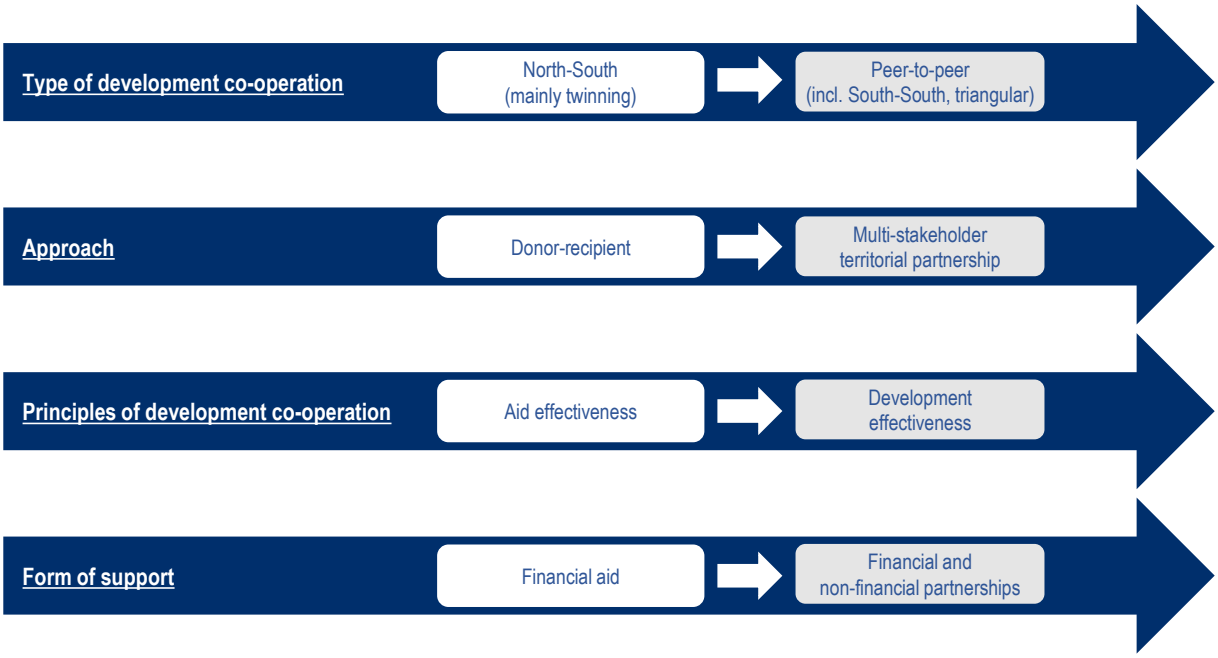
Scoping city-to-city partnerships: Objectives, modalities and actors

Defining city-to-city partnerships

City-to-city partnerships are a modality of decentralised development co-operation (DDC). While there is no standard definition of DDC, the literature looks at DDC as partnerships among local governments. It can therefore be understood as international development co-operation carried out by subnational governments, or when cities and regions from one (often developed) country partner with cities and regions from another (often developing) country (OECD, 2018[1]; 2019[2]). The dominant interpretation of DDC comprises a variety of subnational actors such as cities and regions, provinces, city-states, federal states and inter-municipal co-operation bodies (OECD, 2018[1]). City-to-city partnerships are a form of decentralised development co-operation undertaken by municipalities from developed and developing countries to initiate and develop co-operative actions to their mutual benefit. These partnerships usually rely on a peer-to-peer exchange and learning based on good practice and follow the principle of reciprocity. This involves a political and technical dimension, notably via the engagement of the local government administration, and a social dimension, for example through the mobilisation of civil society (OECD, 2018[1]; CoE, 2015[3]). It is estimated that 70% of cities in the world are engaged in some form of city-to-city international co-operation programmes, including partnerships across borders (UCLG, 2016[4]). The roles and responsibilities of the actors engaged in city partnerships can vary both across and within countries, depending on the country's administrative characteristics (e.g. federal, unitary or hybrid) as well as historical, social, political and economic factors (OECD, 2018[1]).

City-to-city co-operation has evolved from bilateral twinning to more sophisticated arrangements. Historically, the first partnerships of European municipalities with peers from abroad were mostly formed after World War II to reconnect the populations of formerly hostile countries. These municipal partnerships were later expanded to countries in the Global South. In 1971, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly formally recognised those city partnerships as an international co-operation mechanism. In the following years, bilateral municipal twinning evolved into more sophisticated structures, including multi-stakeholder partnerships involving civil society, local public agencies, academia and the private sector among others. DDC has shifted from North-South verticality to a variety of modalities, including South-South and triangular co-operation (Figure 1.1) (OECD, 2018[1]). DDC has furthermore adopted new concepts and principles of development co-operation, such as the notion of development effectiveness, as opposed to aid effectiveness (Figure 1.1). Increasing the effectiveness of aid means ensuring that aid helps developing countries improve the welfare of their poorest populations (OECD, 2007[5]). The shift to development effectiveness emerged in 2011 with the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (Busan Partnership). It recognised the need to look beyond whether the objectives of aid interventions are being achieved to development results of a much broader set of actors in an increasingly complex development landscape. The Busan Partnership agreement formally recognised the subnational level as development actors, calling for the implementation of four main principles: i) ownership of development priorities by developing countries; ii) focus on results; iii) inclusive development partnerships; and iv) transparency and accountability (OECD, 2018[1]). Recently, the COVID-19 pandemic acted as a catalyst for many cities to engage in international co-operation and city-to-city co-operation, notably for economic and material benefits, the exchange of experiences and expertise in responding to the health crisis and as an advocacy tool to create a collective voice for support from different levels of government (Pipa and Bouchet, 2020[6]). Since 2022, city-to-city partnerships and alliances between cities have also gained prominence with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. In Germany for example, more than 70 cities have partnerships with peers in Ukraine (SKEW, 2022[7]). An increasing number of such partnerships were established following Russia's large-scale aggression against Ukraine. More than 40 additional German municipalities have expressed their interest in such partnerships to provide medical equipment, generators, rescue and firefighting vehicles, as well as to support the reconstruction of Ukraine in the medium- and long-terms (SKEW, 2022[8]).

Figure 1.1. Evolution of DDC-related concepts



Source: Own elaboration based on OECD (2018[1]), *Reshaping Decentralised Development Co-operation: The Key Role of Cities and Regions for the 2030 Agenda*, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264302914-en.

Cities' engagement in development co-operation can take various forms. Recent DDC activities such as city-to-city partnerships often go beyond "traditional" technical assistance and have evolved from a donor-recipient to a partnership approach. Nowadays, subnational entities mainly engage in activities where their comparative advantages and competencies lie. This is notably the case in knowledge sharing and transfer in areas like local governance and service delivery, for example in water and waste management. Other activities include awareness-raising (e.g. on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)), peer-to-peer exchanges and mutual learning. Peer-to-peer learning, in particular, can be a valuable tool for subnational entities to learn from each other's successes and obstacles and enable a return on investment for both parties. Such activities are usually based on the principle of partnership and reciprocity going beyond a top-down, North-South type of co-operation (OECD, 2018[1]). DDC is increasingly driven by a territorial network model based on demand from peer regions and cities that involves regions, municipalities, civil society organisations (CSOs), the private sector and universities (Figure 1.1) (OECD, 2018[1]). Proximity to territorial stakeholders and the local population often enables subnational entities to integrate territorial stakeholders more closely in their partnership activities than national governments would be able to. Metropolitan areas can also support activities in areas that go beyond municipal boundaries, such as housing, public transportation, environmental protection and economic development (OECD, 2018[1]).

Regional-to-national government DDC, territorial partnerships, city-to-city partnerships and region to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are four modalities to implement DDC projects. Based on the analysis of several case studies, the OECD (2018[1]) has identified four different approaches that are being used to implement DDC projects. First, the regional-to-national government DDC approach (e.g. implemented in Flanders, Belgium) refers to a situation where the institutional counterpart of the region in the partner country is the national government, which receives financial support to implement the DDC activities in the priority sectors identified together with the region. The implementation is done through multilateral actors and NGOs. A second approach is the territorial partnership model, which entails a direct collaboration between local and regional governments (LRGs) in partner countries. It is for example used by the region of Tuscany in Italy. The third approach, city-to-city DDC, is based on a peer-to-peer partnership between

municipalities in donor and partner countries. It is particularly prominent in the field of water supply, collection and treatment in France. Lastly, in the region-to-NGO model of DDC, NGOs act as intermediaries between local governments, while the implementation in the field is mainly carried out by local NGOs in the partner country as is primarily the case in the Basque Country, Spain, for example (OECD, 2018[1]).

Not all projects and co-operation carried out in city-to-city partnerships are currently reported in official development assistance (ODA) data. In most OECD countries, LRGs are responsible for policies that are central to sustainable development and well-being, such as water, housing, transport, infrastructure, land use and climate change amongst others (OECD, 2020[9]). Due to the evolution of decentralised development co-operation activities and city-to-city partnerships over the past years, DDC also increasingly includes non-financial partnerships fostering peer-to-peer learning activities, knowledge exchange, capacity building and exchange of experiences and best practices amongst subnational actors, in particular in those areas mentioned above (Figure 1.1). The reasons behind this uptake of peer-to-peer or capacity-building activities include: i) the need to steer ODA flows more effectively and impactfully; and ii) the increasing emergence of LRGs as important players in the international sphere (see Box 1.1 for more information about ODA reporting) (OECD, 2018[1]). Twinning, peer-to-peer learning, capacity building for local governance as well as projects implemented by CSOs represent in-kind contributions that are included in ODA reporting (OECD, 2018[1]). Recognising the growing importance of the in-kind contributions of DDC is key to fully capturing the diversity of DDC modalities and approaches. However, not all DDC is captured by ODA, either because OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members decide not to report it (only 11 DAC members report on DDC) or because local governments are not aware that their partnerships qualify as DDC and should be reported.

Box 1.1. Background information about ODA reporting

The OECD defines official development assistance (ODA) flows as “those flows to countries and territories on the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) List of ODA Recipients and to multilateral development institutions, which are provided by official agencies, including state and local governments, or by their executive agencies; and each transaction of which is administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as its main objective; and concessional (i.e. grants and soft loans) in character” (OECD, 2022[10]). Those flows that can be classified as ODA support cover development activities in a wide range of areas including education, health, infrastructure, sanitation but also local governance and taxation. The ODA reporting captures most forms of DDC and is therefore considered the most comprehensive measure of DDC. However, many activities are not reported because countries are not aware that they count as ODA.

The OECD DAC collects data on its members’ development co-operation activities, including on DDC. Since 1961, DAC has served as an international forum for many of the largest development co-operation actors. Its 30 members include the majority of European Union (EU) countries and the EU itself, while the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), amongst others, contribute as observers. One of the main responsibilities of the DAC is the collection of ODA data and the production of related statistics to meet the needs of policy makers In the area of development co-operation. The goal is to enable an assessment of the comparative performance of aid providers. Over the past decades, the DAC has updated its ODA reporting rules to reflect new development trends and instruments (e.g. guarantees for development), ensure the consistency of reporting and the relevance of ODA rules in new development and economic contexts. The DAC is also responsible for the collection of DDC data and statistics (OECD, 2022[11]).

Thirty DAC members, 20 non-DAC providers and more than 40 multilateral institutions report data on ODA and beyond on an annual basis. Apart from ODA, there are Other Official Flows (OOF) and

officially supported export credits reported as public spending. From private sources, DAC collects data from NGOs, foundations and charity organisations, as well as information on bonds, foreign direct investment, portfolio investments and amounts mobilised from the private sector by official development finance institutions. Each year, more than 250 000 transactions are presented in a detailed manner in the Creditor Reporting System (CRS). Quality assurance makes the DAC the only source of reliable, comparable and complete data on development assistance.

The concept of ODA contains in its name the three major requirements for flows directed at countries and multilateral institutions on the DAC list of ODA recipients:

- "**Official**": Provided by official agencies, including state and local governments, or by their executive agencies.
- **"Development"**: Administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as its main objective.
- "**Assistance**": Concessional in character. Provided in the form of grants or soft loans.

This definition thus excludes primarily commercial or religious objectives, military aid and promotion of the donor's security interests, as well as promotion of the donor's language and culture.

The number of countries reporting on DDC has increased over the past years but data gaps remain. While only 9 countries[1] used to report their DDC activities to the OECD DAC in 2005, the number increased to 11 countries[2] in 2021. Recent trends in ODA flows reported by those 11 members are described below. To indicate the flow of DDC ODA, member countries use specific donor codes to attribute project-level data to institutions at the subnational level. Nevertheless, two major challenges persist in terms of DDC data reporting. First, DAC members are carrying out some activities that qualify as DDC but are not reported (e.g. capacity building and technical assistance for local governments by the Association of Netherlands Municipalities and the Dutch Water Authorities). Second, reporting practices differ across DAC members. This relates to the agency codes used to report, to the availability of resources in statistical units to collect subnational data but also to national reporting preferences regarding the role of subnational actors. Furthermore, only a few DAC members use separate codes for local and regional actors (OECD, 2018[1]). Consequently, different types of co-operation, including data on city-to-city partnerships, cannot be analysed individually, but fall under the same category of DDC ODA data.

1. Austria, Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy, Japan, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland.
2. Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.
Source: OECD (2022[11]), *Development Assistance Committee (DAC)*, https://www.oecd.org/dac/development-assistance-committee/ (accessed on 20 October 2022); OECD (2018[1]), *Reshaping Decentralised Development Co-operation: The Key Role of Cities and Regions for the 2030 Agenda*, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264302914-en; OECD (2022[10]), *Official Development Assistance – Definition and Coverage*, https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/officialdevelopmentassistancedefinitionandcoverage.htm (accessed on 12 September 2022).

Key trends in DDC flows and the role of city-to-city partnerships for the localisation of the SDGs

Key trends in DDC flows

Between 2015 and 2021, total DDC volumes increased by 38%, from USD 2 051 million to 2 831 million (Table 1.1). The two largest donors throughout that period were Germany and Spain. In 2021, Germany accounted for around two-thirds of total DDC volumes reported to the DAC, however mainly due to imputed student costs.[1] Spain contributed 14% of total DDC volumes reported in 2021, followed by Canada (6%), France (5%) and Belgium (3%).

Table 1.1. Trends in DDC ODA growth rates

USD million, net disbursements

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Change (%)	Change in cross-border (2016-21) (%)
Austria	189.4	269.5	72.5	31.7	21.1	22.6	32.6	-83	21
Belgium	95.7	86.5	89.4	84.4	79.1	106.9	85.9	-10	4
Canada	260.8	285.5	285.1	206.1	234.0	176.7	171.0	-34	-62
Czech Republic	0.3	0.4	1.0	-	-	-	-	-	-
France	69.2	97.6	119.3	137.3	141.8	139.4	143.1	107	-9
Germany	1 089.8	1 151.5	1 258.5	1 382.7	1 579.9	1 757.4	1901.3	74	17
Italy	22.8	17.9	6.9	13.1	11.1	7.3	8.0	-65	-117
Japan	3.9	3.6	2.8	3.0	3.4	1.6	1.2	-69	-108
Portugal	0.1	0.2	0.5	1.1	1.6	1.6	1.6	1 500	89
Spain	237.8	272.0	301.3	346.3	381.1	368.8	388.7	63	30
Switzerland	63.6	76.9	70.7	67.7	67.7	66.8	59.8	-6	9
United Kingdom	17.7	18.5	21.3	16.9	21.7	21.7	37.5	112	36
Total	**2 051.2**	**2 280.2**	**2 229.4**	**2 290.4**	**2 542.5**	**2 670.8**	**2 830.7**	**38**	**17**

Note: The volumes indicated in the table include in-donor costs.
Source: OECD DAC CRS database (accessed on 26 January 2023).

DDC ODA volumes vary considerably between countries and over time. Despite the overall growth trend of DDC volumes, spending volumes across countries are heterogeneous (Table 1.1). Between 2015 and 2021, Portugal registered the largest increase in DDC volumes (+1 500%), although this is mainly attributable to the marginal amounts reported in 2015. French DDC volumes have more than doubled (+107%) between 2015 and 2021 as did the British (+112%), while Germany (+74%) and Spain (+63%) registered growth rates of more than 50%. Those three countries were also the main drivers behind the overall increase in DDC between 2015 and 2021. In contrast, some countries saw a decrease in DDC volumes, in particular, Austria (-83%), Italy (-65%), Japan (-69%) and Canada (-34%).

Cross-border DDC volumes have increased by 17% between 2016 and 2021. Among all DAC members reporting on DDC, Spain was by far the country with the highest cross-border DDC spending in 2021, accounting for 53% of total cross-border DDC (USD 311 million), followed by Belgium (14%) and Switzerland (9%). Several countries have registered an increase in their cross-border DDC volumes over that period, notably Portugal (+89%), the United Kingdom (+36%) and Spain (+30%), while others experienced considerable a considerable decrease, in particular Italy (-117%), Japan (-108%) and Canada (-62%). These developments are often in line with the change in DDC volumes disbursed by these countries overall.

In several countries, notably Belgium, Germany and Spain, DDC represents a considerable share of the total ODA. Over the 2017-21 period, DDC as a share of total ODA has slightly increased from 3.0% in 2017 to 3.6% in 2021 (Table 1.2). One notable case is Spain, where DDC accounted for more than 30% of total bilateral ODA in 2019 (35%) and 2021 (38%), although partially driven by a decrease in Spanish ODA overall. Overall, the share of DDC as a proportion of total ODA has gone up in several countries, namely in Spain (+28 percentage points or pp), Germany (+2 pp) and Belgium (+1 pp). However, several donors have registered a decreasing share of DDC. These countries are Austria (-1 pp) and Canada

(-6 pp). In the other donor countries, the proportion of DDC has remained relatively stable over the 2017-21 period.

Table 1.2. The proportion of DDC in total bilateral ODA

USD million, net disbursements

	2017	% of total ODA	2019	% of total ODA	2021	% of total ODA
Austria	72.5	7	21.1	4	32.6	6
Belgium	89.4	6	79.1	6	85.9	7
Canada	285.1	10	234.0	7	171.0	4
Czech Republic	1.0	1	-	-	-	-
France	119.3	1	141.8	1	143.1	1
Germany	1 258.5	5	1 579.9	7	1 901.3	7
Italy	6.9	0	11.1	1	8.0	1
Japan	2.8	0	3.4	0	1.2	0
Portugal	0.5	0	1.6	1	1.6	1
Spain	301.3	10	381.1	35	388.7	38
Switzerland	70.7	2	67.7	3	59.8	2
United Kingdom	21.3	0	21.7	0	37.5	0
Total	**2 229.4**	**3.0**	**2 542.5**	**3.5**	**2 830.7**	**3.6**

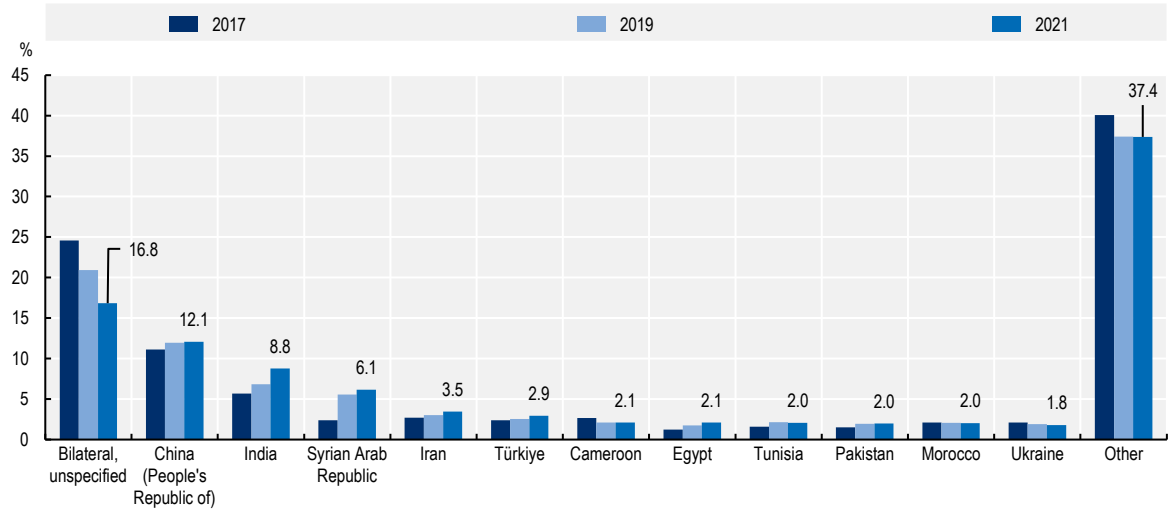
Note: The volumes indicated in the table include in-donor costs.
Source: OECD DAC CRS database (accessed on 26 January 2023).

Globally, China is the top individual recipient of DDC. Among those countries receiving country-allocable DDC between 2017 and 2021, China consistently received the highest share (11.1% in 2017, 11.92.0% in 2019 and 12.1% in 2021). This is however mainly due to imputed student costs from Germany provided to Chinese students. The same is the case for India, which has consistently been the second-largest recipient of DDC in the 2017-21 period (5.7% in 2017, 6.8% in 2019 and 8.8% in 2021). Other main recipients were, Cameroon, Egypt, Iran, the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye. The largest portion of DDC was comprised of small activities programmed across a large number of countries, targeting close to 160 different countries during the 2017-21 period. Between 2017 and 2021, less than 10 countries accounted for more than 2% of total DDC respectively, showing that DDC is often provided through small projects. This reflects the modest size and scale of country institutions as well as the limited availability of financial resources at the subnational level (OECD, 2018[1]).

The top three recipients of cross-border DDC between 2017 and 2021 were Senegal, Guatemala and Mozambique. Figure 1.3 shows the main recipients of DDC ODA when only considering cross-border flows. This measurement excludes in-donor costs such as imputed student costs. Consequently, China and India do not appear among the top recipients. Instead, the composition of the main recipients varies more over time than if taking into account all ODA flows. In 2017, Malawi (4.0%), Senegal (3.7%) and Mozambique (3.3%) were the 3 main recipients of DDC ODA. In 2019, Guatemala (3.1%), Senegal (3.0%) and Mozambique (3.0%) took the 3 top positions. Two years later, Senegal (4.3%), Guatemala (4.0%) and Bolivia (3.9%) were among the top 3, followed by Colombia (3.6%). In terms of overall volumes, Senegal, Guatemala and Mozambique were the three countries that received the largest amounts of DDC between 2017 and 2021 (only considering cross-border flows). Table 1.3 provides an overview of the ten main recipients in the 2017-21 period.

Figure 1.2. DDC ODA by top recipients, including in-donor costs

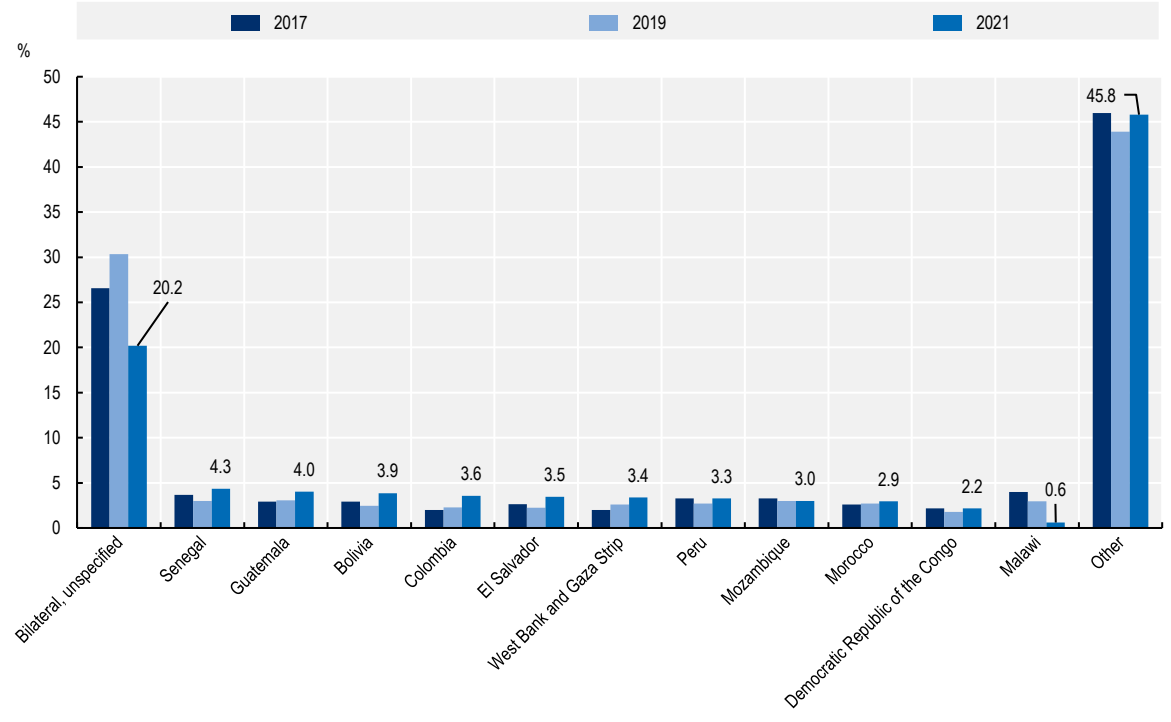
Evolution between 2017 and 2021



Source: OECD DAC CRS database (accessed on 26 January 2023).

Figure 1.3. DDC ODA by top recipients, cross-border flows

Evolution between 2017 and 2021



Note: The “Bilateral, unspecified” category represents resources provided without being allocated to a specific recipient country and mainly consists of in-donor refugee costs and aggregate projects.
Source: OECD DAC CRS database (accessed on 26 January 2023).

Table 1.3. Main recipients of DDC ODA

Cross-border flows, 2017-21 period

Country	Amount received in the 2017-21 period in USD million	As a percentage of total DDC in the 2017-21 period
Bilateral, unspecified	761.6	26.3
Senegal	104.0	3.6
Guatemala	97.4	3.4
Mozambique	89.3	3.1
Bolivia	87.4	3.0
Peru	83.1	2.9
El Salvador	83.0	2.9
Morocco	78.1	2.7
Colombia	74.3	2.6
Malawi	71.2	2.5

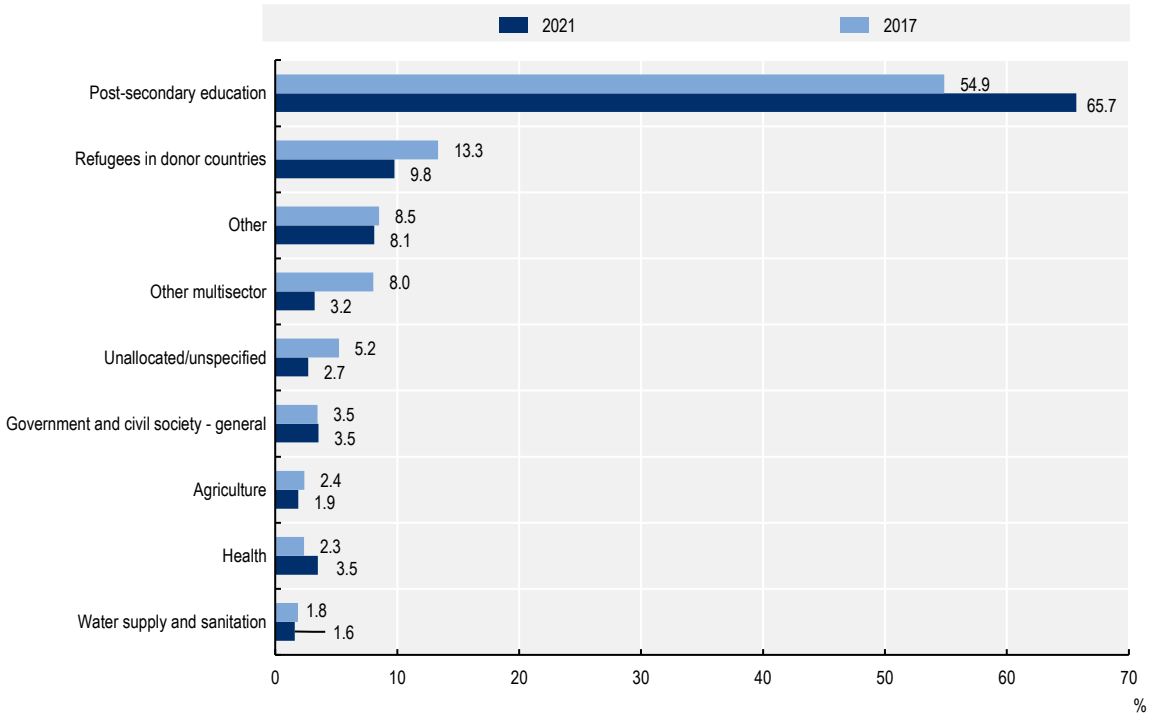
Source: OECD DAC CRS database (accessed on 26 January 2023).

Post-secondary education is the main sector targeted by DDC flows when including in-donor costs.[2] In the past years, DDC has targeted several key social sectors such as water, health, agriculture and education. Considering all DDC flows between 2017 and 2021, post-secondary education was by far the most important sector (Figure 1.4). Its share within total DDC increased from 55% in 2017 to close to 66% in 2021. However, as mentioned before, this is almost exclusively due to imputed student costs. Another key area for DDC between 2017 and 2021 was the support for refugees in donor countries. This accounted for more than 13% in 2017, although it decreased to around 10% four years later, potentially due to the decrease in the migration flows to European DAC countries. Other sectoral allocations of DDC included government and civil society (3.5% in 2021), health[3] (3.5% in 2021), agriculture (1.9% in 2021) and water supply and sanitation (1.6% in 2021).

Regarding cross-border DDC, governance, agriculture and health are the three main target areas. The sectoral allocation of DDC changes considerably if one excludes in-donor costs and only considers cross-border flows. The most important cross-border DDC area was government and civil society, which accounted for 16.8% of total cross-border DDC volumes in 2021, up from 14.3% in 2017 (Figure 1.5). After government and civil society, the most important sectoral allocation in 2021 was health. Its share went up from 11.7% in 2017 to 16.5% in 2021, potentially as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was followed by other multisector DDC, which includes a range of sectoral targets, e.g. training, scientific research, rural development and other social areas. Multisector DDC accounted for more than 15% of overall cross-border DDC spending. Other relevant sectors were agriculture (9.9% in 2021 vs. 8.9% in 2017), water supply and sanitation (7.7% in 2021 vs. 7.6% in 2017) and emergency response (6.5% in 2021 vs. 4.7% in 2017).

Figure 1.4. Sectoral allocations of DDC, 2017 and 2021

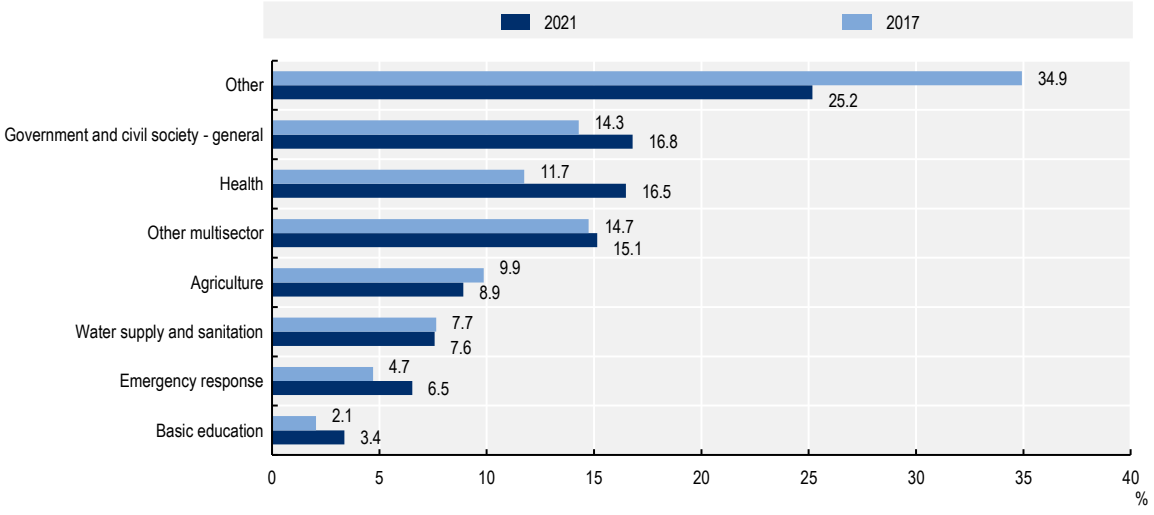
Breakdown of total DDC flows by sector, in %



Note: "Other" concerns a multitude of other sectors that are difficult to show in the chart.
Source: OECD DAC CRS database (accessed on 26 January 2023).

Figure 1.5. Sectoral allocation of cross-border DDC, 2017 and 2021

Breakdown of cross-border DDC by sector, in %



Note: "Other" concerns a multitude of other sectors that are difficult to show in the chart.
Source: OECD DAC CRS database (accessed on 26 January 2023).

The role of city-to-city partnerships in achieving the SDGs

LRGs play a major role in the achievement of the SDGs. City-to-city partnerships have the potential to affect urban governance and sustainability from different angles and can improve local government performance, while at the same time encouraging citizen participation in urban decision-making (Bontenbal, 2009[12]). In particular, city-to-city partnerships can be a tool to advance the UN 2030 Agenda and collectively address common challenges. Such objectives may include achieving low-carbon growth while delivering electricity (SDGs 7 and 8), water (SDG 6), health (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), security (SDG 16) and other social services to local communities – which is challenging both for cities in developed countries and the Global South. Recent OECD work on *A Territorial Approach to the Sustainable Development Goals* (2020[9]) shows that cities and regions are responsible for almost 55% of public investment and 37% of public spending in OECD countries and have a closer connection to citizens than the national government (OECD, 2022[13]). Furthermore, the OECD estimated that at least 105 out of 169 SDG targets will not be realised without engagement and co-ordination with LRGs, which illustrates the crucial importance of city-to-city partnerships (OECD, 2020[9]). Within the 2030 Agenda, SDG 11 "Sustainable cities and communities" explicitly calls upon the local level to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Its target of universal access to affordable housing and basic services largely depends on municipalities' capacities (OECD, 2019[2]). Many of the SDGs require mobilising the expertise and resources of subnational entities for delivering essential public services in a range of areas, including health, education, water and energy (SDSN, 2016[14]). Oftentimes, LRGs are closer to citizens than national governments and therefore more likely to better appraise local needs and capabilities from a policy or financing standpoint (OECD, 2019[2]). The interconnected nature of the SDGs also requires coherence in policy design and implementation and calls for mobilising a variety of stakeholders to find collective solutions. This is why the SDGs hold much potential to provide a systemic framework that can help subnational governments rethink their strategies, policies, investment and budget priorities according to the needs of their local communities. Fostering a territorial approach that can help to localise the SDGs requires: i) a shift from a sectoral to a multi-sectoral approach to the SDGs; ii) incentives for bottom-up approaches and their alignment with top-down priorities; iii) the development of context-specific policies; and iv) the recognition of the importance of a comprehensive multi-level governance system (OECD, 2020[9]).

DDC and city-to-city partnerships can be key contributors to the localisation of the SDGs. In recent years, the thematic scope of DDC has widened, which reflects the increasing importance of thematic global agendas such as the Paris Climate Agreement. The SDGs and their holistic approach to sustainable development provide an opportunity to further mainstream the 2030 Agenda into policy design and implementation, in particular in development co-operation activities (OECD, 2018[1]). Many national and subnational governments in OECD and non-OECD countries have therefore revised their development co-operation guidelines and integrated the SDGs as a guiding principle. In addition, the SDGs have provided a useful framework to identify and evaluate existing DDC programmes against identified priorities and/or to elaborate new DDC programmes, for example in Flanders, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and Portugal (OECD, 2018[1]). An increasing number of DDC actors determine their geographical focus depending on global priorities and agendas, in particular the SDGs. The DDC principle of reciprocity, aiming to ensure that DDC actions are beneficial to all partners, captures the essence of the 2030 Agenda. As such, it also provides a key tool to support LRGs in their own SDG implementation process. The exchange of good practices, capacity building, knowledge exchange and peer-to-peer learning in the respective areas of expertise of the partners involved are ways through which DDC and city-to-city partnerships can contribute to the localisation of the SDGs.

An overview of existing frameworks to enhance city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs

The following subchapter provides an overview of three main frameworks that can be used to enhance city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs. These are: i) the OECD Checklist for Public Action to Localise the SDGs; ii) the G20 Rome High-level Principles on city-to-city partnerships for localising the SDGs (hereinafter the G20 Principles); and iii) the European Commission (EC) programme on Partnerships for Sustainable Cities. The OECD Checklist for Public Action to Localise the SDGs provides an overview of the relevant framework conditions for the localisation of the SDGs that can also be applied to sustainable city-to-city partnerships. The G20 Principles will be further used in particular to design the self-assessment of the systemic monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework (see Box 1.2). The EC programme on Partnerships for Sustainable Cities will be taken into account both for the design of the M&E framework as well as for the pilot testing of the self-assessment framework.

The OECD Checklist for Public Action to Localise the SDGs

In its 2020 synthesis report *A Territorial Approach to the Sustainable Development Goals* (OECD, 2020[9]), the OECD proposed a Checklist for Public Action to Localise the SDGs. The checklist targets policy makers at all levels of government and provides action-oriented recommendations across five different pillars to localise the SDGs (OECD, 2020[9]). The five pillars are: i) planning, policies and strategies; ii) multi-level governance; iii) financing and budgeting; iv) data and information; and v) stakeholder engagement (see below for more details). It takes into account the holistic approach of the SDGs as a comprehensive framework that allows for the promotion of synergies and management of trade-offs across sectoral policies, alongside the engagement of various territorial stakeholders. Furthermore, the checklist also considers the SDGs as a framework to monitor progress and set targets for the achievement of sustainability at the local level while providing transparency and accountability (OECD, 2020[9]).

The OECD Checklist for Public Action to Localise the SDGs recommends mainstreaming the SDGs in the design and implementation of international co-operation activities. Even though the checklist was not specifically designed as a framework to enhance city-to-city partnerships, such partnerships play a key role in the policy recommendations contained in the checklist. As part of the first pillar on planning, policies and strategies, the checklist provides recommendations on the integration of the SDGs in DDC. The checklist suggests that DDC programmes could be shaped around the SDGs where a city or region has a comparative advantage over others. It also emphasises the importance of knowledge sharing and peer-to-peer exchange on those SDGs where collaboration between different partners can have the strongest impact. As a follow-up, the “OECD toolkit for a territorial approach to the SDGs” (2022[13]) complements the recommendations under each of the five components of the checklist, with examples of how cities, regions and countries put in place each of the recommendations. For instance, the toolkit includes the example of how the region of Flanders in Belgium is integrating the SDGs in DDC. The regional government of Flanders is one of the most active governments on DDC in the OECD and determines sectoral priorities for bilateral DDC activities jointly with partner countries based on their 2030 Agenda priorities. In 2018, the region approved a reformed framework decree for DDC that aims to foster systemic change, societal innovation and multi-actor partnerships rather than mere sectoral approaches when addressing the SDGs (OECD, 2022[13]).

G20 Rome High-Level Principles on city-to-city partnerships for localising the SDGs

The G20 Principles emphasise the importance of co-operation between cities for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. In 2021, building on the crucial role of cities to contribute to the SDGs, the G20 Development Working Group endorsed the G20 Principles under the Italian G20 presidency and with the technical support of the OECD (Box 1.2). The principles aim to promote city-to-city partnerships for the SDGs while considering their diversity across G20 countries and their partners. The ten principles underline the importance of a territorial approach to the SDGs and call for a strengthened multi-level governance

framework for city-to-city partnerships and enhanced rural-urban connectivity. Furthermore, they encourage an exchange about mainstreaming SDG indicators into planning and policy documents as well as the development of M&E frameworks. The principles call for the uptake of peer-to-peer learning and capacity building and encourage the engagement of territorial stakeholders. Lastly, they pledge LRGs to develop effective financing and efficient resource mobilisation strategies, as well as to build the necessary human, technological and infrastructural capacities to take advantage of digitalisation in city-to-city partnerships (G20 DWG, 2021[15]).

Box 1.2. Ten G20 Rome High-level Principles on city-to-city partnerships for localising the SDGs

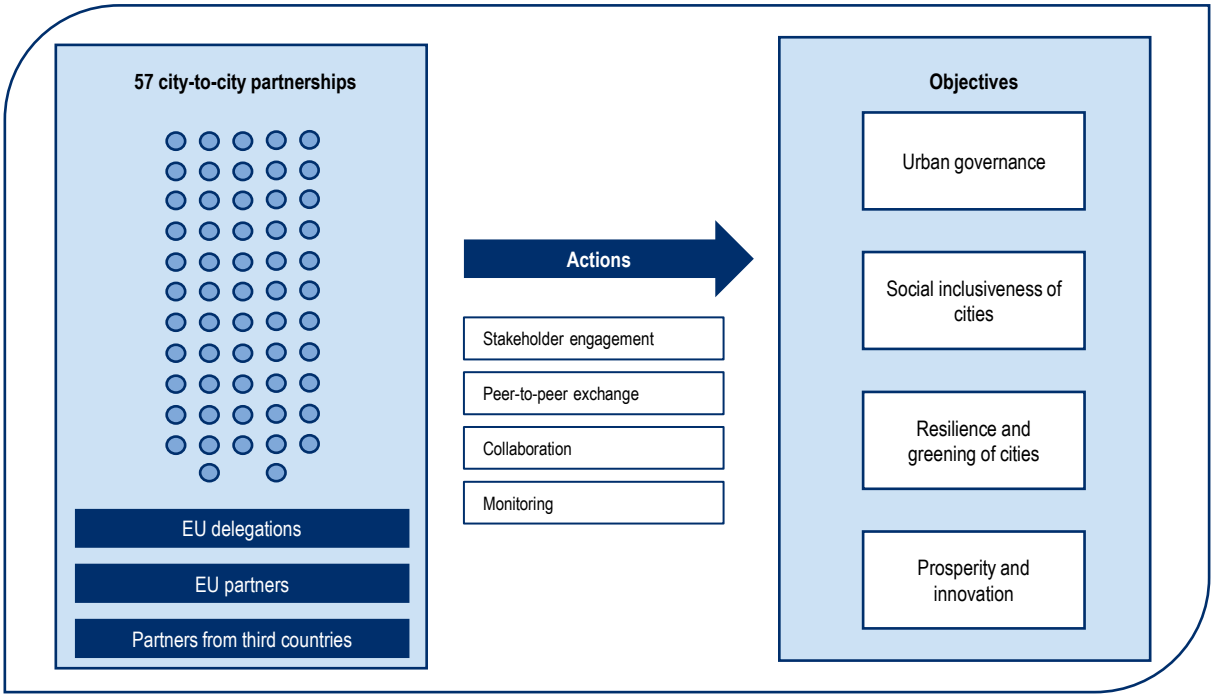
1. **Territorial approach.** Promote city-to-city partnerships as a means to enhance the implementation of a territorial approach in responding to and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, reducing vulnerability to climate change.
2. **Multi-level governance.** Strengthen multi-level integrated governance and co-ordination for greater effectiveness of city-to-city partnerships and more demand-based initiatives, while considering local and regional contexts and responding to the specific needs of different geographical areas and governance systems, as appropriate.
3. **Rural-urban connectivity.** Enhance rural-urban connectivity and co-operation, including between primary and intermediary cities, including through past G20 work on infrastructure.[4]
4. **Data and indicators.** Encourage local and regional governments to exchange approaches and practices in mainstreaming SDGs indicators into planning and policy documents at all levels of government and produce disaggregated data towards strengthened context-specific analysis and assessment of territorial disparities in collaboration with national governments, which could also support countries in developing their Voluntary National Reviews.
5. **Monitoring and evaluation.** Taking into account different national and local contexts, develop monitor and evaluation (M&E) indicators towards a result framework for evidence-based city-to-city partnerships, documenting their impact and providing recommendations to optimise those partnerships.
6. **Peer-to-peer learning.** Focus on mutual benefit, peer-to-peer learning, support and review in city-to-city partnerships, including the exchange of knowledge on sustainable urban planning and capital investment planning.
7. **Capacity development.** Support capacity development and build local managerial capital and skills for effective, efficient and inclusive city-to-city partnerships implementation.
8. **Stakeholder engagement.** Engage all relevant stakeholders to implement territorial network modalities of city-to-city partnerships towards the achievement of the SDGs, including by establishing partnerships with the private sector.
9. **Financing.** Call on local and regional governments to develop effective financing and efficient resource mobilisation strategies and instruments in collaboration with national governments as appropriate, through existing mechanisms to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through city-to-city partnerships, including by integrating the SDGs in budgeting processes.
10. **Digitalisation.** Develop strategies to build human, technological and infrastructural capacities of the LRGs to make use of and incorporate digitalisation best practices in city-to-city partnerships.

Source: G20 DWG (2021[15]), *Territorial Development and SDGs Localisation*, https://dwgg20.org/app/uploads/2021/10/Territorial-Development-SDGs-Localisation.pdf.

The European Commission programme on Partnerships for Sustainable Cities

The EC has set up a programme to deepen relations with local authorities to address the urgency of urban challenges. In 2018, the EC Directorate General for Development Co-operation (then called DG DEVCO, now renamed International Partnerships [DG INTPA]) launched a programme on Partnerships for Sustainable Cities (EC, 2022[16]). The programme supports partnerships between municipalities from the EU and partner municipalities in the Global South to leverage inter-linkages among the SDGs, enhance their effectiveness and impact and accelerate progress in achieving the goals. The specific objectives of the EC Partnerships for Sustainable Cities programme are fourfold: i) to strengthen urban governance (e.g. through urban planning and land use management); ii) to ensure social inclusiveness of cities (e.g. by addressing urban planning gender gaps, safety and security in urban settings); iii) to improve resilience and greening of cities (e.g. by setting up new projects to implement environmental and climate resilient local policies); and iv) to improve prosperity and innovation in cities (e.g. by increasing job creation and entrepreneurship) (EC, 2022[16]) (Figure 1.6).

Figure 1.6. The EC programme on Partnerships for Sustainable Cities



The programme incentivises mutual learning and participatory approaches. Following 3 consecutive calls for proposals between 2018 and 2021, DG INTPA selected a total of 57 city-to-city partnership projects to participate in the programme and has mobilised more than EUR 160 million to support them. Partners from the EU and outside the EU implement the projects together with the EU delegations in the respective country where the actions take place. Actions can include peer-to-peer activities or decentralised co-operation activities that contribute to the four specific objectives of the programme mentioned above. One of the main characteristics of the programme is the participation of all relevant stakeholders in specific partnerships. Within such partnerships, municipalities work together on areas of mutual interest that fall under the category of integrated urban development. Their goal is to act as “laboratories” to generate innovative solutions to urban challenges. As such, they are expected to impact positively the EU’s development co-operation activities and promote the uptake of lessons learned among EU institutions (EC, 2022[16]).

Framework conditions for effective and sustainable city-to-city partnerships

What makes city-to-city partnerships work?

Specific framework conditions need to be in place for city-to-city partnerships to deliver on their objectives. Since city-to-city partnerships are an important factor contributing to the localisation of the SDGs, the OECD Checklist for Public Action to Localise the SDGs provides a useful framework that can help promote effective and sustainable city-to-city partnerships. The checklist is structured around five components: i) policies and strategies, e.g. integrating the SDGs into territorial policies and strategies; ii) governance, e.g. improving multi-level governance structures and policy coherence for the implementation of the SDGs; iii) data and information, e.g. measuring the performance of cities and regions on the SDGs through localised indicators; iv) financing, e.g. aligning budget and financing to ensure sufficient resources for sustainability (which has been complemented by a component on the capacity for this project); and v) stakeholder engagement, e.g. by integrating territorial stakeholders into the implementation of the SDGs at the local level. The below section discusses the framework conditions (see Figure 1.8 for an overview of the relevant framework conditions for effective and sustainable city-to-city partnerships) that are necessary for effective and sustainable city-to-city partnerships along the five components of the checklist. However, when the framework conditions are not in place nor effectively discharged, city-to-city partnerships may face various obstacles, ranging from: i) lack and cost of co-ordination; ii) financing; iii) local capacity; iv) small-scale projects; v) transparency and accountability; and vi) data availability.

Figure 1.7. The OECD Checklist for Public Action to Localise the SDGs



Source: OECD (2022[13]), "OECD toolkit for a territorial approach to the SDGs", https://doi.org/10.1787/2913bae2-en.

Policies and strategies

City-to-city partnerships call for a territorial approach. Successful city-to-city partnerships address concrete local challenges such as clean forms of urban mobility, affordable housing, clean water and sanitation amongst others. Adopting a territorial approach that takes into account place-specific contexts is critical to address the interconnectedness of many of these policy areas. It is also important to establish city-to-city partnerships that create synergies across sectoral policies and manage trade-offs, e.g. between mobility and spatial planning. In particular, city-to-city partnerships should target those policy areas that can help exploit the territorial development potential of the city through context-specific policies and interventions. City-to-city partnerships also need to be integrated into local development strategies and their objectives aligned with local and regional priorities (OECD, 2018[1]).

The principles of reciprocity, proximity and territorial partnership can foster sustainable city-to-city co-operation. First, a two-way relationship, where both partner governments are considered equal, is key to ensuring that the impact and results of partnerships fulfil the expected outcomes. Furthermore, local governments and stakeholders must be the main actors involved since they are the best equipped to deal with local territorial development challenges, given their proximity to the local population. Lastly, since city-to-city partnerships are based on partnerships between local governments in developed and developing countries, they should be grounded in a policy vision and objectives shared by all partners to facilitate ownership and optimise the results of the partnership (OECD, 2018[1]).

Political leadership is an important success factor for sustainable city-to-city partnerships. A survey conducted among 30 local governments from 16 countries in Asia, Tjandradewi and Marcotullio (2009[17]) found that political leadership was considered one of the most important factors contributing to successful city-to-city co-operation, alongside the free flow of information and reciprocity. Drawing on several city-to-city partnership case studies from South Africa and the United States, de Villiers (2009[18]) identified strong community leadership as well as effective and permanent organisational structures as success factors for sustained city-to-city partnerships. Political leadership is also essential for the achievement of the SDGs at the local level. A survey conducted by the OECD and the European Committee of the Regions showed that political leadership at the local and regional levels was the most important factor of success for the implementation of the SDGs (OECD, 2022[19]).

City-to-city partnerships require a strategy that elaborates on the rationale, aim and vision of the envisaged collaboration and relationship. Developing a strategy that defines the scope and objectives of city-to-city partnerships against the background of the SDGs is important for the design of a partnership's actions. Starting to map existing strategies and plans allows to identify crucial areas of collaboration and link them to the SDGs. This mapping exercise can therefore represent the starting point for the development of that strategy (SDSN, 2016[14]). Based on that analysis, successful strategies outline the partnership's goals, guidelines for partner selection and mechanisms to draw lessons from the collaboration. A partnership strategy should also include guidelines for capacity building and the partnership's governance structure (de Villiers, 2009[18]).

Effective strategies for city-to-city partnerships should follow a multiple-step approach. The United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) Capacity and Institution Building (CIB) Working Group (2019[20]) presents a multiple-step approach to how to draft an effective SDG-linked development co-operation policy, which can also be applied to city-to-city partnerships. The main elements are: i) the purpose; ii) the problem statement; iii) policy; iv) procedures; as well as v) evaluation and review. The purpose section entails an explanation of why the policy plan is drafted and why it should be linked to the SDGs. The problem statement elaborates on the need for a DDC policy or a specific city-to-city partnership. It points out a particular issue to be addressed in one or both of the partner cities. In that context, the two cities and local stakeholders ideally share common ideas and objectives in areas of sustainable urban development (UNIDO/FCSSC, 2019[21]). The policy section spells out the roadmap and rules in place as well as the objectives and the commitment of the political leaders. The procedures section addresses how to best

achieve the tasks within the mandate and competencies of the local government, provides a set of guidelines for effective policies and outlines an implementation plan. Lastly, the evaluation section outlines the evaluation criteria as well as reporting and communication on the work undertaken, which is further explained in the section below on data and information (UCLG, 2019[20]). This can be followed by an additional analysis of the potential replicability in other city-to-city partnerships and the development of strategies to mainstream the results of the partnership to promote wider city objectives (UNIDO/FCSSC, 2019[21]; Boulanger and Nagorny, 2018[22]). In addition, it is important to define a timeframe for the partnership agreements, which should include periodical review processes to assess if the partnership is leading to the desired outcomes. To do so, the agreement should also allow for possible adjustments of actions and policies undertaken in the framework of the partnership (Gootman, Barker and Bouchet, 2019[23]).

Multi-level governance

With an increasing number of actors involved in city-to-city partnerships, the co-ordination of actions, roles and responsibilities becomes more challenging. The lack of clarity regarding the competency for DDC between local, regional and national levels can cause some additional multi-level governance challenges and complicate co-ordination between actors. Existing co-ordination mechanisms can also be challenged if there are multiple LRGs active in DDC (e.g. Spain) (OECD, 2018[1]). Another challenge is related to silos across departments and agencies involved in the partnership. Common goals for development projects between actors are key to the sustainability of city-to-city partnerships. However, if there is a divergence in local and regional development priorities and the relevance of solutions between partners in the Global North and the Global South, the governance of the partnership can become challenging (OECD, 2018[1]).

Legal and institutional frameworks are therefore important conditions for effective and sustainable city-to-city partnerships. Legal and institutional frameworks for DDC in OECD countries take different forms. As shown above, DDC activities vary considerably in terms of scope and size between countries. The same is the case for the institutional frameworks for DDC. Some countries such as Belgium, France and Italy clearly define DDC parameters. Their legal frameworks operate on a national level, recognising the competencies of decentralised bodies to conduct DDC (e.g. through specific laws or decrees for municipal development co-operation) (OECD, 2018[1]). Another group of countries, including Austria, Germany and the Netherlands for instance, does not have a specific legal framework for DDC but relies on local and/or decentralisation regulations to carry out DDC activities. In most cases, DDC is considered a part of and embedded in the national development co-operation, as well as a tool for the implementation of the national development co-operation strategy (OECD, 2018[1]). For example, Germany has established a conducive institutional framework for DDC, which considers all levels of government (federal, state and municipal). Through its federal government and federal states programme called *Bund-Länder-Programm* (BLP), which integrates the federal state level competencies of the public administration, private sector and academic institutions into German development co-operation, Germany links regional expertise in the federal states with technical co-operation projects initiated by the federal government and implemented by the German development agency GIZ (GIZ, 2022[24]). Furthermore, a dedicated agency (Service Agency Communities in One World, SKEW) promotes national and international exchange and joint learning between municipalities, notably in the framework of city-to-city partnerships, including through financial and skills support (SKEW, 2022[25]).

Guidelines for DDC can help better support and frame city-to-city partnerships. Several members of the OECD DAC (e.g. Austria, Belgium, France) have such guidelines in place at the national level. They also exist at regional levels (e.g. in Flanders and Wallonia in Belgium and the Basque Country in Spain) and local levels (e.g. in Barcelona, Spain). Such legal frameworks and guidelines can have an even greater impact on DDC practices if LRGs and their territorial stakeholders are engaged in their elaboration and the actual implementation of DDC projects.

The existence of an enabling multi-level governance structure is crucial to facilitate successful partnerships. Co-ordination across levels of government and collaboration between LRGs and their stakeholders is key to achieving the objective and long-term impact of city-to-city partnerships. City-to-city partnerships create a space for different levels of government to participate, either by the provision of funding or a policy or regulatory framework for city partnerships at the regional or national level. The national government can also provide data and research support. However, complex interactions across levels of government and local governments involved in city-to-city partnerships can represent a burden to governance mechanisms and arrangements. It is therefore important that the partner governments involved in the partnership incentivise the application of common framework conditions such as legal frameworks and rules to secure an enabling environment for DDC projects (OECD, 2018[1]). In Spain for example, several regions and municipalities have developed policies, operational plans and strategies that made DDC a local and regional public policy priority. The OECD (2018[1]) has identified the strong involvement of multiple actors and levels of government as a success factor to maximise the impact of DDC activities such as city-to-city partnerships. At the same time, multi-level governance needs to consider the different local and regional contexts to respond to the specific needs of different geographical areas (G20 DWG, 2021[15]). Vertical co-ordination is crucial in that context, in particular, to address potential competition or race to the bottom among territories. It can be promoted through local government associations like the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG) in Belgium, Cités-Unies in France or the German Association of Districts, Cities, Towns and Municipalities[5] (OECD, 2018[1]).

City-to-city partnerships require common framework conditions and enabling policy environments. In city-to-city partnerships, it is important to allow for some flexibility that responds to the needs of the local project partners (Gootman, Barker and Bouchet, 2019[23]). The OECD (2018[1]) therefore recommends that DDC promoters should strive to incentivise the application of common framework conditions to secure the proper enabling environment for partnership projects to deliver intended benefits at a lower cost. Generating a governance spillover may help incline relations towards horizontal, in-country governance and collaborative exchanges across countries. Furthermore, partnerships for development can only succeed if they are co-designed with developing countries and feature in country-specific and city-specific situations and needs (OECD, 2018[1]).

Coherence with the national and regional development co-operation strategies is another key factor for fostering a sustainable approach to city-to-city partnerships. Building on an implementation framework that is integrated into its country's multi-level governance system is critical to avoid a short-term and project-based approach to development co-operation projects (OECD, 2018[1]). In this context, the G20 Principles (see above) call for stronger multi-level governance and co-ordination for greater effectiveness of city-to-city partnerships and for more demand-based initiatives that take into account local and regional contexts.

Financing and capacity

The availability of sufficient and adequate financial resources and conditions is crucial to the success of city-to-city partnerships. Insufficient funding and the volatility of financing represent a significant burden to the long-term impact of city-to-city partnerships both in the donor and in the partner country. The OECD (2018[1]) shows that the lack of financial guarantees for DDC projects, weak prioritisation of DDC funds across levels of government and the lack of multi-annual strategic plans and budgets are among the main challenges hindering the efficiency of DDC interventions. Ensuring the long-term financial stability of city-to-city partnerships can be particularly difficult. In Germany, for example, a main obstacle for municipalities regarding their city-to-city partnerships is the annual budgeting cycle. Since public budgets, e.g. municipal and federal state budgets as well as funding from implementing agencies such as GIZ and SKEW, usually cover only one year; longer-term planning of DDC activities comes with uncertainty about the future financing of the activities (OECD, 2023[26]). LRGs, therefore, need to develop effective financing and efficient resource mobilisation strategies and instruments in co-operation with national governments. These may include existing mechanisms to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, such as the

integration of the SDGs in budgeting processes (G20 DWG, 2021[15]). One option to lower the volatility and uncertainty about DDC is the extension of budget cycles. The region of Flanders, Belgium, for example, put in place an innovative long-term DDC budgeting system, which ensures a five-year commitment cycle allowing greater predictability of aid for recipient countries (OECD, 2018[1]).

Blended finance could provide an opportunity to secure funds to implement city-to-city partnerships. Blended finance refers to the strategic use of development finance for the mobilisation of additional finance towards the SDGs, which primarily means commercial finance (OECD, 2018[27]). It presents growing opportunities to mobilise additional private finance. On average, official development finance interventions have mobilised private resources of close to USD 50 billion per year between 2018 and 2020 (OECD, 2022[28]). The OECD DAC Blended Finance Principles call on DAC members to support local development priorities and make sure that blended finance contributes to a sound local enabling environment for responsible borrowing (OECD, 2019[2]). Another tool to meet the financing demand for partnerships with local governments in developing countries is the development of subnational financing capacities to attract broader external finance. One example is that of subnational pooled financing vehicles (SPFM), such as specific municipal bonds (OECD, 2019[2]). SPFMs mobilised almost USD 3 billion in developing countries between 2000 and 2015 to finance public services such as water and sanitation, energy or transport infrastructure (FMDV/AFD, 2015[29]). In that context, linking DDC projects to the 2030 Agenda can be a powerful tool to attract funding from investors that seek to provide SDG-compatible finance (OECD, 2019[2]).

Governance models that entail co-financing schemes and the pooling of financial resources can help facilitate access to funding for DDC projects. As mentioned above, a conducive multi-level governance framework entails DDC funding support for development co-operation activities at the regional and local levels, e.g. through co-financing schemes. In Germany, for example, funding schemes from SKEW, the country's focal point for municipal development policy, can cover up to 90% of the total eligible expenditure of municipal development co-operation projects (OECD, 2023[26]). Furthermore**,** the lack of critical mass at the subnational level due to territorial fragmentation can be a challenge for design, implementation and reporting. Small municipalities engaged in city-to-city partnerships with the Global South in particular might not have sufficient financial resources and human capacity to design, co-ordinate and evaluate their activities. Implementing DDC activities through networks of municipalities can help address the lack of financial resources to manage a partnership with another peer in a developing country, especially in small municipalities. In the Italian region of Tuscany, the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) is promoting an initiative to support local municipalities to engage in DDC through the territorial partnership model adopted by the region. In Spain, municipalities have created joint funds to address the issue of scale (OECD, 2018[1]).

Improving the accountability and transparency of financing are key to contributing to successful city-to-city partnerships. Transparency and accountability of financing are longstanding barriers to effective DDC and city-to-city partnerships. The reputation of some local governments as engaging in corrupt activities is often due to weak financial transparency and insufficient national fiscal rules and frameworks (OECD, 2019[2]). A growing number of countries have therefore established mechanisms to safeguard against corruption that go hand in hand with financing procedures for DDC projects. Improving the accountability and transparency of financing is the first step towards ensuring that resources are used rationally, reliably, consistently and with high-quality standards. Sharing best practices and strategies to incentivise reporting by local governments on their ODA (also in the framework of city-to-city partnerships) can contribute to that objective (OECD, 2019[2]).

Local capacity and technical skills are a prerequisite for the successful governance of city-to-city partnerships but can be a challenging factor. Local and regional actors might have the insufficient scientific, technical and infrastructural capacity to conduct a sustainable city-to-city partnership (OECD, 2018[1]). Such obstacles often negatively impact project management and implementation of DDC projects at the local level, as does the turnover of staff in local administrations engaged in a partnership. Capacity-building

training modules and workshops can contribute to bridging potential gaps in terms of expertise and technical skills as well as knowledge of the SDGs (OECD, 2018[1]). Local NGOs or research centres can provide needed knowledge and legal, financial or other for development co-operation projects. Direct assistance, advice and support are the most common forms of capacity building for governments (used for example by the Barcelona Provincial Council in Spain or SKEW in Germany) (OECD, 2018[1]). Another tool is peer learning activities between city administrations or across levels of government. They allow for drawing lessons from past successes and failures and thus improve existing partnerships. For example, the partnership between the city of Zoersel in Belgium and the city of Bohicon in Benin focused on peer learning and exchange to strengthen the local capacity in local governance, technology transfer, service delivery and waste management (OECD, 2018[1]). The SDGs can play a key role in supporting such peer learning activities as they provide a global framework with common goals, orientation and policy guidelines to both parties of the city-to-city partnership.

Engagement

Stakeholder engagement is a mechanism to secure greater social and political acceptance or co-design of partnerships and improve the representation of various actors therein. One of the main framework conditions that make city-to-city partnerships work is the engagement of territorial stakeholders in the partnership. The Busan Partnership highlighted that openness, trust, mutual respect and learning lie at the core of effective partnerships in support of development goals (OECD, 2011[30]). It is therefore important to recognise the different and complementary roles of all actors involved in development co-operation projects. This is particularly relevant since traditional bilateral partnerships are increasingly replaced by multi-level and multi-stakeholder partnerships from across scales and sectors. One of the advantages of DDC, and in particular city-to-city partnerships, is the proximity of actions to and possible collaboration with civil society and those directly affected by public policies (Vital, 2013[31]). Local-based partnerships represent a platform to involve and gather the support of various stakeholders around SDG-related city-to-city partnerships (de Losada Passols, 2017[32]). These stakeholders can include the local government, private sector, academia and civil society amongst others. By engaging various territorial stakeholders from different sectors and building stakeholder relationships between territories, city-to-city partnerships are a particular promoter of innovation and co-operation that can contribute to SDG 17 (UCLG, 2019[20]). For example, CSOs are often important partners for cities in developing and developed countries and key implementing agents in local service delivery and the assessment of local communities' needs (UN-Habitat/UNO/FMCU, 2001[33]). In the Basque Country, for instance, 90% of ODA is channelled through CSOs (OECD, 2018[1]).

Stakeholder engagement creates ownership of DDC and city-to-city partnerships' activities. The engagement of territorial actors such as CSOs, NGOs, the private sector, research centres and universities allows to empower communities and generate ownership and long-term sustainability of partnerships. At the same time, stakeholder engagement enables the development of place-based knowledge, expertise and good practices (OECD, 2018[1]). It can furthermore lead to collective learning, which has the potential to raise the capacity for collective problem-solving among diverse groups (Gerlak and Heikkila, 2011[34]). Generally, three main types of learning are most relevant for city-to-city partnerships: i) technical learning (learning about certain policy instruments and their improvement to achieve a goal); ii) conceptual learning (exploring the bigger picture and taking new perspectives); and iii) social learning (learning about values, norms and responsibilities) (Kemp and Weehuizen, 2005[35]). It is therefore important to identify the most relevant potential stakeholders for city-to-city partnerships, map their core motivations and actions, and regularly assess their engagement. Furthermore, it is beneficial to provide adequate legal and institutional frameworks that encourage engagement processes, as well as to offer the necessary platforms for dialogue between project partners (OECD, 2018[1]). Participation in international city networks and fora can be a tool to create links with other city governments, CSOs or businesses working on the SDGs.

The private sector and academia are key actors that can support city-to-city partnerships. The contribution of the private sector to local sustainable development is crucial as it represents a main driver of productivity, inclusive economic growth and employment opportunities. Engaging the private sector in city-to-city partnerships for the SDGs can bring domestic firms and industries closer, expertise and best practices as well as shift their focus toward sustainability while expanding their international network. Such a knowledge gain has the potential to strengthen the local economy (Gootman, Barker and Bouchet, 2019[23]). Partnerships with the private sector also allow city governments to exploit business opportunities for integrated urban development. In addition, the private sector is a key actor engaging with local communities and other local stakeholders, boosting innovation and producing useful data and information that contribute to a successful city-to-city partnership. Using the 2030 Agenda to further engage the private sector in such partnerships can also represent a powerful tool to attract investors who seek to provide SDG-compatible finance (OECD, 2019[2]). Academia can also play a key role in development co-operation projects. The integration of universities into city-to-city partnerships allows for tapping into the knowledge and scientific expertise held by these institutions. In particular, it allows for the application of scientific research and expertise at the local level, for example through data and the development of indicator frameworks as well as evaluation and reporting frameworks. Finally, city-to-city partnerships can actively contribute to the exchange of knowledge between academic institutions in the two partner cities thereby generating new research synergies.

Data and information

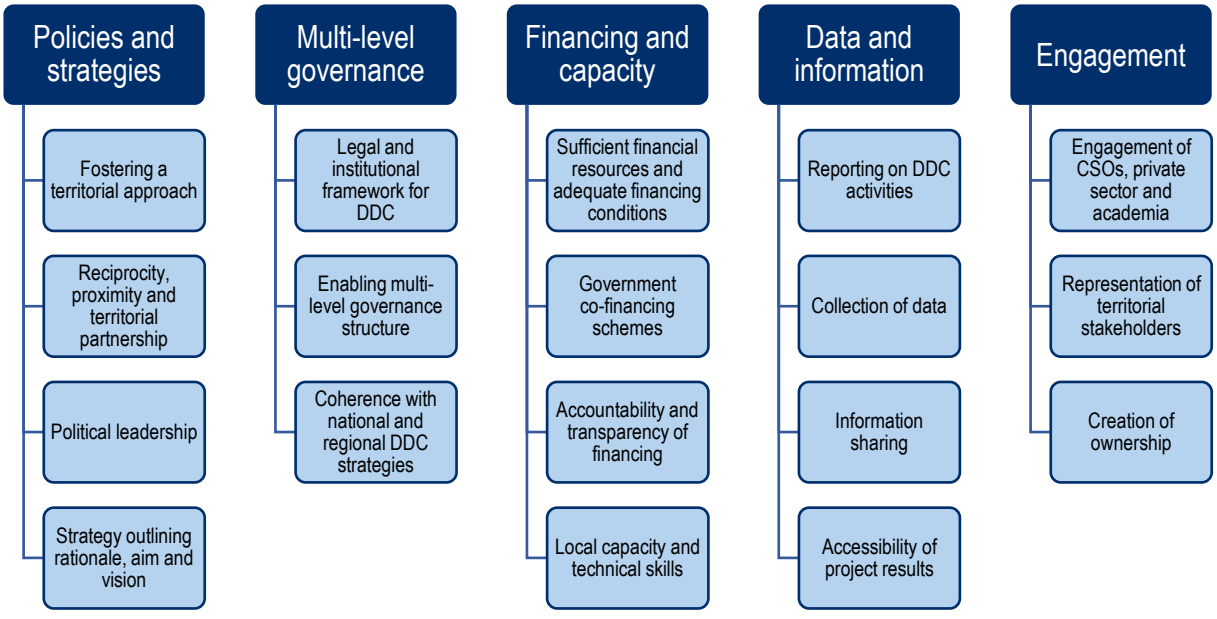
Reporting on development co-operation activities and the collection of data can improve transparency and accountability. The lack of quality data and accessibility of information is considered one of the most common explanations for a low awareness of DDC and city-to-city partnerships (OECD, 2018[1]). It can prevent an open and transparent exchange and a better understanding of the importance of DDC among territorial stakeholders and lead to the duplication of efforts, fragmentation of actions and lack of co-ordination (OECD, 2018[1]). Harmonised reporting on DDC activities, including city-to-city partnerships and in co-ordination with the national level, e.g. by using common and harmonised indicator frameworks, is important to ensure consistency and comparability between different DDC projects. Data on DDC and city-to-city partnerships are often scattered and fragmented due to the number of actors involved, such as local governments, implementing agencies, NGOs and other territorial stakeholders. For example, less than half of DAC members report on DDC activities, and only 4 out of 30 DAC members report on DDC disaggregated at the regional and municipal levels (OECD, 2018[1]).

Sharing best practices on how to better incentivise reporting by subnational governments on ODA can help increase its uptake. The multiplicity of subnational actors can be a major obstacle to setting up, governing and co-ordinating partnerships. It can also impact data collection, notably due to due cost of co-ordination (OECD, 2018[1]). Tracking and reporting relevant data about the partnership might then be considered not worth the effort (see above). In the Netherlands, for example, the International Cooperation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) is involved in capacity building and technical assistance for local governments in more than 30 countries (EUR 30 million in 2021) but its activities are considered too small to be worth reporting (VNG International, 2022[36]). The OECD (2018[1]) therefore points out the need to set incentives to improve the reporting on DDC financial flows, priorities and practices. Sharing best practices on how to better incentivise reporting by subnational governments on ODA, e.g. by promoting mechanisms for dialogue among DAC members with institutions dedicated to DDC, can play an important role in that respect (OECD, 2019[2]). In that context, it is also important to raise awareness about the concept of ODA more broadly, the eligibility criteria of activities and the reporting possibilities at the subnational level, including in municipalities. In France for example, the National Commission for Decentralised Co-operation (*Commission nationale de la coopération décentralisée*, CNCD) hosts a web-based reporting platform, including an Atlas of Decentralised Co-operation that maps the international actions of all French local and regional authorities (OECD, 2019[2]).

Data are an important factor to assess the performance of city-to-city partnerships. There are several challenges related to the accountability and transparency of DDC projects, in particular when it comes to M&E. Even if a M&E system is in place for a specific project, different standards of city-to-city partnerships, in particular regarding the usage of qualitative data, can hamper comparability and replicability. In most EU countries, where M&E frameworks are used, the activities are mostly focused on the monitoring and assessment of input and some limited output results. They barely take into account the outcome or impact of DDC actions (OECD, 2018[1]). Without the relevant data and evaluation schemes, deriving potentially replicable good practices and quantifying the outcomes of the partnerships can be challenging. To measure and incentivise progress and allow for course correction, city partnerships need to be assessed by performance metrics. To that end, Gootman, Barker and Bouchet (2019[23]) propose the application of a SMART (specific, measurable, assignable, realistic and time-bound) model, which includes process metrics (number of missions, events, workshops, resources), outcome metrics and a timetable with specific deadlines and roles. Providing disaggregated data can also help avoid distorted analysis, priority setting and statistical development efforts (OECD, 2018[1]). Technology and innovation can be major drivers in that context, allowing for data measurement and sharing between data producers and users as well as between partnering cities (OECD, 2018[1]). They can also feed into the development of M&E frameworks (see the section on using data and indicators in monitoring and evaluation in Chapter 2).

Sharing information is a vital factor to guide and improve partnerships. Successful city-to-city partnerships require reliable and regular communication with all territorial stakeholders, including a mutual understanding of their objectives and commitment between partners. The sharing of information between partners is crucial to guiding and improving partnerships on a long-term basis (OECD, 2018[1]). A transparent and effective communication plan upfront on what information should be communicated, to whom, by whom and when, is a helpful tool in that regard (UCLG, 2019[20]).

Figure 1.8. Overview of framework conditions for effective and sustainable city-to-city partnerships



Reporting and the accessibility of project results to the general public are crucial to raising awareness about partnerships. To better understand DDC results and the contribution of DDC projects to their intended goals, governments need to report comprehensively on their financial flows. Improved reporting across donors is critical to foster transparency and better capture the richness and impact of DDC. In

addition to the financial component of DDC, reporting on the non-financial component is crucial as well. To make partnership results more accessible to the general public, the reporting on city-to-city partnerships needs to consider several elements. These include the purpose of the reporting itself, the target audience, the thematic priorities, the way data and findings are presented, the frequency, the resources and the capacities available for the reporting. Effective reporting and open data accessibility represent an accountability mechanism for the local governments involved in the partnership as they provide an incentive for effective project performance and usage of resources (SDSN, 2016[14]). For this purpose, M&E findings can also be distributed through online tools such as websites, newsletters, press releases and social media. Remedial measures are a way to enhance accountability when programme outcomes are not achieved (UCLG, 2019[20]).

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Notes

[1] Imputed student costs are defined as indirect or "imputed" costs of tuition in donor countries.

[2] OECD DAC members can count the costs of assisting refugees in donor countries as ODA.

[3] Health summarises data reported under the labels I.2.b. Basic Health and I.2.a. Health, General.

[4] Including the Principles for Quality Infrastructure Investment, the G20 Guidelines on Quality Infrastructure for Regional Connectivity and the G20 High-level Principles on Sustainable Habitat through Regional Planning.

[5] In Germany, there are different associations representing districts, towns, cities and municipalities: i) the Association of German Cities; ii) the German Association of Towns and Municipalities; and iii) the German Association of Districts.

2 Rationale and frameworks for assessing city-to-city partnerships

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms can enable partners involved in city-to-city partnerships to carry out dialogues on what works and identify opportunities for improvement. Yet, assessing city-to-city partnerships remains a challenge and often lacks a quantitative component. The United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a tool to improve the M&E of city-to-city partnership projects and their contribution to achieving global goals. This chapter takes stock of existing checklists and self-assessment tools of relevance to city-to-city partnerships and identifies persistent gaps. It also provides the rationale for a complementary framework to gauge the effectiveness of partnerships at the subnational level and in particular measure progress towards achieving the SDGs and their compliance with the G20 High-level Principles on city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs.

The rationale for monitoring and evaluation of city-to-city partnerships

The SDG framework can provide a tool to improve the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of city-to-city partnership projects and their contribution to achieving the global goals. The adoption of SDGs in 2015 has provided cities, regions, and countries with a framework that can help develop and implement city-to-city partnerships (OECD, 2018[1]). The OECD estimates that although the SDGs were not designed by and for local and regional governments, at least 105 of the 169 SDG targets will not be reached without engagement and co-ordination with local and regional governments (OECD, 2020[2]). Many cities around the world have started to use the SDGs as a framework to rethink their local and regional development strategies, plans and actions, improve multi-level governance and vertical co-ordination as well as engage territorial stakeholders in policy making (OECD, 2020[2]). Furthermore, the SDGs can also help monitor and evaluate the contribution of local governments' partnerships to sustainable development and improve transparency and accountability on how effectively resources have been used and what impact the partnerships have had in the different partner countries and cities (UN-Habitat/UCLG, 2020[3]). Using the SDGs in M&E frameworks of city-to-city partnerships could help embrace a broader view of their outcomes beyond project specifics. Through its harmonised and standardised targets and respective indicators, the SDGs can also allow for internationally comparable measurements across different policy sectors and local contexts.

M&E mechanisms can enable partners involved in city-to-city partnerships to carry out dialogue on what works and identify opportunities for improvement. The information gathered through M&E offers a valuable learning mechanism that helps decision-makers put in place preventive and corrective actions where needed, learn from past experiences and ensure accountability toward relevant stakeholders (EC, 2022[4]). Dialogue on M&E among stakeholders can promote sharing of best practices on how to reduce costs and better incentivise reporting mechanisms (OECD, 2019[5]). The availability of solid data on the partnerships compiled through M&E mechanisms can also improve transparency and accountability since they allow tracking of how resources have been spent effectively. However, there is relatively little culture of M&E of the outcomes of city-to-city partnerships overall, as opposed to the results of individual projects, which constitutes a challenge in decentralised development co-operation (OECD, 2018[1]).

Better M&E of city-to-city partnerships are needed to achieve SDG impact (OECD, 2018[1]). Devolution of expenditure responsibilities to subnational governments in developing countries creates greater demand for partnerships that deliver financing, capacities and expertise at the subnational level (OECD, 2019[5]). However, transparency and accountability of financing remain longstanding barriers to effective decentralised development co-operation (DDC). Tracking how effectively resources have been spent and their impact on development outcomes is another challenge for city-to-city partnerships and DDC more broadly. For example, while 10 out of 232 SDG indicators (roughly 4% of total indicators) rely on official development assistance (ODA) data to monitor progress toward the goals, roughly a third of OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members report ODA data on DDC (11 out of 30 DAC members). Sufficient accountability and transparency of financing are the first steps to ensure that DDC resources are used rationally, reliably, consistently and with high-quality standards. The small size of projects and a large number of decentralised actors active in development co-operation, alongside a lack of incentives, also impede the collection and reporting of data at the subnational level (OECD, 2018[1]; 2019[5]). To that end, this section first provides an overview of the concept of M&E with a focus on city-to-city partnerships and the SDGs. It explains the importance of data and indicators for M&E frameworks. In addition, it provides key messages from the analysis of the 16 partnerships supported by the European Commission (EC) DG INTPA and an overview of existing checklists and self-assessment tools that inspired the development of the proposed systemic M&E framework for city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs in Chapter 3.

The concepts of monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are distinct but complementary components that can be used to assess the progress and success of city-to-city partnerships. They are distinct as monitoring is a constant process, while evaluation is undertaken periodically. Monitoring provides information about the current status of partnerships, while evaluation provides recommendations and lessons learnt for future partnerships. Monitoring studies the present data and experiences of partnerships while evaluation studies past experiences of partnership performance. At the same time, the two concepts are complementary in the sense that monitoring is necessary for providing the underlying data and information for an evaluation.

Monitoring

Monitoring is a continuous activity over time to keep projects on track and measure progress based on predefined objectives, mostly through indicators (Potluka, 2020[6]). Monitoring activity is usually undertaken internally within the organisation or among project partners involved and focuses on inputs (financial, human and material resources used for the development intervention), activities (actions taken that mobilise inputs, such as funds, technical assistance and other types of resources, to produce specific outputs) and outputs (the products, capital goods and services which result from a development intervention) (OECD, 2002[7]). Monitoring frameworks involve multiple data points and frequent reporting. Thus, monitoring studies the information on the current status of a project or partnership and compares the actual progress with the planned progress (UN-Habitat/UCLG, 2020[3]).

Stakeholder engagement plays a key role in the successful monitoring of city-to-city partnerships. Subnational authorities often lack political commitment to monitor city-to-city partnerships and effective frameworks to assess the outcomes (OECD, 2018[1]). One important driver to implementing a transparent monitoring scheme is to engage stakeholders in the monitoring process and share monitoring results and data. For example, cities can hold regular meetings that provide a platform for citizens, experts and stakeholders to voice and exchange their opinions on how the partnership is achieving its intended goals. For example, cities work closely with civil society organisations (CSOs). The share of DDC channelled to and through CSOs is 19%, which is 4% higher than the average for total bilateral aid (15%) (OECD, 2019[5]). The private sector can also be an important partner. Strengthening engagement with the private sector, for example, can help to upgrade the technology used to track assets, payments and administrative processes to bring accountability and trust into investments (OECD, 2019[5]). Engaging such stakeholders in city-to-city partnerships can also help better reflect their specific needs and priorities in the evaluation process. To improve transparency, cities could share monitoring data with the public through government communication channels such as bulletins or electronic platforms including dashboards or interactive and informative websites (UN-Habitat/UCLG, 2020[3]). For example, the province of Córdoba in Argentina has launched an Open Government Roundtable (*Mesa de Gobierno Abierto*) composed of CSOs and representatives from academia to work on the institutionalisation of open government principles in the province. The creation of this roundtable led to the development of an Open Management Portal, through which the general public can directly access information and data related to the three axes of governmental actions aligned with the SDGs (OECD, 2021[8]). The municipality of Kópavogur in Iceland has developed an innovative management and information system where all local databases are integrated into one data warehouse to monitor and link performance indicators on municipal tasks with prioritised targets and the SDGs (OECD, 2020[9]).

Community-based monitoring can constitute a tool for enhancing dialogue with local stakeholders. It is an organised way through which the local community can monitor and collect ongoing or recurring information on specific partnership goals and objectives. It can help improve the sense of ownership and increase the likelihood that both policy makers and stakeholders at all levels will use the results of the monitoring for planning, budgeting and the implementation of local development programmes, as well as for their M&E (UCLG/CES/OIDP, 2014[10]). Community-based monitoring can also encourage the collection of additional

data that may rely on diversified tools to generate and compile the necessary data for the assessment of projects and evidence-based policy making. Such tools may include community scorecards, surveys, dialogues or other feedback mechanisms (UCLG/CES/OIDP, 2014[10]). Examples of such tools for local monitoring in collaboration with stakeholders include the OECD Water Governance Indicator Framework, which helps governments to assess the state of play of water governance policy frameworks, institutions and instruments, and their needed improvements over time (OECD, 2018[11]) and the self-assessment tool of the Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development Toolkit, which enables policy makers, practitioners and stakeholders to review their institutional mechanisms, organisational structures and policy-making processes against internationally recognised good practices on policy coherence for sustainable development (OECD, 2016[12]).

Evaluation

Evaluation describes a systemic and objective examination of projects and policies and an assessment of their impact, outcomes and outputs (UN-Habitat/UCLG, 2020[3]). Evaluation processes usually include the collection of qualitative and quantitative data. They aim to assess whether the project achieved its intended impact. Impact refers to the positive, negative, primary and secondary long-term effects created by a development intervention (OECD, 2002[7]). Programme evaluations usually pursue two main objectives: i) ensuring accountability and providing learning opportunities to project partners and stakeholders; and ii) informing key decisions about the programme's future (Aghumian, 2014[13]). Evaluation is therefore an important tool to assess the impact of partnership programmes such as city-to-city partnerships. Evaluations also aim to assess outputs – the products, goods and services resulting from a development intervention and outcomes, which are defined as the short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention's output (OECD, 2002[7]). In addition, the term result summarises the output, outcome and impact of a development intervention (OECD, 2002[7]).

When setting the scope and design of a partnership evaluation, policy makers need to define the purpose of their evaluation. This can be done for instance through the elaboration of terms of reference to clarify expectations, roles and responsibilities for the evaluation, including why the evaluation is being undertaken (objectives), what will be examined (scope), how (methods) and when and for how long (timeframe) (UN-Habitat/UCLG, 2020[3]). In particular, project partners need to determine the target audience for their M&E (de Losada Passols, 2017[14]). For instance, an evaluation for accountability purposes requires more independence and broader coverage than one focused on learning in a specific area, for example urban resilience (Aghumian, 2014[13]). To ensure quality evaluations, sufficient resources need to be made available. According to an assessment of the World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group, the cost of M&E for development projects usually ranges between 1% and 3% of a given programme's annual expenditures (IEG, 2011[15]). Other common challenges that undermine the quality of evaluations include unclear terms of reference, insufficient time, weak M&E frameworks for the programmes, and lax evaluation methodology and tools (IEG, 2011[15]). Therefore, the adoption of agreed common standards to evaluate the extent to which city-to-city partnerships contribute to sustainable development would improve the quality, utilisation and impact of such evaluations.

Evaluations can be undertaken by an individual or a team, ideally comprised of local stakeholders from the public sector, private sector and civil society. The leading person or team should have the convening power to gather stakeholders and thoughtfully plan and manage the evaluation process and adapt the necessary tools (OECD, 2020[16]). For accountability and credibility purposes, those who commission and receive a project evaluation should not influence the evaluation at any stage (Aghumian, 2014[13]). However, key stakeholders should be consulted and the evaluation process should be transparent. In sum, the evaluation of city-to-city partnerships should be based on a clear understanding of the purpose of the evaluation, the availability of sufficient resources and data to assess outcomes and impacts, and the development of an evaluation work plan.

The OECD approach to the evaluation of development projects

The OECD (2018[1]) promotes a learning-focused approach to M&E with a focus on generating evidence and insights to improve effectiveness and impact. To that end and to guide evaluations, the OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation (EvalNet) has defined six evaluation criteria. The criteria were first developed in 1991 and last updated in 2019 (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1. Evaluation criteria of the OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation



Source: OECD (2021[17]), *Evaluation Criteria*, https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm (accessed on 7 March 2022).

Beyond being simple evaluation criteria, they describe the desired attributes of development interventions, which can help define what is meant by a successful city-to-city partnership for the SDGs. They are also linked to evaluation questions, which should provide a different perspective on the intervention, its implementation and results. The first criterion is *relevance* (is the intervention doing the right thing?) and assesses to which extent the intervention objectives and design respond to the intended beneficiaries and needs of the partners in institutions. The second criterion of *coherence* (how well does the intervention fit?) analyses the compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution. The third criterion of *effectiveness* (is the intervention achieving its objectives?) investigates to which extent the intervention has achieved or is expected to achieve its objectives and results. The fourth criterion of *efficiency* (how well are resources used?) measures the extent to which the intervention delivers results in an economic or timely way. The fifth criterion of *impact* (what difference is the intervention making?) assesses to which extent the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative higher-level effects. Lastly, the sixth criterion on *sustainability* (will the benefits last?) should measure to which extent the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue (OECD, 2020[18]).

The usage of the OECD evaluation criteria should be guided by two conditions. First, there needs to be a thoughtful application of the criteria to support high-quality and useful evaluation. This means that the criteria should be contextualised based on the circumstances of the individual evaluation and stakeholders involved, i.e. the evaluation questions and what the answers will be used for, which should inform how the criteria are interpreted and analysed (OECD, 2021[17]). Second, the application of the criteria needs to be based on the purpose of the evaluation, i.e. the criteria should be covered according to the needs of relevant stakeholders and the context of the evaluation (OECD, 2020[18]). A different amount of time and resources may be devoted to the evaluative analysis for each criterion depending on the purpose of the evaluation. Data availability, resource constraints, timing and methodological considerations may also influence whether and to what extent a particular criterion is covered (OECD, 2021[17]). Therefore, the criteria should be understood within a broader context and read in conjunction with other guidance on how to evaluate development projects (OECD, 2020[18]).

Policy alignment across levels of government, local ownership, dialogue and reciprocity among partners are critical for the effective M&E of city-to-city partnerships. In the context of city-to-city partnerships, M&E frameworks should assess: i) the level of alignment between the actions of city-to-city partnerships and the local and national policies in partner countries; ii) the degree of ownership by local partners in partner countries; iii) the degree of dialogue and participation that partner organisations plan in the project; as well as iv) the potential for reciprocity among partners. In addition, an M&E framework should help actors generate evidence-based information to capture the value-added of the partnership over alternative approaches put in place by central governments and other development actors. It should also feed into a learning process that uses the information gathered to inform future political decision making, including through the internalisation of lessons learnt, the production of strategic knowledge and the communication of results for better accountability (OECD, 2018[1]). Development effectiveness principles should provide guidance for both national and subnational actors to improve their policy environment and strengthen their partnerships with diverse actors at the local and national levels to deliver on agreed development results. The Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC) monitoring, led by national governments, aims to support the effectiveness of DDC by linking subnational and central actors for policy coherence. Hence, the GPEDC can also help to strengthen the voice of cities and regions within dialogues on development effectiveness including at high-level meetings such as the 2022 Effective Development Co-operation Summit.

Benefits and success factors of M&E frameworks

Successful M&E systems can generate various benefits for policy makers. First, they facilitate evidence-based political decision making and public spending. Being able to demonstrate the (positive) outcome of a policy or a partnership at large can make it easier to garner support from across levels of government or other funding sources (SDSN, 2016[19]). M&E also improve organisational learning and the development capacities of governments and other actors involved in the partnership. In the context of city partnerships for sustainable development, M&E help assess whether and to what extent the cities involved in the partnership are making progress towards the achievement of the SDGs and towards the key objectives of the EC Partnerships for Sustainable Cities programme (hereinafter the EC Partnerships programme) such as improved urban governance, social inclusion, resilience, prosperity and innovation. This is particularly the case if the M&E results are subsequently used to improve ongoing and future partnership initiatives (Lamhauge, Lanzi and Agrawala, 2012[20]). The United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) therefore suggests the application of a simple M&E framework for DDC projects that local project partners are confident working with (UCLG, 2019[21]). M&E also provide researchers and other professionals the opportunity to develop research, policy recommendations and other innovative solutions that can contribute to strengthening local governance (SDSN, 2016[19]). In doing so, M&E systems can enhance the implementation of city-to-city partnerships and increase their visibility and impact.

The availability of quality data is an important success factor in M&E frameworks. These frameworks can improve the collection of data as they rely on the availability of quantitative information for policy assessment (OECD/UNDP, 2016[22]). Increased demand for data can drive up the quantity of information available, which can feed into evidence-based policy planning. ODA, for example, is a key data source to strengthen the M&E of financing for city-to-city partnerships (OECD, 2019[5]). Improved quality and quantity of data can contribute to increased transparency e.g. through annual or monthly communication on ongoing projects and sharing project outcomes, thereby improving accountability. Consistent and ongoing M&E can also improve co-ordination across governmental levels and stakeholders to guide public action through information sharing and continuous data collection (OECD, 2018[1]). The publication of the outcomes of city-to-city partnerships can improve their visibility and, thereby, potentially increase public support for and recognition of these partnerships. In addition, it enhances the efficiency of projects through consultation and networking. One example in France is the Atlas of Decentralised Co-operation, which maps the international action conducted by all French local and regional authorities and provides a platform for inter-ministerial and multi-stakeholder information sharing (OECD, 2018[1]).

Successful M&E frameworks integrate multi-level governance aspects and engage stakeholders. According to the UCLG, the most efficient M&E frameworks build on joint and co-ordinated efforts across various levels of government (i.e. local, regional, territorial) and local stakeholders such as the private sector, CSOs, academia and citizens (UCLG, 2019[21]). In Spain, for example, most regions and municipalities active in DDC have set up multi-stakeholder platforms or councils that advise them on development co-operation projects. They follow a participatory approach to engage a broader range of actors in the implementation and evaluation of DDC projects (OECD, 2018[1]). In Madrid, the city council established the *Foro Madrid Solidario*, a multi-stakeholder platform for consultation and dialogue that aims to allow for a participative approach to the design, implementation and evaluation of Madrid's local development co-operation policies (de Losada Passols, 2017[14]). Another example is the region of Flanders (Belgium), which has developed guidelines for the implementation and impact evaluation of its DDC projects. While evaluations are usually developed by external evaluators, monitoring is conducted by the region and local partners. Mid-term reviews are one of the main evaluation modalities in its partner countries, which have to follow the evaluation guidelines. The region also links financial audits to the projects, which are stored in the international M&E database that represent the basis for Flanders' ODA reporting (OECD, 2018[1]). The UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) (2016[19]) characterises the capacity for information flows across levels of government as another success factor of local M&E systems since it facilitates the analysis of disaggregated statistics to evaluate local performance. Additionally, successful frameworks map out the project content during the conceptualisation phase to ensure that SDG targets are identified and that accurate and exploitable data are collected from the beginning (UCLG, 2021[23]).

Knowledge-based institutions can facilitate the development of M&E frameworks. Universities and research centres are often actively involved in city-to-city partnerships (OECD, 2018[1]). Through their knowledge, capacities and tools to generate specific data, they also carry a strong potential to improve the evidence base and evaluation of city-to-city partnerships. They can thus be a critical player in data collection and drafting of evaluation reports. The UCLG Capacity and Institution Building (CIB) Working Group suggests that experienced project partners such as universities can help train local stakeholders in using M&E systems and potentially align them with the different partner cities' overall performance management system and the SDGs, and train the other partners accordingly on how to use them (UCLG, 2019[21]). One example where a partnership between universities provides opportunities for shared learning and development is the Phoenix Project between Cardiff University in Wales (United Kingdom) and the University of Namibia. In this partnership, the two universities are engaged in training, mutual resources and the provision of information technology support among other things (de Losada Passols, 2017[14]). Multilateral platforms can also help to ensure that capacity building and technical assistance provide results. For instance, Tax Inspectors Without Borders (TIWB) deploys experienced tax auditors to work with countries' revenue authorities, including at the subnational level: the Tax Administration Diagnostic

Assessment Tool (TADAT), particularly, has witnessed growing demand from subnational entities (OECD, 2019[5]).

International co-operation can promote an M&E culture that fosters the involvement of a variety of actors. The GPEDC, co-led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the OECD, is an example of an international partnership contributing to a more inclusive M&E culture. Through its monitoring exercise to track progress on the implementation of internationally-agreed development effectiveness principles, it allows multiple stakeholders, including local and regional actors from both provider and partner countries, to participate in the monitoring process (OECD, 2018[1]). In 2016, more than 81 low- and middle-income countries led the reporting exercise, with the participation of more than 120 countries, 74 development organisations and several hundred CSOs, private sector representatives, trade unions, foundations, parliamentarians and local governments (OECD, 2018[1]).

In sum, the success of M&E frameworks depends on a range of factors. First, it is important to foster a wider uptake of the M&E culture, e.g. through international co-operation to improve organisational learning and the development capacities of local governments and other actors involved in partnerships. Second, data collection and the availability of quality data contribute to the delivery of better and more precise M&E results. Through their knowledge, capacities and tools to generate specific data, universities and other academic institutions carry a strong potential to improve the evidence base and evaluation of city-to-city partnerships. Third, the most efficient M&E frameworks incorporate efforts across various levels of government and integrate local stakeholders such as the private sector, CSOs, academia and citizens.

Using data and indicators in monitoring and evaluation

Indicators play a central role in M&E processes. By creating regular and objective feedback on the progress of partnerships towards their objectives, indicators offer a quantitative assessment tool. As such, they can be used to examine the effects of partnerships' objectives and outputs (Figueiredo, Honiden and Schumann, 2018[24]). They can provide essential information for cities to assess the effectiveness of their policies and objectives and to adjust them if needed. Well-designed indicators have the benefit of providing easily comprehensible information and supporting judgment based on facts that can inform political decisions (Figueiredo, Honiden and Schumann, 2018[24]). Indicators can also facilitate learning by contributing to a better understanding of what types of policies are effective or ineffective. Additionally, indicators can further contribute to transparency and accountability (Figueiredo, Honiden and Schumann, 2018[24]).

Well-defined indicators allow M&E frameworks to quantify project or partnership outcomes and achievements. Local indicators provide tangible data that can guide actions and policies relevant to local competencies, for example, administrative and operational data (OECD, 2020[2]). To be of use for M&E frameworks, such indicators should be specific (measuring the intended results), measurable (being reliable and objective), attainable (being practical and obtainable at reasonable cost), relevant (being aligned with the objectives of the partnership) and time-bound (being expected to be achieved within a certain time frame). Defining indicators that fulfil these characteristics provides the opportunity to establish quantifiable targets and assess the project's achievement against those target values and in comparison, to the baseline situation (UN-Habitat/UCLG, 2020[3]). The selection of indicators can be theoretical and science-driven (i.e. being based on theoretical models) or value-driven (i.e. reflecting ongoing social debates and priorities), with the latter being more common for policy-making purposes (Zinkernagel, Evans and Neij, 2018[25]). However, different partners might have differing measures and criteria for success (The Partnering Initiative/UN DESA, 2020[26]). It is important to agree on monitoring criteria and indicators that fulfil the needs of all partners to avoid any overload of indicators and reports (OECD, 2018[1]).

SDG data can provide M&E frameworks with a holistic perspective on development co-operation projects. The SDGs have supported a shift towards a multi-sectoral approach to development co-operation, incentivising municipalities to collaborate internationally. The SDGs as an internationally standardised framework is another means to improve M&E frameworks through their common foundation and language. In particular, they can help leverage opportunities to engage cities and regions in monitoring and data collection (OECD, 2020[2]). An example of using the SDGs to improve M&E culture is the OECD programme A Territorial Approach to the SDGs. The programme supports cities and regions on their pathway to enhancing accountability through better monitoring of sustainable development projects and outcomes (OECD, 2020[2]). City-to-city partnerships are a major component of the localisation of the SDGs (OECD, 2018[1]). The localisation of the SDGs requires collecting and analysing context-specific data to allow for a reliable assessment of the local needs and living conditions of different communities. Without systematic M&E, it is difficult to separate project outcomes that work from those that do not (Figueiredo, Honiden and Schumann, 2018[24]).

However, the collection of local and context-specific data can be challenging for city-to-city partnerships and the assessment of their progress towards achieving the SDGs, particularly in developing countries. Local governments in the least developed territories and countries often lack the capacity and resources for data collection (de Losada Passols, 2017[14]). The PARIS21 Engagement Strategy, therefore, highlights the increasing demand from local governments for disaggregated data and the need for subnational components of national strategies for the development of statistics (NSDS) to monitor development activities and leave no one behind (OECD, 2019[5]). Due to the limited availability of granular data, 59% of local government associations and 72% of local and regional governments in countries reporting to the UN High-level Political Forum have yet to develop any form of system to track progress on the localisation of the SDGs in 2021 (UCLG, 2021[23]). Moreover, the capacity of cities and municipalities in terms of budget and staff varies, impeding the collection and reporting of data at the subnational level (OECD, 2019[5]).

Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) can help facilitate the creation of M&E frameworks. Tying into existing frameworks such as the reporting of progress in VLRs and Voluntary National and Local Reviews (VNRs) can simplify the introduction of M&E frameworks locally (The Partnering Initiative/UN DESA, 2020[26]). An increasing number of local authorities from all continents are publishing VLRs to assess their progress on the SDGs, including Cape Town (South Africa), Helsinki (Finland), Kitakyushu (Japan), Melbourne (Australia), New York (United States), São Paulo (Brazil) and Surabaya (Indonesia) among others (OECD, 2020[2]). These VLRs can inspire local policy makers, notably for the development of commonly agreed indicators for M&E frameworks to assess the progress of their city partnerships towards the SDGs. Furthermore, the integration of city-to-city partnerships assessments into VNRs and VLRs can provide an opportunity for cities and regions to strengthen their data on SDG implementation and thus feed into an improved M&E framework.

Monitoring and evaluation in the EC Partnerships programme – Evidence from 16 partnerships

The EC Partnerships programme uses logical frameworks including activity matrices to assess each of its city-to-city partnerships. Logical frameworks, strategic planning and management methodology to design, monitor and evaluate international development projects are the most commonly used tools to assess EC external actions or projects. The logical framework or log frame aims to measure the fulfilment of the objectives of an action, e.g. a city-to-city partnership. The log frame includes the overall objectives of the partnership (impact), specific objectives (outcome), outputs and different indicators used to measure the extent to which the different objectives have been achieved (EC, 2021[27]). For example, in the Madrid-Praia partnership Adapting Local Integrated Urban Development Plans to the SDGs, the overall objective (impact) of the partnership is fostering a territorial approach to integrated local development for more sustainable and inclusive cities. In addition, the partnership aims to empower the partners to adapt local strategies aligned with the SDGs through designing a multi-stakeholder ecosystem to finance the

implementation of an SDG action plan. The indicator to measure impact is the number of inhabitants in Praia benefitting from the project activities. One of the specific objectives (outcomes) is to strengthen urban governance, which is measured by the indicator number of local strategic plans. The desired output is a local strategic plan for sustainable development and the SDGs, an action plan and an investment plan (output), which is measured by the number of local plans for development (indicators to measure output). The log frame includes an activity matrix, which identifies and describes partnerships' key activities to be carried out to produce the intended outputs and the necessary means such as political, technical, financial, human and material resources required to implement these activities, e.g. staff, equipment, supplies and operational facilities.

The logical framework of the EC Partnerships programme includes several indicators and data sources. Indicators used in the logical framework of the EC Partnerships programme include indicators for different points in time, i.e. a baseline value (value and reference year), a current value (reference year), a target value (value and reference year) as well as sources of data and assumptions. Indicators are quantitative and/or qualitative variables that allow for simple and reliable measurement of the achievements of the partnership. The baseline refers to the value of the indicator before the action to assess and compare it against future progress. The current value refers to the latest known value at the time of reporting. Lastly, the target value refers to the intended final value. The assumptions refer to any external conditions that may have affected the action that is outside of the management's control. The log frame is thus helpful as a reporting tool on the achievement of results of the city-to-city partnerships during the implementation phase.

The activity matrix identifies and describes partnerships' key activities to produce the intended outputs. These main activities include the necessary steps to obtain the desired result, for example the recruitment and assignment of staff or the creation of project governance committees. The main activities are described by explaining means, costs and assumptions. The means refer to the political, technical, human and material resources that are necessary to implement the activities. The costs refer to the amount of money necessary for the action and how they are classified. Assumptions describe the external, necessary and positive conditions for implementing the intervention that is outside of its management's control. The activity matrix is used to complement the log frame as it forces project initiators to reflect on the necessary steps for achieving their impacts, outcomes and outputs. It can also help partnerships establish clear goals and outcomes as the activity matrix can be used as a guide to assess feasibility (EC, 2021[27]).

The data and indicators used in the evaluation of EC Partnerships are not harmonised, which makes the comparison of project outcomes challenging. While all partnerships of the EC Partnerships programme use log frames and activity matrices to monitor and evaluate the outcome of its partnerships, each partnership decides on its overall (impact) and specific objectives (outcome) (Table 2.1). The partnerships also determine their indicators to measure progress in achieving these objectives. Most partnerships have one overall objective (impact) and several specific objectives (outcomes), while others pursue two or more overall objectives measured by different indicators, although the guidelines for filling the log frames suggest pursuing a single long-term objective. They also consider having only one specific objective: a good practice. However, there are no guidelines on the number of indicators required to monitor and evaluate the partnerships' progress in achieving their objectives. Consequently, there is a large variety and diversity in the number and scope of indicators used to measure impact, outcome and outputs (as shown in Table 2.1)

Table 2.1. Objectives and indicators of the EC Partnerships programmes' actions log frames

Partnership name and cities/countries involved	Overall objectives (impact)	Indicators to measure the impact	Specific objectives (outcomes)	Indicators to measure the outcome	Outputs	Indicators to measure outputs
AccessoCidades (AccessCities) *Partnership between Italy, Spain and Brazil*	Contribute to the qualification of urban mobility policies in Brazil as a tool for integrating sustainable urban development policies and reducing inequalities.	1	2	8	3	22
Appui à la région de Nouakchott pour un Développement Durable Résilient et équitable (ARENDDRE) (Support to the Nouakchott Region for Resilient and Equitable Sustainable Development) *Nouakchott (Tunisia), Grand Paris Sud (France)*	Focuses on urban transportation and safety in public spaces to ensure the integration of peripheral neighborhoods through the improvement of travel conditions and the safety of populations in marginalised communities of the city.	1	4	8	8	30
AUTREMENT - Aménagement urbain du territoire pour reinventer les mobilités et engager les tunésiens (Urban development to reinvent mobility and involve Tunisians) *Strasbourg (France), Kairouan (Tunisia), Mahdia (Tunisia)*	More participatory, sustainable and inclusive mobility in Kairouan and Mahdia.	3	7	8	14	24
Asistencia Técnica Proyecto – Adapting Local Integrated Urban Development Plans to the SDGs through Multi-Stakeholder and Multi-Governance Approaches *Madrid (Spain), Praia (Cape Verde)*	Foster the territorial approach to integrated local development for more sustainable and inclusive cities. Empower them to adapt local strategies aligned with SDGs through multi-level governance.	1	4	6	11	11
BEST TAG – Blue Economy for the Sustainable Towns of Taranto and *Gabès* *Gabès (Tunisia), Taranto (Italy)*	Building and enhancing reliable co-operation between the coastal cities of Taranto and Gabès, enabling them to design and implement excellent urban development plans around the opportunities offered by the Blue Economy.	3	3	13	13	21
City Link Ostend-Banjul – Partnership for sustainable city development *Ostend (Belgium), Banjul (Gambia)*	Contribute to establishing a resilient and liveable city as a hub of commerce, prosperity, sustainability and good governance.	1	6	11	12	42
CRIC – Climate Resilient and Inclusive Cities *Co-operation between Indonesia and Europe in collaboration with other South and Southeast Asian*	Thirteen overall objectives (e.g. strengthened policy dialogue on urban policies, urban challenges and climate change and improved inclusive public policies including for gender equality).	13	6	12	16	16

Partnership name and cities/countries involved	Overall objectives (impact)	Indicators to measure the impact	Specific objectives (outcomes)	Indicators to measure the outcome	Outputs	Indicators to measure outputs
countries (India, Malaysia, Nepal, the Philippines and Viet Nam)						
El Centro Historico de la Habana *Habana (Cuba). Partnerships for sustainable cities in Latin America, Central America and the Caribbean*	Improve management model through a pilot model of a smart city that promotes the development of creative economies, to contribute to the safeguarding and protection of cultural heritage as well as the optimisation of institutional services offered at the territorial level.	2	2	4	8	8
Empoderamiento de Comunidades y Gobiernos Rurales a través del Turismo Sostenible en El Carchi, Ecuador (ECoGobTur) (Empowerment of Rural Communities and Governments through Sustainable Tourism in El Carchi, Ecuador) *Mira and Muntúfar (Ecuador), La Palma del Condado (Spain)*	Contribute to the strengthening of local governance, CSOs and local authorities (LAs) for the promotion of sustainable tourism as the axis of integrated local development in the Ecuadorian municipalities of Mira and Montúfar.	1	1	3	3	9
Improving Solid Waste Management in Windhoek-Namibia *Windhoek (Namibia), Bremen (Germany)*	To contribute to the reduction of the adverse environmental impact of the City of Windhoek (CoW) in relation to municipal waste management.	2	1	4	3	6
MAISPEMBA – A City-to-city and Multi-stakeholder Approach for an Integrated, Sustainable and Inclusive Urban Development of the city of Pemba *Emilia (Italy) and Pemba (Mozambique)*	Integrated urban development of the city of Pemba is promoted through the partnership between the municipality of Pemba and the municipalities of Reggio Emilia and Milan, Italy.	4	4	5	23	27
MUEVE - Movilidad Sostenible, Urbanismo, Equipamiento, Valoración del Espacio Público (Sustainable Mobility, Urbanism, Equipment, Valuation of Public Space and Greening) *San José (Costa Rica) and San Sebastian (Spain)*	Promote comprehensive urban development in line with the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development in the 15 municipalities in the area of influence of the Electric Train belonging to the Greater Metropolitan Area of Costa Rica.	1	4	13	5	6
Promotion of Integrated, Inclusive, Resilient and Ecological Urban Development of the City of Villa María and Its Region *Villa María, Córdoba (Argentina), Braga (Portugal), Asunción (Paraguay)*	Promote integrated, inclusive, resilient and ecological urban development, through a multi-level governance scheme of the local government of Villa María and its region.	2	4	4	15	15

Partnership name and cities/countries involved	Overall objectives (impact)	Indicators to measure the impact	Specific objectives (outcomes)	Indicators to measure the outcome	Outputs	Indicators to measure outputs
Research and Education Building Urban Institutions for Local Development (REBUILD) *Trento (Italy), Friuli-Venezia Giulia (Italy) Gharyan (Libya), Central Tripoli (Libya), Bine Walid (Libya), Azzawiya (Libya), Sirte (Libya), Zliten (Libya), Sebha (Libya), Zintan (Libya), Tobruk (Libya), Benghazi (Libya)*	To contribute to the development of qualitative local public services in Libya.	2	1	1	4	12
Smart Change – Strengthening Urban Governance, Prosperity and Innovation in Jakarta *Berlin (Germany), Jakarta (Indonesia)*	To promote good governance and sustainable urban development in Jakarta City following the 2030 Agenda on sustainable development through Jakarta-Berlin local authority partnership and triangular co-operation with Bangkok.	6	2	9	2	12
Strengthening the Governance of the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador, for the Adoption and Implementation of the Objectives of Sustainable Development, abbreviated as Metropolitan Governance *San Salvador (El Salvador), Barcelona (Spain)*	Promote metropolitan urban development, governance and comprehensive, equitable and sustainable territorial management in accordance with the UN 2030 Agenda.	1	1	2	5	5

Source: Log frames of 16 selected partnerships of the EC programme Partnerships for Sustainable Cities.

Individual partnerships measure similar objectives through different indicators and there are instances where similar objectives are measured through very different indicators. For example, the overall objective (impact) of promoting sustainable urban development policies and inclusivity is measured by the indicators "number of municipalities participating in the project" (e.g. in the *AccessCities* partnership, a co-operation between cities in Italy, Spain and Brazil), the "number of inhabitants benefitting from the project activities" (e.g. in the partnership on Adapting Local Integrated Urban Development Plans to the SDGs), a "localised economic growth index" and the "number of tons of CO_2 emitted annually" (e.g. Territorial Alliance for Sustainability and Competitiveness in Eastern Antioqueño-Colombia, between Rionegro, Colombia, Itaugua, Paraguay and Barcelona, Spain). This is the case since they are often placed at very different result levels, which highlights the missing distinction in the M&E frameworks between output (e.g. the number of municipalities participating in the project) and impact level (e.g. the number of tons of CO_2 emitted annually). Additionally, the type of indicators differs, some being quantitative and others qualitative. The log frames also include sources and means of verification that differ in their level of specificity (i.e. cities' websites and local newspapers compared to employment growth statistics of the central bureau of statistics). The level of accuracy within the log frame is hence often determined by the partnerships and their available resources.

Taking stock of existing monitoring and evaluation frameworks

Checklists and self-assessment tools for monitoring and evaluation

The following section provides an overview of a selection of existing M&E frameworks related to sustainable development, notably self-assessment frameworks and checklists (Table 2.2). The purpose of this overview is to draw insights into the development of an OECD evaluation framework for city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs. This section also identifies several gaps or missing parts and points out the need for a complementary M&E framework that allows cities to track the implementation of their city-to-city partnerships in a more comprehensive way.

Table 2.2. A sample of relevant checklists and self-assessment tools for the development of the M&E framework

Source	Name	Type and scope
OECD	OECD Water Governance Indicator Framework	**Monitoring framework with indicators and a self-assessment checklist**: The OECD Water Governance Indicator Framework is conceived as a self-assessment tool to facilitate a policy dialogue across a range of water users aiming to assess the state of play of water governance policy frameworks (what), institutions (who) and instruments (how), and their needed improvements over time. It is composed of a traffic light system based on 36 indicators, a checklist of more than 100 questions and a 10-step methodology to facilitate inclusive and participatory self-evaluation and consensus building. It concludes with the design of an action plan to steer progress over time in addressing identified bottlenecks or areas of improvement.
OECD	Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development Toolkit	**Toolkit with a self-assessment checklist**: This interactive self-assessment tool enables policy makers, practitioners and stakeholders to review their institutional mechanisms, organisational structures and policy-making processes against internationally recognised good practices on policy coherence for sustainable development, as outlined in the OECD Recommendation on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development. It is designed to stimulate dialogue by helping users to identify strengths, gaps and weaknesses as a first step toward improvement.
OECD	OECD Scoreboard on the Governance of the Circular Economy	**Self-assessment checklist**: The Checklist for Action for cities and regions transitioning to the circular economy aims to support decision makers in promoting, facilitating and enabling the transition to the circular economy. The checklist is accompanied by the OECD Scoreboard on the Governance of the Circular Economy, a tool for cities and regions to self-assess the existence and functioning of enabling conditions for circular economy policies, initiatives, strategies and programmes.

Source	Name	Type and scope
OECD	OECD Toolkit for Identifying, Monitoring and Evaluating the Value-added of Triangular Co-operation	**Toolkit with checklist**: This toolkit offers ideas for policy makers, practitioners and evaluators to capture the value-added of triangular co-operation, from day one of the project ideas. To ensure that the twin objectives of partnership and development results are considered fully, this toolkit provides input and food for thought on identifying the value-added of triangular co-operation, formulating indicators to account for the value-added of triangular co-operation and designing evaluations to take account of the value-added of triangular co-operation.
GPEDC	The Global Partnership Monitoring Framework for 2030	**Monitoring framework**: The Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC), co-led by the UNDP and OECD, is an example of an international partnership contributing to a more inclusive M&E culture. Through its biannual monitoring exercise to track progress on the implementation of internationally-agreed development effectiveness principles, it allows multiple stakeholders, including local and regional actors from both provider and partner countries, to participate in the monitoring process.
UN-Habitat	City Prosperity Initiative	**Monitoring framework**: The City Prosperity Initiative is a global enabling city authority, as well as local and national stakeholders, to identify opportunities and potential areas of intervention for their cities to become more prosperous. Its composite index is made of six dimensions. It serves to define targets and goals that can support the formulation of evidence-based policies, including the definition of ambitious and measurable city visions and long-term plans.
UN DESA and the Partnering Initiative	The SDG Partnership Guidebook	**Guidelines**: The guidebook sets out the key building blocks of successful partnerships for the SDGs and the underlying processes – from initial stakeholder engagement to partnership review – necessary to develop and keep those building blocks in place and to maximise partnership impact. Along with frameworks to help organisations understand, identify and select the most appropriate forms of collaboration, the guidebook includes a series of tools that support organisations through each step of partnership development and management.

Source: OECD (2018[11]), *OECD Water Governance Indicator Framework*, https://www.oecd.org/regional/OECD-Water-Governance-Indicator-Framework.pdf; OECD (2016[12]), *Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development Toolkit*, https://www.oecd.org/governance/pcsd/toolkit/ (accessed on 7 March 2022); OECD (2020[16]), *The Circular Economy in Cities and Regions: Synthesis Report*, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/10ac6ae4-en; UN-Habitat (2021[28]), *City Prosperity Initative*, https://unhabitat.org/programme/city-prosperity-initiative (accessed on 16 August 2021); UN-Habitat (2022[29]), *Urban Monitoring Framework*, https://data.unhabitat.org/pages/urban-monitoring-framework (accessed on 31 January 2022); The Partnering Initiative/UN DESA (2020[26]), *The SDG Partnership Guidebook: A Practical Guide to Building High Impact Multi-stakeholder Partnerships for the Sustainable Development Goals*, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26627SDG_Partnership_Guidebook_0.95_web.pdf.

The OECD Water Governance Indicator Framework

The OECD Water Governance Indicator Framework is a self-assessment tool for dialogue on the performance of water governance systems. Its framework is intended to be used as a multi-stakeholder voluntary and self-assessment tool to engage in multi-stakeholder dialogues on the performance of water governance systems involving governments, public, private and non-profit sectors. It aims to support the implementation of the OECD Principles on Water Governance and assess the state of play of water governance policy frameworks, institutions and instruments. It consists of a traffic light system of 36 water governance indicators for the 12 dimensions of the OECD Principles on Water Governance (OECD, 2015[30]). Data are collected through multi-stakeholder workshops through a five-scale self-assessment and a "not applicable option". The scale ranges from "in place, functioning" (5 points) if the water governance dimension is complete and relevant in all aspects, to "not in place" (1 point) if the governance dimension does not exist and there are no plans or actions taken for implementing it. Stakeholders are also invited to identify the expected trend for the next three years (improvement, stable situation, decrease). The indicators are complemented by a checklist containing more than 100 questions that underline that the implementation of each principle should not be limited to the 3 indicators per principle and requires a more in-depth reflection on additional governance conditions. The last step of the self-assessment process is the creation of an action plan, which should determine which collective actions can be taken over the short, medium and long terms to improve the different dimensions of the water governance system (OECD, 2018[11]). Recently, the indicator framework was complemented by a how-to Guide to Assess Water Governance, which contains a background section to understand the OECD principles and indicators on water governance and indicator framework and further explains the ten-step

methodology used to implement and carry out a multi-stakeholder assessment of water governance (OECD, 2022[31]). It also provides a range of examples and lessons learnt from the implementation of past experiences using the methodology.

The OECD Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development Toolkit

The OECD Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development Toolkit aims to analyse, enhance and track progress on policy coherence in the implementation of the SDGs. The toolkit provides practical guidance, self-assessment checklists and good practice examples. Its objective is to guide policy makers in the analysis to improve the understanding of synergies and trade-offs among SDGs. It also aims to strengthen existing institutional mechanisms to support a more coherent and integrated implementation of the SDGs. Furthermore, it helps identify options for monitoring, assessing and reporting policy progress on policy coherence for sustainable development. The self-assessment tool provides policy makers and stakeholders with the option to review their institutional mechanisms, organisational structures and policy-making processes in comparison to internationally recognised good practices. As such, it is designed to stimulate dialogue by helping users identify strengths, gaps and weaknesses regarding their implementation of the SDGs. The self-assessment tool consists of 24 questions structured across 8 building blocks (political commitment; strategic long-term vision; policy integration; policy co-ordination; local and regional involvement; stakeholder engagement; policy and financing impacts; monitoring, reporting and evaluation). The rating scheme follows the same approach as the OECD Water Governance Indicator Framework and ranges from 5 (in place, functioning) to 1 (not in place) with an additional "not applicable" option. The self-assessment should ideally be conducted by the body responsible for co-ordinating the implementation of the SDGs, for example the lead governmental institution. To improve the representativeness of the results, it could be organised through a workshop involving different territorial stakeholders (OECD, 2016[12]).

The OECD Scoreboard on the Governance of the Circular Economy (self-assessment tool)

The OECD Scoreboard on the Governance of the Circular Economy is a self-assessment tool based on 12 key governance dimensions to help create a circular economy system. The OECD scoreboard follows a 1 to 6 scoring system with 1 being "planned" and 6 being "in place, objectives achieved". In doing so, the OECD scoreboard offers cities and regions conducting the assessment an overview of the current governance situation, allowing them to take decisions based on the assessment's results. Additionally, it guides improvement by identifying policy areas where action is required to enable and facilitate the circular transition. The self-assessment is also a tool for dialogue as it is based on a multi-stakeholder participatory process, allowing various stakeholders to help improve the policies and tools by providing feedback during stakeholder dialogues that may promote collective thinking or foster learning. The self-assessment is based on 12 governance dimensions: roles and responsibilities, strategic vision, awareness and transparency, co-ordination, policy coherence, stakeholder engagement, appropriate scale, regulation, financing, capacity building, innovation, and data and assessment. The self-assessment allows for empirical learning that can help cities and regions rethink their overarching governance and economic models toward a circular economy. This exchange of practices across different governmental levels can help investigate and overcome barriers while generating adequate data and information and stimulating innovation (OECD, 2020[16]).

The Global Partnership Monitoring Framework for 2030

The Global Partnership Monitoring Framework for 2030 is a monitoring framework under the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC) that aims to improve development effectiveness. The GPEDC is a multi-stakeholder platform that aims to deliver long-lasting results and contribute to the SDGs. The GPEDC is housed at the OECD and is managed jointly with the UNDP

(GPEDC, 2020[32]; OECD, 2018[1]). Its framework allows local and regional actors from both donor and partner countries to participate in the monitoring process (OECD, 2018[1]). Through indicators that are assessed based on scoreboards, it incorporates evidence of how effective development co-operation aligns with supporting countries' policies and practices to achieve the 2030 Agenda and deliver results for the people and the planet (GPEDC, 2017[33]). The framework is based on a voluntary and country-led process to strengthen multi-stakeholder dialogue at the country, regional and global levels to drive change in the way development co-operation is provided by collecting country-generated data (OECD/UNDP, 2019[34]). The framework analyses data on ten indicators across four categories: i) ownership of development priorities by developing countries; ii) a focus on results; iii) inclusive development partnerships; and iv) transparency and mutual accountability. It also assesses the extent to which civil society is engaged. The GPEDC created a virtual dashboard to visualise the progress of countries on development co-operation data. This dashboard tool allows users to view country-specific data that can be compared across countries and regions. Additionally, it allows for the measurement of progress and trends over time (GPEDC, 2017[33]).

The City Prosperity Initiative

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) has developed the City Prosperity Initiative (CPI) to measure and monitor sustainable urban development. It provides city authorities, and local and national stakeholders with a composite index, which entails six dimensions (productivity; infrastructure; quality of life; equity and inclusion; environmental sustainability; governance and legislation) to define targets and goals supporting the formulation of evidence-based policies (UN-Habitat, 2021[28]). It allows cities in developed and developing countries the opportunity to create indicators and baseline information while providing a global monitoring mechanism adaptable to the local level. In particular, UN-Habitat's CPI represents a global monitoring framework for SDG 11, allowing cities to track progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and encouraging them to monitor and report in a more systematic manner (UN-Habitat, 2021[28]). A benefit of this global framework is a systemic approach to establishing and understanding inter-relations of different dimensions of city development. Furthermore, it provides a single score of the current state of the city through a composite index and establishes benchmarks and baselines for local monitoring. It also features a global platform for comparability, provides evidence for better policy making and accountability, and creates local monitoring mechanisms.

The SDG Partnership Guidebook

The SDG Partnership Guidebook is a tool for monitoring and evaluating partnerships' objectives. To assess the fulfilment of a partnership's objectives, the Partnering Initiative and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) propose to set up a regular formal review workshop taking place once every 6 or 12 months. In these workshops, project partners shall be invited to provide their opinions on the partnership across different qualitative indicators regarding various aspects of the partnership. These include the fundamentals of the partnership (e.g. if the partnership has identified collaborative advantages), the partnership relation (e.g. if partners are accountable to each other for delivering on their commitment), the structuring and setup (e.g. if the partnership's governance structure is fit for purpose), resources (e.g. if sufficient personnel is available), management (e.g. if information sharing and decision making is effective) and the enabling environment (e.g. if the partners advocate for more collaborative approaches to the SDGs) (The Partnering Initiative/UN DESA, 2020[26]).

The guidebook evaluates partnerships through the criteria of efficiency, effectiveness and value-added. The efficiency criterion is looking at how well the partnership is designed and implemented. Effectiveness assesses the work that the partnership is delivering and progress towards planned outputs, outcomes and impacts. Value-added refers to the extent to which the partnership adds value by achieving outcomes that cannot be done independently. According to the Partnering Initiative and UN DESA (2020[26]), there are some key factors to consider when monitoring and evaluating partnerships. These include ensuring that it

informs the future, ensuring clarification of what data are required and by whom, and trying to take a participatory approach to its design and implementation. Furthermore, it is important to be realistic about available resources, be creative in using already existing information, try to tie into existing frameworks where possible, use the theory of change not only for partnership design but also as a management tool to support reflection on processes and be transparent about the findings and results.

An overview of selected indicator frameworks for the localisation of the SDGs

An important prerequisite for measuring the progress of city-to-city partnerships towards sustainable development is the availability of an adequate indicator framework. While the UN's SDG indicator framework contains several city-specific indicators for SDG 11, all SDGs will require support for implementation by cities. Currently, the indicators used by the SDG framework are largely targeted towards the national level. Yet, national averages can misrepresent realities in regions and cities and tend to mask large territorial disparities, compromising the SDGs' premise of leaving no one behind (OECD, 2020[2]). Therefore, various organisations have made strong efforts to develop localised measurement and indicator frameworks and measure cities' and regions' progress on the SDGs over the past few years. The following section provides an overview of existing localised measurement frameworks and points out data gaps. The four frameworks and indicators presented are the OECD localised indicator framework for the SDGs, the UN-Habitat Global Urban Monitoring Framework, the *European Handbook for SDG Voluntary Local Reviews* and a stocktaking on indicators for European cities to assess and monitor the SDGs by the European Topic Centre on Urban Land and Soil Systems.

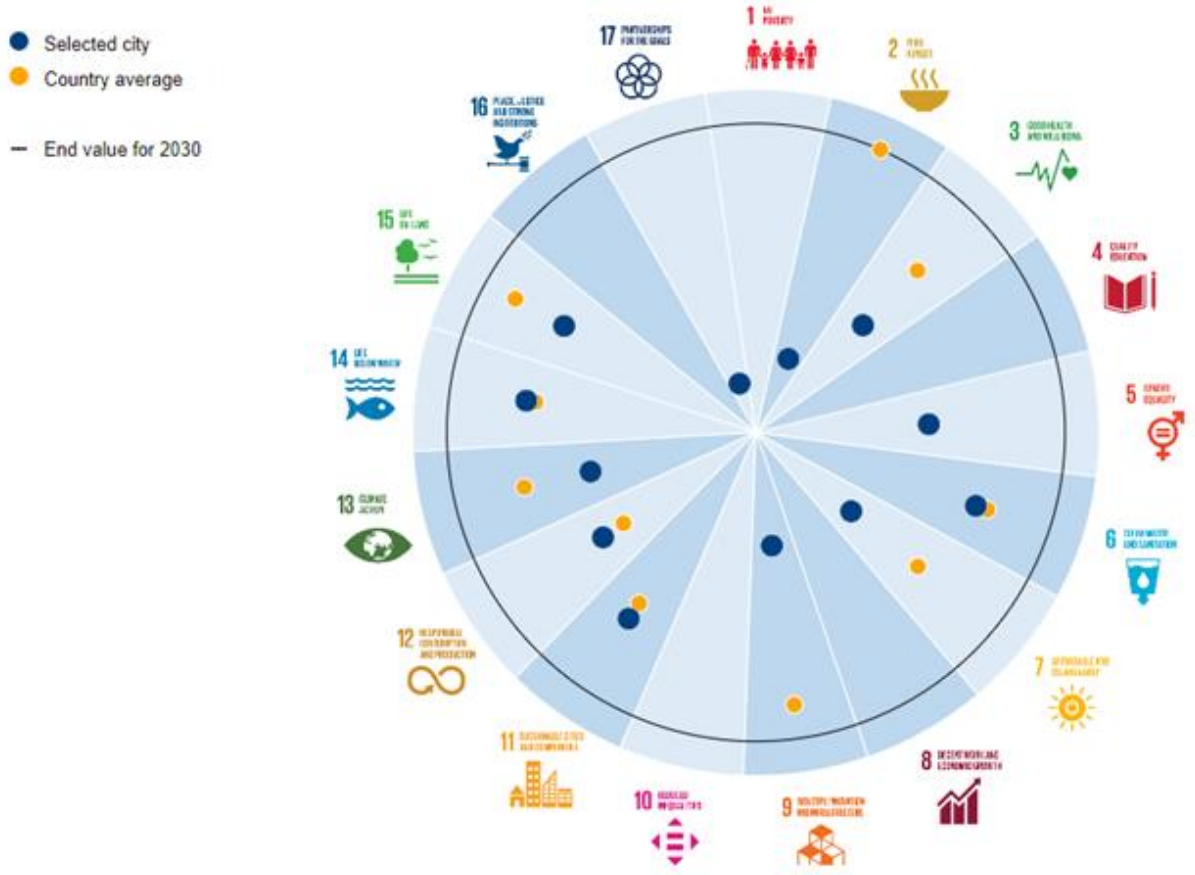
The OECD localised indicator framework for the SDGs

The OECD localised indicator framework for the SDGs provides indicators to measure the distance of regions and cities to each of the 17 SDGs. The consensual, comparable and standardised framework allows for benchmarking performances within countries and across regions and cities to support public action across levels of government. Through an extensive literature review and expert consultations, the OECD has classified the 169 SDG targets from the UN indicator framework by their level of relevance for subnational levels of government (place-relevant) and advanced economies (OECD-relevant). This classification led to a subset of SDG targets based on their applicability to the context and specificities of OECD countries (OECD-relevance). While all SDGs are relevant for cities and regions, 159 of the SDG targets appear to have a strong subnational component. However, only 105 of them are also very important in the context of OECD countries. While for example, 90% of the targets for sustainable cities apply to OECD regions and cities, only around 30% of the targets of SDG 17 "Partnerships and enablers for the SDGs" and 40% of the targets for SDG 14 "Life below water" appear as a priority to be measured at the subnational level in OECD countries. The OECD measures the achievement of those targets by a selection of 135 indicators for OECD regions and cities (OECD, 2020[2]).

To evaluate the achievements of a city or region on the SDGs, the OECD framework is based on identified end values to shed light on aspirational trends in OECD regions and cities toward the SDGs. Often, these end values are directly derived from the UN framework, i.e. the targets set by the UN. When they were not inferable from the UN framework, the OECD defined end values for indicators based on international guidelines (e.g. World Health Organization [WHO] air quality guidelines), the knowledge of experts in the field or based on the best performance of regions and cities in that indicator. Such end values have the objective of providing technical guidance for governments to advance local development plans and sustain evidence-based policies. End values, which represent ambitious targets to be achieved by 2030, enable regions and cities to assess where they stand today and understand the distance they have to travel by 2030. The OECD localised indicator framework attributes end values to 88% of its indicators, of which 65% are defined using the criteria of "best performers". The framework also normalises the SDG indicators from 0 to 100 – where 100 is the suggested end value of an indicator to be achieved by 2030 – and aggregates headline indicators that belong to the same SDG to provide an index score for each of the 17 SDGs

(Figure 2.2). The distance to the target or goal is the number of units the index needs to travel to reach the maximum score of 100 (OECD, 2020[2]).

Figure 2.2. OECD localised indicator framework for measuring the distance to the SDGs – Performance of cities – Example of the city of Bremen, Germany



Source: OECD (OECD, 2023[35]), *Measuring the Distance to the SDGs in cities and regions*, http://www.oecd-local-sdgs.org

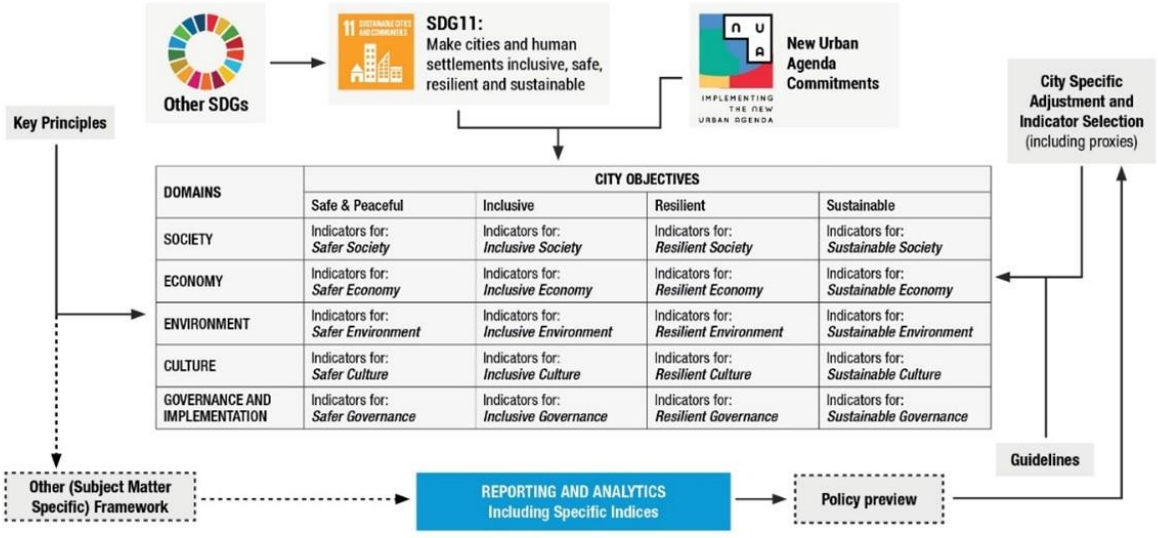
With its 135 indicators, the OECD localised framework covers at least 1 aspect of each of the 17 SDGs for both regions and cities. The OECD localised framework covers data for more than 600 cities and regions in OECD and partner countries and allows to compare them with their national average, peer cities and regions, including through a dedicated online visualisation tool.[1] Although the set of 135 indicators aims to cover the broad spectrum of all 17 SDGs, the coverage in terms of indicators also varies widely across SDGs and is higher for regions than for cities (OECD, 2020[2]). While the framework measures achievements in five of the targets of SDG 11 through seven indicators for cities[2] (defined as functional urban areas) and seven indicators for regions,[3] the coverage for SDG 17 is expandable. Currently, the measurement for SDG 17 encompasses an indicator of Internet access, relating to how regions and cities can communicate and co-operate to build a partnership for sustainable development and one indicator of international co-patents reflecting how knowledge sharing between regions can enhance access to innovation and foster sustainable development. The indicators do not yet capture components of public capacity (e.g. subnational finance and decentralisation) and development co-operation (e.g. ODA of SDG 17) due to the lack of available data. To advance the statistical agenda on these two components, the OECD keeps developing its work on subnational finance statistics (see OECD/UCLG (2019[36])) –

including pilot projects at the regional and municipal levels, as well as on measures of DDC (see OECD (2018[1]; 2019[5]; 2023[37])).

The UN-Habitat Global Urban Monitoring Framework

The UN-Habitat Global Urban Monitoring Framework (UMF) (2022[29]) aims to harmonise existing urban indices and tools to monitor the transformation towards a more sustainable, inclusive, safe and resilient urban area. As an agreed universal framework, it has been developed by taking into consideration existing urban indices and monitoring tools and the need for the development of an urban monitoring framework. As such, it aims to track the performance of the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs, and is meant to encourage data sharing and improve comparability at the global level. Furthermore, it pursues the objective to ensure a thematic integration and interlinkages between different dimensions of development, to promote working at different scales and functional urban areas and allow for comparability across cities. It also serves as a monitoring tool for UN-Habitat's SDG Cities flagship programme and facilitates VLR reporting. In particular, the UMF allows stakeholders to evaluate the progress of their cities and urban areas through a harmonised indicator set (Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3. UN-Habitat's Global Urban Monitoring Framework



Source: UN-Habitat (2022[29]), *Urban Monitoring Framework*, https://data.unhabitat.org/pages/urban-monitoring-framework (accessed on 31 January 2022).

The framework pursues four main objectives of safe and peaceful, inclusive, resilient and sustainable cities. It includes more than 70 indicators across 5 domains: i) society; ii) economy; iii) environment; iv) culture; and v) governance and implementation (UN-Habitat, 2022[29]). The indicators are derived from multiple sources, including the official UN SDG indicators, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the City Prosperity Index, the OECD localised indicator framework for measuring the distance to the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda. Underlying principles for the selection of the indicators are people-centricity (e.g. indicators that could monitor whether cities are becoming more liveable for all, regardless of gender, age or ethnicity, etc.), city-centricity (the framework is intended to be distinct from other UN monitoring frameworks in that

it is city-focused, rather than regional or national), usability and thematic interlinkages amongst others (UN-Habitat, 2022[29]).

The European Handbook for SDG Voluntary Local Reviews

In 2020, the EC Joint Research Centre (JRC), the EC's science and knowledge service, published the *European Handbook for SDG Voluntary Local Reviews*, a framework for policy makers, researchers and practitioners to set up VLRs (Siragusa et al., 2020[38]). A second edition was released in June 2022 (Siragusa et al., 2022[39]). It builds on the first version and includes an updated analysis of the VLRs published globally and in Europe. As part of the second edition of the handbook, the JRC has compiled a range of 72 indicators covering each of the 17 SDGs. The indicators were selected based on their relevance seven years after the approval of the 2030 Agenda, and also in the context of the COVID-19 recovery as well as their relevance to the European context and the local scale. Overall, the JRC framework uses four types of indicators: i) official indicators, harmonised at the European level; ii) experimental indicators, harmonised and available for a significant number of European cities; iii) official indicators, not harmonised, that were collected by countries or local entities; and iv) experimental local indicators, which are produced by research and other institutions with innovative methodologies. Among the 72 indicators, 53 of the JRC indicators are official indicators while 19 are experimental ones.

The JRC handbook's objective is to help cities and regions implement effective local SDG monitoring systems. The framework should allow cities and regions to assess quantitatively how they contribute to sustainable development. The SDG handbook points out challenges linked to SDG monitoring at the local scale such as data collection and indicator analysis and provides an overview of existing SDG monitoring systems. The 2020 edition furthermore offers suggestions for the integration of SDG monitoring into city strategy plans and provides considerations regarding several issues on local SDG monitoring such as desired trends, distance to targets, the selection of baseline years and frequency and scale of measurement as well as the boundaries for SDG monitoring.

The European Topic Centre on Urban Land and Soil Systems

In 2020, the European Topic Centre on Urban Land and Soil System of the European Environment Agency released its report *Indicators for European Cities to Assess and Monitor the UN SDGs* (EEA, 2020[40]). The report aims to provide local governments across Europe with a wide range of indicators to assess their performance towards achieving the 17 SDGs and their respective targets. It is based on the analysis of more than 2 000 indicators across 30 indicator sets published by various global, European and national institutions, all dedicated to the local and urban levels, though often without any reference to the SDGs. The report allocated these indicators to 1 or several of the SDGs and their 169 targets to generate a compilation of existing indicators aligned with the 17 SDGs that target the local level. As such, it serves as a pool of potential indicators local governments can choose from when they are starting to develop their own SDG monitoring system (EEA, 2020[40]).

The report distinguishes different aspects for each of the targets where indicators are available. For example, for SDG Target 11.1 to ensure access for all to adequate, safe, affordable housing and basic service and upgrade slums, the report lists indicators for the aspects of: i) living space; ii) informal housing; iii) adequate housing; iv) evictions and homeless people; v) housing costs; vi) social housing and subsidies; and vii) basic services. Overall, a total of 389 different indicators are allocated to SDG 11. SDG 17 is represented by 82 indicators with a predominant coverage of SDG Target 17.17 to encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships.

These include, for example:

- The ability of local governments to borrow funds or choose contracts for projects without permission from national levels of government.

- Public assistance to international mutual aid actions (budget for international mutual aid actions).
- International co-operation in place (yes/no).
- An assessment if the city is leading by example in (integrated) environmental behaviour by using green public procurement guidelines, co-operating with other authorities and organisations on environmental topics and enabling employees to develop their skills on environmental topics (yes/no).
- Various indicators on policy coherence for sustainable development.
- The level of implementation of UN Agenda 21 (index).
- The share of public expenditures allocated for local development co-operation (%).
- Various indicators of stakeholder engagement in local policies.
- The availability of a full-time employee directly responsible for the co-ordination of sustainability issues across departments.
- The co-operation with other authorities at different levels or other organisations on sustainability issues.
- The presence of disaggregated data collection and analysis for different social and income groups in the city.
- Monitoring and performance evaluation schemes.

While some of the 17 SDG indicators presented in the report are quantifiable, many of them can only be measured by yes and no answers or a unit of measurement is missing, which is a challenge that remains to be solved.

The need for a complementary monitoring and evaluation framework

Monitoring and evaluating city-to-city partnerships remains a challenge, despite existing frameworks. Current M&E frameworks for partnerships lack an assessment of how the very process of partnerships can contribute to their effectiveness and usefulness for identified policy objectives and SDG implementation (Stott, 2019[41]). The OECD report *Reshaping Decentralised Development Co-operation: The Key Role of Cities and Regions for the 2030 Agenda* illustrates that most efforts to monitor and evaluate DDC and city-to-city partnerships projects have so far mainly focused on project results and limited output results, while rarely considering the outcomes or impact of each action (OECD, 2018[1]). In addition, it is often challenging to isolate the value-added or impact of city-to-city partnerships. The logical frameworks that govern interventions also often focus on monitoring and reporting at the project level rather than assessing the impact of the partnerships on the broader development process of a place, which emphasises the importance of designing and aligning them with global agenda objectives, in particular the SDGs. Consequently, most of the value-added assigned to city-to-city partnerships is often speculative and based on aggregated project results. Evaluations should therefore include information on the impact of city-to-city partnerships' activities on development outcomes and their contribution to sustainable development and citizen well-being (OECD, 2018[1]). They should also be oriented towards assessing results through the critical analysis of information and internalising the lessons learnt. Furthermore, partnerships should be aligned and aim to contribute to impact results, which M&E systems can capture.

M&E frameworks often lack a quantitative component. Some national governments have established evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact, costs and benefits of city-to-city partnerships, mostly through reports. For example, in France, an evaluation report is systematically presented at the deliberative assembly of local authorities to report on the impacts of project spending. In the Netherlands, log frames and the theory of change are often used as M&E systems. However, more quantitative methods, such as surveys and indicator systems, are less commonly used to assess the impact of city-to-city partnerships interventions (OECD, 2018[1]). Moreover, indicator availability for M&E purposes at the subnational level

remains insufficient, preventing the creation of reliable analysis of SDG achievements at the local level (UCLG, 2021[23]). Thus, there is a need to assess the extent to which partnerships are achieving their goals and fostering sustainable development at the local level. In its 2018 report on reshaping DDC, the OECD encouraged a culture of M&E of city-to-city partnerships projects by moving towards a common M&E framework for all projects (OECD, 2018[1]). To that effect, the OECD proposed to develop tools such as indicators, report-back templates and tools to monitor progress, to ensure that all data and information gathered for city-to-city partnerships projects are consistent, comparable and harmonised. In particular, the OECD recommended increasing the use of data collected through the national decentralised co-operation portals, where they exist (OECD, 2018[1]).

Gaps identified from the analysis of existing toolkits and self-assessment tools

The stocktaking of checklists and self-assessment tools reveals a number of gaps in terms of simultaneously measuring the progress of cities engaged in city-to-city partnerships towards the SDGs and engaging stakeholders to increase ownership of the assessment. Although some frameworks aim to assess partnerships (SDG Partnership Guidebook) and the extent to which cities are achieving urban development (Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities, RFSC, and City Prosperity Initiative, CPI), none of them measures how cities engaged in city-to-city partnerships are making progress towards reaching the SDGs and assess the coherence with sustainability principles in the implementation process (see below). A complementary framework allowing for more systemic M&E could lead to more effective policy making and improved accountability. The SDG guidebook underlines important factors to consider when creating partnerships that could be integrated into such a complementary framework, including regular formal reviews, with the opportunity for learning and feedback on the framework and process. Similarly, the OECD Water Governance Indicator Framework suggests a ten-step multi-stakeholder process to build consensus on what works or not, and facilitate cross-fertilisation of knowledge and learning amongst partners. A complementary framework for city-to-city partnerships could seek to facilitate a multi-stakeholder approach to integrate peer-to-peer learning and increase the scope and stakeholder ownership of the assessment. The G20 High-level Principles on city-to-city partnerships for localising the SDGs, developed under the Italian G20 presidency in 2021 (see Chapter 1), provide a common framework of good practices and framework conditions for policy makers at the international, national, regional and local levels to initiate, develop and monitor city-to-city partnerships for the SDGs (G20 Development Working Group, 2021[42]) Consequently, they provide a valuable reference framework to measure to which extent cities are aligned with such principles in their efforts to engage partnerships to localise the SDGs.

Gaps identified from existing indicator frameworks on the localisation of the SDGs

The overview of indicator frameworks for the localisation of the SDGs revealed the potential to expand the scope and comparability of indicators as well as their geographical outreach. Although the OECD localised indicator framework for the SDGs can assess the SDGs at the local level, there is still scope to extend the number of indicators available, notably regarding SDG 17. The JRC *European Handbook for SDG Voluntary Local Reviews* (Siragusa et al., 2022[39]) contains a list of more than 70 SDG indicators that cover all 17 SDGs, however with a particular focus on European cities. Consequently, its applicability in the context of city-to-city partnerships that cover both cities from developed and developing countries is limited. The European Topic Centre report on indicators for European cities to assess and monitor the UN SDGs provides a mapping of more than 2 000 SDG indicators. Its coverage thus goes beyond what individual cities or institutions can afford in terms of measurement and management capacities. UN-Habitat's UMF highlights some advantages of having a universally agreed framework for measuring territorial development, allowing for comparability across cities, but is not applied to city-to-city partnerships and DDC specifically.

In the EC Partnerships programme, the use of customised and project-specific indicators in log frames makes the comparability across partnerships challenging. The programme allows partnerships to establish

their own indicators for the overall objectives and the specific objectives of individual partnerships. As a consequence, each partnership uses different project-specific indicators to assess its outcome, making it challenging to compare the outcomes of different partnerships and evaluate their success in comparison to other partnerships. This can create challenges when attempting to compare the results of city-to-city partnerships. First, because different types of indicators may have been chosen to measure the same objectives and impact. For example, good urban governance is a common objective of several city-to-city partnerships. For example, the MUEVE partnership between San José, Costa Rica, and San Sebastian, Spain, uses the UN-Habitat City Prosperity Index to measure good governance, while the Futureproof Banjul (Ostend, Belgium and Banjul, Gambia) partnership measures the same objective through the level of satisfaction of city actors regarding urban governance.

In addition, the type of indicators (i.e. qualitative or quantitative) used in the log frames differs between partnerships. Some partnerships use quantitative indicators. The Smart Change – Strengthening Urban Governance, Prosperity and Innovation in Jakarta partnership (Berlin, Germany and Jakarta, Indonesia) uses the indicator of level/quality of "rule of law" practices as a quantitative and numerical baseline to assess good governance. Others, such as the Partnership for Strengthening Governance, Resilience and Greening of Jinja Municipal Council (Soria, Spain and Jinja, Uganda), measure the contribution to urban governance through citizen service delivery satisfaction surveys, adopting a more qualitative approach. On the other hand, the partnership Strengthening the Governance of the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador, for the Adoption and Implementation of the Objectives of Sustainable Development (San Salvador, El Salvador and Barcelona, Spain) measures the objective of improved urban governance through the establishment of a legal and regulatory framework that takes the SDGs into account, thus using qualitative indicators. The application of different types of indicators (qualitative vs. quantitative) challenges the comparability of impacts and project success across partnerships – in the above example, the objective of good urban governance.

A homogeneous M&E framework for city-to-city partnerships could help gauge the effectiveness of partnerships at the subnational level. Setting up a dedicated M&E framework for the entire supply chain of city-to-city partnerships could help better assess the effectiveness of partnerships against their objectives such as the objectives mentioned in the EC Partnerships programme (i.e. to strengthen urban governance, ensure social inclusiveness of cities, improve resilience and greening of cities and improve prosperity and innovation in cities); or their compliance and alignment with global recommendations such as the ten G20 Principles on city-to-city partnerships, or the progress of cities involved in city-to-city partnerships towards achieving the SDGs specifically. The systemic M&E framework for city-to-city partnerships presented in Chapter 3 aims to bridge that gap by combining the assessment of the implementation of the G20 Principles with measuring the progress towards the SDGs of cities engaged in city-to-city partnerships.

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Notes

[1] For more information, see https://www.oecd-local-sdgs.org/index.html.

[2] Percentage of households expenses dedicated to housing costs; percentage of population satisfied with affordability of housing; percentage of population satisfied with the quality of public transportation systems; difference between built-up area growth rate and population growth rate (percentage points); exposure to PM2.5 in µg/m³, population weighted (micrograms per cubic metre); percentage of population satisfied with quality of air; percentage of people exposed to more than 10 µg/m³ (micrograms per cubic metre) of PM2.5.

[3] Performance of public transport network, ratio between accessibility and proximity to hospitals; performance of car transport network, ratio between accessibility and proximity to hospitals; difference between built-up area growth rate and population growth rate (percentage points); exposure to PM2.5 in µg/m³, population weighted (micrograms per cubic metre); percentage of people exposed to more than 10 µg/m³ (micrograms per cubic metre) of PM2.5; percentage of population with access to at least 1 hectare of green urban areas (parks) and forests within 15 minutes of walking; percentage of population with access to at least one recreational opportunity (theatres, museums, cinemas, stadiums or cultural attractions) within 15 minutes of cycling.

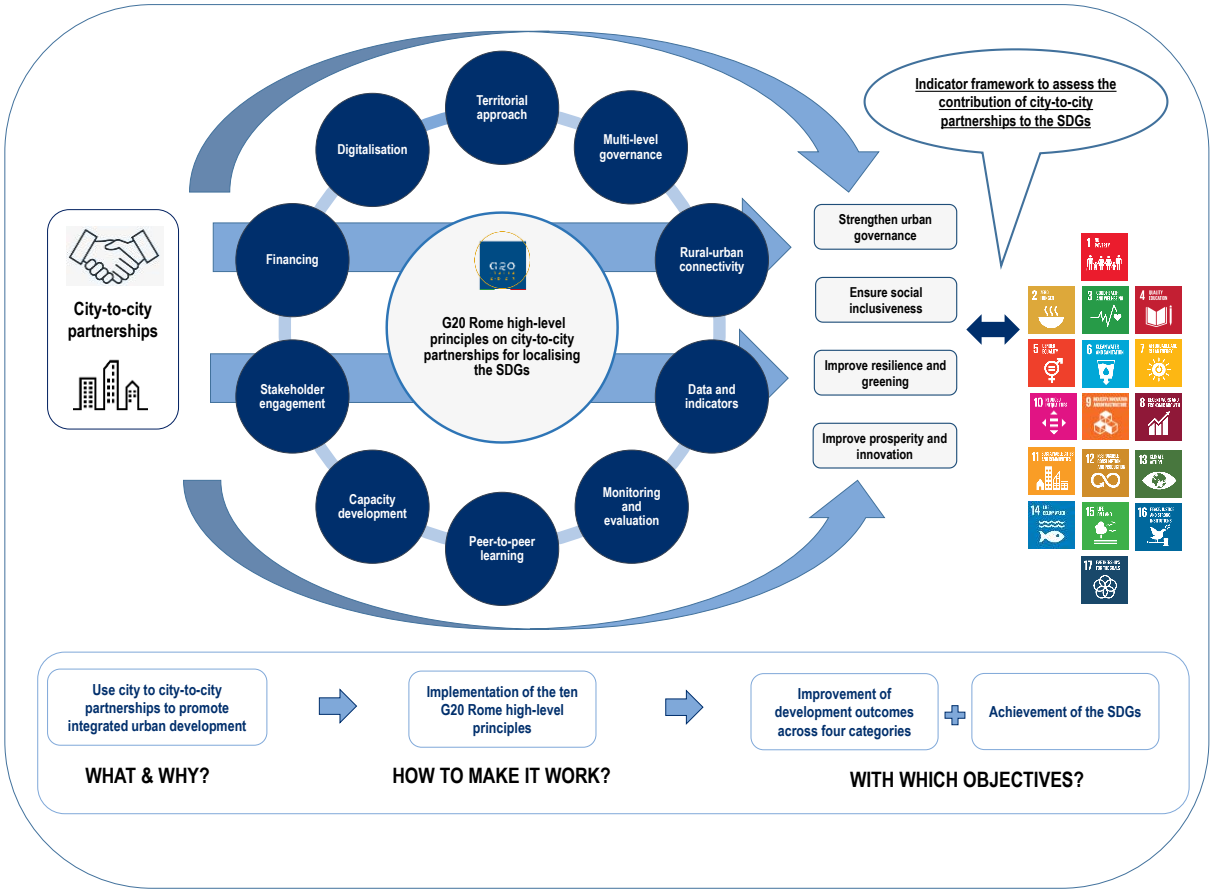
3 A systemic monitoring and evaluation framework for city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs

This chapter proposes a systemic monitoring and evaluation framework for city-to-city partnerships to localise the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which combines a self-assessment framework and a set of indicators. The self-assessment framework consists of a checklist to assess the extent to which city-to-city partnerships comply with each of the ten G20 High-level principles on city-to-city partnerships. The second component of the monitoring and evaluation framework measures the progress of cities engaged in partnerships toward achieving the SDGs. By combining self-assessment and the indicator framework, the proposed framework allows for a comprehensive assessment of city-to-city partnerships and their contribution to the SDGs.

A systemic monitoring and evaluation framework for city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs

The proposed monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework for city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs combines a self-assessment framework and a set of indicators. Taking into consideration the ten G20 Rome High-level principles on city-to-city partnerships for localising the SDGs (G20 principles) and the four main objectives of the European Commission (EC) Partnerships for Sustainable Cities programme (hereinafter the EC Partnerships programme) (strengthen urban governance, ensure social inclusiveness of cities, improve resilience and greening of cities and improve prosperity and innovation in cities), this chapter proposes a two-component approach to evaluate the progress of cities involved in city-to-city partnerships towards achieving the SDGs and the four objectives of the EC programme. The first component, a self-assessment framework for local governments and their territorial stakeholders, aims to enable them to assess to what extent they are aligned with the ten G20 Principles on city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs (Box 1.2). The second component of the M&E framework is a set of indicators to assess how cities involved in city-to-city partnerships are progressing towards achieving the SDGs (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1. Monitoring and evaluation framework of city-to-city partnerships for localising the SDGs



The proposed M&E framework advances the assessment of city-to-city partnerships in several ways. By combining self-assessment and the indicator framework, the framework allows for a more comprehensive assessment compared to most other frameworks that either focus solely on indicators or self-assessment tools and checklists. In addition, the list of indicators considered in the framework proposes a specific focus on SDGs 11 and 17, where most frameworks have gaps in terms of indicators and data coverage.

Self-assessment framework for city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs

The self-assessment framework consists of a checklist to assess the extent to which city-to-city partnerships comply with each of the ten G20 Principles. The checklist is inspired by several similar OECD checklists and self-Assessment tools. These include notably the Checklist for the OECD Principles on Water Governance and its traffic light system, the Checklist for Action and scoreboard on circular economy in cities and regions, as well as the Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development Toolkit. A checklist aims to assess existing framework conditions for achieving the SDGs and sustainable city-to-city partnerships and the extent to which they are aligned with the G20 Principles. Furthermore, it should stimulate a transparent, neutral, open, inclusive and forward-looking dialogue across stakeholders on what works, what does not, what should be improved and who can do what to that effect. The proposed checklist encompasses a variety of dimensions that should enable the successful application of the G20 Principles (Box 1.2) and provide the right preconditions to enhance the effectiveness of city-to-city partnerships and their contribution to the four main objectives of the EC Partnerships programme. The checklist contains three different assessment stages: i) a preparation stage; ii) a diagnosis stage; and iii) an action stage (Figure 3.2). The OECD proposes an assessment using a five-scale evaluation (plus a "not applicable" option) corresponding to the level of implementation at the moment in which the workshop is carried out (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1. Self-assessment scoreboard

Category	Description	Rating
In place, functioning	The G20 principle under investigation is complete and relevant in all aspects, no major concerns are noted.	5
In place, partly implemented	The G20 principle under investigation is in place but the level of implementation is not complete. It might be the case that parts are explicitly lacking to make the framework complete. There might be several reasons for this, including insufficient funding, regulatory burdens, bureaucratic lengthy processes, etc.	4
In place, not implemented	The G20 principle under investigation is in place but it is not implemented. For example, it can be inactive or activities are of very low relevance to play a real role in possible progress.	3
Under development	The G20 principle under investigation does not exist yet but the framework is under development.	2
Not in place	The G20 principle under investigation does not exist and there are no plans or actions taken for developing it.	1
Not applicable	The G20 principle under investigation does not apply to the context where the self-assessment takes place.	-

Source: Based on OECD (2018[1]), *OECD Water Governance Indicator Framework*, https://www.oecd.org/regional/OECD-Water-Governance-Indicator-Framework.pdf.

This overall assessment should be split into separate sub-assessments for each of the G20 Principles. For each of the questions of the checklist for a specific principle (see below), stakeholders should have the opportunity to rate the level of its implementation/achievement based on the five-scale rating system (from 1 to 5) with one vote per stakeholder engaged in the process. Five should be the highest rating achievable and be assigned if the G20 principle under investigation is complete and relevant in all aspects with no major concerns noted regarding its implementation. Four points should be assigned in the event the G20 principle under investigation is in place but its level of implementation is not complete and some challenges have been identified. If the G20 principle under investigation is in place but is not implemented, stakeholders should assign three points. If the G20 principle under investigation does not exist yet but the framework is under development, stakeholders should assign two points. The rating should be one in the event the G20 principle under investigation does not exist in the city-to-city partnership and there are no plans and actions taken for developing it (Table 3.1). As a next step, the average rating of the stakeholders should be computed, first per stakeholder group (e.g. public administration, private sector, civil society) and then for all stakeholders. Applying such a rating system to the ten G20 Principles could reveal common

and conflicting views between different stakeholder groups. It could thus also provide relevant input for the following discussion and elaboration of actions on how to improve the implementation of each G20 principle.

Self-assessment framework

1. **Territorial approach.** Promote city-to-city partnerships as a means to enhance the implementation of a territorial approach in responding to and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, reducing vulnerability to climate change.
   - Do you use city-to-city partnerships to address concrete local challenges such as clean forms of urban mobility, affordable housing, gender equality, access to green spaces, balanced urban development, clean water and sanitation, air quality, solid waste management, territorial inequalities or service delivery?
   - Are the established city-to-city partnerships creating synergies across sectoral policies and plans at the local level?
   - Are city-to-city partnerships integrated into the local development strategy?
   - Do you establish city-to-city partnerships in policy areas that can help exploit the territorial development potential of the city?
   - Do you use city-to-city partnerships to foster territorial cohesion and recover from COVID-19?
2. **Multi-level governance.** Strengthen multi-level integrated governance and co-ordination for greater effectiveness of city-to-city partnerships and for more demand-based initiatives, while considering local and regional contexts and responding to the specific needs of different geographical areas and governance systems, as appropriate.
   - Do the SDGs provide a framework for a more holistic and bottom-up design of your city-to-city partnerships?
   - Are you engaged in the process of Voluntary National Reviews?
   - Do you use city-to-city partnerships to strengthen vertical co-ordination with regional and national levels of government?
   - Are there governance arrangements and/or working practices that support effective communication on city-to-city partnerships?
   - Do you evaluate the benefits of your city-to-city partnerships vis-à-vis policymakers and stakeholders (e.g. reduced information asymmetries, optimisation of financial resources use, reduction/elimination of split incentives/conflicts)?
   - Do you receive guidance or support from other levels of government regarding the implementation and development of city-to-city partnerships?
3. **Rural-urban connectivity.** Enhance rural-urban connectivity, and co-operation, including between primary and intermediary cities, including through past G20 work on infrastructure.[1]
   - Do your city-to-city partnerships consider rural-urban connectivity and/or facilitate territorial co-operation between urban and rural areas to promote an integrated development approach?
   - Do you assess possible economic, environmental and social gains from such enhanced rural-urban co-operation?
   - Do you adopt a functional approach to design policies and strategies to achieve the SDGs beyond administrative boundaries and based on where people work and live?
4. **Data and indicators.** Encourage local and regional governments to exchange approaches and practices in mainstreaming SDG indicators into planning and policy documents at all levels of government and produce disaggregated data towards strengthened context-specific analysis and

assessment of territorial disparities in collaboration with national governments, which could also support countries in developing their Voluntary National Reviews.

- Do you produce and disclose data and information on your city-to-city partnerships in a shared responsibility across levels of government, public, private and non-profit stakeholders?
- Do you produce or collect disaggregated data on your city-to-city partnerships for the assessment of their contribution to the SDGs?
- If you produce them, do you make data on city-to-city partnerships publicly accessible and update them regularly?
- Are there mechanisms or incentives to encourage local and regional governments to exchange approaches and practices in implementing city-to-city partnerships and mainstreaming SDG indicators into planning and policy documents?
- Have you agreed on key performance indicators related to your city-to-city partnerships in co-operation with partner cities?
- In addition to quantitative data, do you use qualitative information (e.g. storytelling, a community of practices) to showcase the performance and success stories of the city-to-city partnership?
- Do you collect data and report on official development assistance (ODA) as part of your city-to-city partnership?

5. **Monitoring and evaluation.** Taking into account different national and local contexts, develop M&E indicators towards a result framework for evidence-based city-to-city partnerships, documenting their impact and providing recommendations to optimise those partnerships.
   - Are you subject to formal requirements (e.g. agreements on evaluation components, methodologies, etc.) for the evaluation and monitoring of the city-to-city partnership?
   - Have you established monitoring and reporting mechanisms for your city-to-city partnerships (e.g. joint reviews, surveys/polls, benchmarking, evaluation reports, *ex post* financial analysis, regulatory tools, national observatories, parliamentary consultations, etc.)?
   - Do you have capacity-building events to strengthen the data collection, management, storage and reporting processes?
   - Have you developed quantitative tools to assess the potential contribution of the city-to-city partnerships to the SDGs?
   - Do you share the results of the M&E process with the wider public to provide transparency and accountability?
   - Do you assess the level of dialogue and participation by partner organisations and local authorities in the definition, implementation and M&E of the city-to-city partnership?
6. **Peer-to-peer Learning.** Focus on mutual benefit, peer-to-peer learning, support and review in city-to-city partnerships, including the exchange of knowledge on sustainable urban planning and capital investment planning.
   - Do your city-to-city partnerships generally include a component of peer-to-peer learning?
   - Have you put in place knowledge-sharing opportunities across your city-to-city partnership stakeholders (city representatives, schools, civil society, private sector and academia) to exchange and learn from each other's experiences?
   - Do you engage in international networks and fora to exchange best practices and learn from peer cities on city-to-city partnerships?
   - Do you actively reach out to peer cities via email or social media to search for new practices and innovative approaches to policy making in the framework of city-to-city partnerships?

- Do you attend events (e.g. webinars) relevant to the thematic area of your city-to-city partnerships to get inspiration?
- Do you consider how practices showcased by peer cities or stakeholders could be transferred to your city?

7. **Capacity development.** Support capacity development and build local managerial capital and skills for effective, efficient and inclusive city-to-city partnerships implementation.
   - Do you review and analyse the local managerial capabilities and required skills for carrying out all of the activities associated with designing, setting, implementing and monitoring the city-to-city partnership?
   - Based on such a diagnosis, do you offer capacity-building modules and workshops that can help address imbalances and create bridges among actors and territories with different levels of expertise and knowledge?
   - Are there capacity-building activities in the public service to collect and analyse evidence about the impacts of different policies implemented in the framework of the city-to-city partnership?
   - Do you mobilise sufficient funding to train territorial stakeholders that are involved in the partnership in the monitoring of city-to-city partnerships?
   - Do you collaborate with regional, national or global associations of local governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or research centres to consolidate and expand skills and competencies needed for city-to-city partnerships to deliver intended outcomes?
8. **Stakeholder engagement.** Engage all relevant stakeholders to implement territorial network modalities of city-to-city partnerships towards the achievement of the SDGs, including by establishing partnerships with the private sector.
   - Do you use the SDGs as a vehicle to enhance accountability and transparency of your city-to-city partnerships through engaging all territorial stakeholders, including civil society, citizens, youth, academia and private companies, in the policy making process?
   - Have you carried out stakeholder mapping to make sure that all of those that have a stake in the outcome or that are likely to be affected are clearly identified, and their responsibilities, core motivations and interactions understood?
   - Have you defined the objectives of stakeholder engagement and the expected use of their inputs in the city-to-city partnership?
   - Do you facilitate a dialogue between stakeholders on policy incoherencies or areas of disagreement regarding the city-to-city partnership?
   - Have you identified place-based priorities for the city-to-city partnerships through a participatory and multi-stakeholder process?
   - Have you put in place regular assessments of stakeholder engagement costs or obstacles at large?
   - Have you put in place tailored communication strategies for relevant stakeholders?
9. **Financing.** Call on local and regional governments to develop effective financing and efficient resource mobilisation strategies and instruments in collaboration with national governments as appropriate, through existing mechanisms to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through city-to-city partnerships, including by integrating the SDGs in budgeting processes.
   - Is there sufficient funding available to shape the city-to-city partnerships according to the needs of the local stakeholders and project partners?
   - Do you incentivise public-private partnerships as well as the engagement of businesses in city-to-city partnerships?
   - Do you use the SDGs to allocate budget across the identified priorities in your city-to-city partnerships?

- Do you use financial instruments such as taxes or fees to catalyse needed revenues to implement city-to-city partnerships?
- Does your local government have sufficient leeway to adjust and manage revenues to respond to the needs of city-to-city partnerships?
- Do you have access to (innovative) financing tools such as green bonds, land value capture mechanisms, infrastructure funds or pooled financing instruments that include lending or de-risking investment, such as guarantees for municipal bonds to secure sufficient funding for city-to-city partnerships?

10. **Digitalisation.** Develop strategies to build human, technological, and infrastructural capacities of the local and regional governments to make use of and incorporate digitalisation best practices in city-to-city partnerships.
    - Do you have local government strategies to build human, technological and infrastructural capacities to make use of and incorporate digitalisation best practices in city-to-city partnerships?
    - Do you use digital technologies, such as interactive online platforms, to encourage stakeholders to exchange information and good practices within the city-to-city partnerships?
    - Have you integrated specific targets related to digitalisation into your city-to-city partnerships?
    - Do you use initiatives or approaches that effectively leverage digitalisation to boost citizen well-being and deliver more efficient, sustainable and inclusive urban services and environments as part of a collaborative, multi-stakeholder process?
    - Do you collaborate with stakeholders such as entrepreneurs, start-ups and innovative civil society organisations to find smart and digital solutions for urban development problems addressed by city-to-city partnerships?

Indicator framework to monitor the outcome of city-to-city partnerships

The second component of the systemic M&E framework measures the progress of cities engaged in partnerships toward achieving the SDGs. To complement the assessment of the application of the G20 Principles in city-to-city partnerships, the second component of the proposed M&E framework aims to quantify the progress toward the SDGs of cities engaged in partnerships. To that end, the M&E framework for city-to-city partnerships proposes an indicator framework to assess how cities engaged in city-to-city partnerships progress towards achieving the SDGs and the objectives of the EC Partnerships programme (urban governance, social inclusiveness in cities, green resilience and prosperity, innovation in cities). The indicator framework is structured according to the 4 objectives of the EC programme and composed of a range of measurable indicators for all 17 SDGs, with a particular focus on SDGs 11 and 17. The proposed indicator framework draws extensively on the analysis of existing tools, including notably: i) the OECD localised indicator framework for measuring the distance to the SDGs in cities and regions; ii) the EC Joint Research Centre *European Handbook for SDG Voluntary Local Reviews*; iii) the UN-Habitat Global Urban Monitoring Framework; and iv) the European Environment Agency (EEA) European Topic Centre on Urban Land and Soil System report *Indicators for European Cities to Assess and Monitor the UN SDGs*. The proposed indicators were also mapped against the EC Global Europe Results Framework to ensure they are aligned to the largest extent possible. The proposed framework includes 59 indicators overall, composed of 2 indicators for SDG 14, 3 indicators each for SDGs 1-10, 12, 13, 15 and 16 as well as 8 indicators for SDG 11 “Sustainable cities and communities” and SDG 17 “Partnerships for goals”.

Table 3.2 presents the full list of indicators considered in the framework and proposes a simplified list with the 35 most relevant and easy-to-measure core indicators, notably for cities in developing countries. It shall provide an incentive for cities and regions engaged in partnerships to start and expand their monitoring and evaluation schemes.

Table 3.2. Long list of indicators of the systemic monitoring and evaluation framework for city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs

Indicator	SDG	Category of the EC programme	Reference
People living in households with very low work intensity		Social inclusiveness	JRC VLR Handbook
Percentage of population with a disposable income below 60% of the national median disposable income		Social inclusiveness	OECD localised indicator framework
Percentage of the population with access to public service provision systems that meet human basic needs including drinking water, sanitation, hygiene, energy, mobility, waste collection, healthcare, education and information technologies		Urban governance	UN-Habitat Global Urban Monitoring Framework
Productivity (gross value added [GVA] per worker) in agriculture, forestry and fishing (ISIC rev4) (in constant 2010 USD PPP)		Prosperity and innovation	OECD localised indicator framework
Prevalence of malnutrition		Social inclusiveness	UN-Habitat Global Urban Monitoring Framework
Percentage of people with access to at least 1 food shop within 15 minutes of walking		Social inclusiveness	OECD localised indicator framework
Life expectancy		Social inclusiveness	OECD localised indicator framework
Mortality rates for the 0 to 4 year-old population (deaths per 10 000 people)		Social inclusiveness	OECD localised indicator framework
Hospital beds rate (hospital beds per 10 000 people)		Urban governance	OECD localised indicator framework
Percentage of population from 15 to 19 years old enrolled in public or private institutions		Social inclusiveness	OECD localised indicator framework
Percentage of early leavers from education and training, for the 18 to 24 year-old population		Social inclusiveness	OECD localised indicator framework
Percentage of population from 25 to 64 years old with at least secondary education		Social inclusiveness	OECD localised indicator framework
Gender gap in employment rate (male-female, percentage points)		Social inclusiveness	OECD localised indicator framework

Indicator	SDG	Category of the EC programme	Reference
Time spent on unpaid domestic and care work		Social inclusiveness	UN-Habitat Global Urban Monitoring Framework
Seats held by women in municipal governments		Urban governance	JRC VLR Handbook
Wastewater safely treated		Resilience and greening in cities	JRC VLR Handbook
Percentage of households with access to in-house water distribution		Resilience and greening in cities	Log frames EC project
Safely managed drinking water services		Urban governance	UN-Habitat Global Urban Monitoring Framework
CO_2 emissions from buildings		Resilience and greening in cities	OECD metropolitan database
Energy consumption per capita		Resilience and greening in cities	JRC VLR Handbook
Percentage of total electricity production that comes from renewable sources		Resilience and greening in cities	OECD localised indicator framework
Net firm creation rate (%) (firm birth rate minus firm death rate)		Prosperity and innovation	OECD localised indicator framework
Annual growth rate of real gross domestic product (GDP) per capita		Prosperity and innovation	OECD localised indicator framework
Unemployment rate (%)		Social inclusiveness	OECD localised indicator framework
Productivity (GVA per worker) in manufacture (ISIC rev4) (in constant 2010 USD PPP)		Prosperity and innovation	OECD localised indicator framework
Performance of public transport network, ratio between accessibility and proximity to people		Urban governance	OECD localised indicator framework
Research and development personnel as a share of total employment		Prosperity and innovation	OECD localised indicator framework

Indicator	SDG	Category of the EC programme	Reference
Growth in disposable income per capita		Social inclusiveness	OECD localised indicator framework
Gini index of disposable income (after taxes and transfers) (from 0 to 1)		Social inclusiveness	OECD localised indicator framework
Median disposable income per equivalised household (in USD PPP, constant prices of 2010)		Social inclusiveness	OECD localised indicator framework
Percentage of population with access to at least 1 recreational opportunity (theatres, museums, cinemas, stadiums or cultural attractions) within 15 minutes of cycling		Urban governance	OECD localised indicator framework
Area size of informal settlements as a percentage of city area		Social inclusiveness	ETC Mapping
Performance of public transport network, ratio between accessibility and proximity to people		Urban governance	OECD localised indicator framework
Emissions from the transport sector		Resilience and greening in cities	OECD metropolitan database
Use of public transport (percentage of total motorised trips)		Urban governance	UN-Habitat Global Urban Monitoring Framework
Percentage of pedestrian streets and walkways		Resilience and greening in cities	ETC Mapping
Exposure to PM2.5 in µg/m³, population-weighted (micrograms per cubic metre)		Urban governance	OECD localised indicator framework
Percentage of household expenses dedicated to housing costs		Urban governance	OECD localised indicator framework
Municipal waste rate (kilos per capita)		Resilience and greening in cities	OECD localised indicator framework
Recycling rate (percentage of municipal waste)		Resilience and greening in cities	OECD localised indicator framework
Number of motor road vehicles per 100 people		Resilience and greening in cities	OECD localised indicator framework

Indicator	SDG	Category of the EC programme	Reference
People affected by disasters		Resilience and greening in cities	JRC VLR Handbook
Average proportion of the built-up area of the area of influence corresponding to open spaces for public use and green spaces		Resilience and greening in cities	Log frames EC project
Bathing water quality of coasts (proportion of coasts with bathing water quality)		Resilience and greening in cities	ETC Mapping
Achieve no net loss of wetlands, streams and shoreline buffers		Resilience and greening in cities	ETC Mapping
Protected coastal area as a percentage of total coastal area		Resilience and greening in cities	OECD localised indicator framework
Land abandonment (land that was previously used for crop or pasture/livestock grazing production but no longer has farming functions, i.e. a total cessation of agricultural activities, and has not been converted into forest or artificial areas)		Resilience and greening in cities	JRC VLR Handbook
Terrestrial protected areas as a percentage of total area		Resilience and greening in cities	OECD localised indicator framework
Tree cover as a percentage of total area		Resilience and greening in cities	OECD localised indicator framework
Satisfaction with the administrative services of the city		Urban governance	JRC VLR Handbook
Homicides per 100 000 persons		Urban governance	OECD localised indicator framework
Number of projects on urban governance developed and initiated with cross-sectoral actors and number of cross-city projects initiated		Urban Governance	Log frames EC project
Percentage of people with access to public WiFi		Urban governance	ETC Mapping
Remittances as a proportion of GDP		Prosperity and innovation	JRC VLR Handbook
Share of Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) co-patent applications that are done with foreign regions (in percentage of co-patent applications)		Prosperity and innovation	OECD localised indicator framework

Indicator	SDG	Category of the EC programme	Reference
Percentage of households with broadband Internet access		Social inclusiveness	OECD localised indicator framework
Foreign direct investments		Prosperity and innovation	ETC Mapping
Share of public expenditures allocated for local development co-operation		Urban governance	ETC Mapping
Number of sectoral public policies formulated with the participation of civil society		Urban governance	Log frames EC project

Table 3.3. Simplified list of indicators of the systemic monitoring and evaluation framework for city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs

Indicator	SDG	Category of the EC programme	Reference
Percentage of population with a disposable income below 60% of the national median disposable income		Social inclusiveness	OECD localised indicator framework
Percentage of population with access to public service provision systems that meet human basic needs including drinking water, sanitation, hygiene, energy, mobility, waste collection, healthcare, education and information technologies		Urban governance	UN-Habitat Global Urban Monitoring Framework
Productivity (GVA per worker) in agriculture, forestry and fishing (ISIC rev4) (in constant 2010 USD PPP)		Prosperity and innovation	OECD localised indicator framework
Prevalence of malnutrition		Social inclusiveness	UN-Habitat Global Urban Monitoring Framework
Mortality rates for the 0 to 4 year-old population (deaths per 10 000 people)		Social inclusiveness	OECD localised indicator framework
Life expectancy		Social inclusiveness	OECD localised indicator framework
Percentage of early leavers from education and training, for the 18 to 24 year-old population		Social inclusiveness	OECD localised indicator framework
Percentage of population from 25 to 64 years old with at least secondary education		Social inclusiveness	OECD localised indicator framework
Gender gap in employment rate (male-female, percentage points)		Social inclusiveness	OECD localised indicator framework
Seats held by women in municipal governments		Urban governance	JRC VLR Handbook
Percentage of households with access to in-house water distribution		Resilience and greening in cities	Log frames EC project
Safely managed drinking water services		Urban governance	UN-Habitat Global Urban Monitoring Framework
Energy consumption per capita		Resilience and greening in cities	JRC VLR Handbook

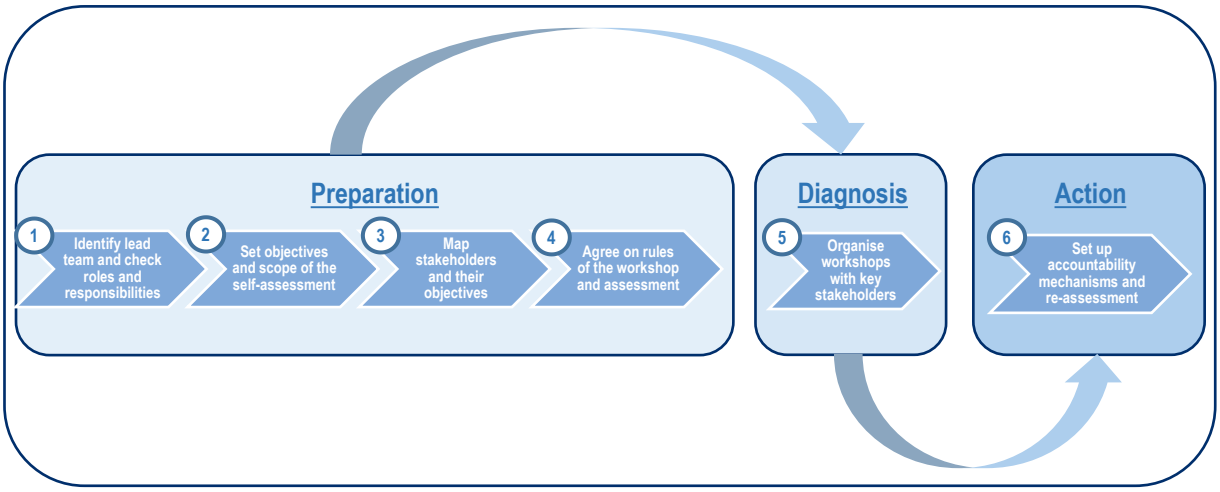
Indicator	SDG	Category of the EC programme	Reference
Percentage of total electricity production that comes from renewable sources		Resilience and greening in cities	OECD localised indicator framework
Annual growth rate of real GDP per capita		Prosperity and innovation	OECD localised indicator framework
Unemployment rate (%)		Social inclusiveness	OECD localised indicator framework
Productivity (GVA per worker) in manufacture (ISIC rev4) (in constant 2010 USD PPP)		Urban governance	OECD localised indicator framework
Research and development personnel as a share of total employment		Prosperity and innovation	OECD localised indicator framework
Gini index of disposable income (after taxes and transfers) (from 0 to 1)		Social inclusiveness	OECD localised indicator framework
Median disposable income per equivalised household (in USD PPP, constant prices of 2010)		Social inclusiveness	OECD localised indicator framework
Percentage of population with access to at least 1 recreational opportunity (theatres, museums, cinemas, stadiums or cultural attractions) within 15 minutes of cycling		Urban governance	OECD localised indicator framework
Area size of informal settlements as a percentage of city area		Social inclusiveness	ETC Mapping
Use of public transport (percentage of total motorised trips)		Urban governance	UN-Habitat Global Urban Monitoring Framework
Exposure to PM2.5 in µg/m³, population-weighted (micrograms per cubic metre)		Urban governance	OECD localised indicator framework
Municipal waste rate (kilos per capita)		Resilience and greening in cities	OECD localised indicator framework
Number of motor road vehicles per 100 people		Resilience and greening in cities	OECD localised indicator framework
People affected by disasters		Resilience and greening in cities	JRC VLR Handbook

Indicator	SDG	Category of the EC programme	Reference
Average proportion of the built-up area of the area of influence corresponding to open spaces for public use and green spaces		Resilience and greening in cities	Log frames EC project
Achieve no net loss of wetlands, streams and shoreline buffers		Resilience and greening in cities	ETC Mapping
Terrestrial protected areas as a percentage of total area		Resilience and greening in cities	OECD localised indicator framework
Homicides per 100 000 persons		Urban governance	OECD localised indicator framework
Number of projects on urban governance developed and initiated with cross-sectoral actors and number of cross-city projects initiated		Urban governance	Log frames EC project
Percentage of households with broadband Internet access		Prosperity and innovation	OECD localised indicator framework
Remittances as a proportion of GDP		Social inclusiveness	JRC VLR Handbook
Share of sectoral public policies formulated with the participation of civil society		Urban governance	Log frames EC project

Methodology and process

The following section explains the methodology to conduct the self-assessment (Figure 3.2), in particular the three different assessment stages: i) the preparation stage; ii) the diagnosis stage; and iii) the action stage as well as its link to the indicator framework.

Figure 3.2. Methodology for the self-assessment



Source: Author's elaboration inspired from OECD (2018[1]), *OECD Water Governance Indicator Framework*, https://www.oecd.org/regional/OECD-Water-Governance-Indicator-Framework.pdf.

Preparation

Identification of team lead and roles and responsibilities

A successful self-assessment process requires an effective lead institution and co-ordination team. In the case of city-to-city partnerships, this could be the municipal department in charge of the collaboration between the two cities or a dedicated office or agency involved in the partnership. The lead institution should have the convening power to gather stakeholders. It should also possess the human and financial resources to carry out the assessment and organise multi-stakeholder workshops to conduct the self-assessment. In addition, the lead institution should have the knowledge and capacity to carry out the assessment and be motivated and able to promote and implement the proposals for change that are derived from the assessment. It would be desirable for the lead institution to have experience in monitoring and evaluating city-to-city partnerships as well as in the use of methodologies to collect inputs from different stakeholders transparently and openly. The lead institution should ideally also have knowledge of data collection and indicators to be able to facilitate discussions about the proposed indicator framework during the workshops to make sure stakeholders can contribute to the measurement component.

Setting assessment objectives and stakeholder mapping

The self-assessment aims to measure the sustainability of city-to-city partnerships. To do so, it assesses different components, for example, multi-level governance structures and co-ordination for greater effectiveness of city-to-city partnerships, the mainstreaming of data and indicators into the planning and strategies to incorporate digitalisation best practices in city-to-city partnerships. Furthermore, the self-assessment represents a tool for dialogue across stakeholders involved in a city-to-city partnership. As such, it should promote collective thinking among stakeholders, foster peer-to-peer learning across

stakeholders involved in the city-to-city partnership, improve transparency and reduce information asymmetries, and enhance the accountability of the lead institution.

For a successful self-assessment of city-to-city partnerships, it is important to have an agreement on its objectives among the stakeholders involved in the process. In particular, stakeholders should be able to see how their contribution can lead to an improvement of the current institutional setting and policies implemented in the framework of the city-to-city partnerships. It is therefore crucial that the lead institution and stakeholders discuss and agree on the objectives and scope of the assessment. To ensure a high level of representation of stakeholders in the assessment, the lead institution should take the initiative to conduct a mapping of stakeholders involved. These should include representatives from the public administration involved in the city-to-city partnership, ideally from different levels of government, civil society organisations, academia, youth and the private sector, donor agencies and financial institutions. Based on the mapping, the lead institution should engage the identified stakeholders in the assessment and take their input into account to define priorities for follow-up actions.

Agreeing on the rules of the workshop and assessment

A multi-stakeholder workshop to conduct the self-assessment can bring value and requires clear rules. Once the objectives have been defined and the stakeholder mapping has been conducted, participants need to find an agreement on the rules of the workshop and the assessment. As a first step, they need to be familiarised with the G20 Principles on city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs and understand the concepts and their aspirations. The duration of the workshop should allow the lead institution and stakeholders sufficient time to share information and opinions, and gather data and ways forward on how to better comply with the G20 Principles in the ongoing city-to-city partnership. Necessary information and material, in particular on the G20 Principles, should be shared before the workshop. The moderator of the workshop should aim for balanced participation across stakeholders to ensure a diversity of opinions. Together with the lead institution, the moderator should also present the assessment criteria used in the exercise. Stakeholders should be given the option to provide open feedback and discuss and dispute the gathered opinions and scores.

Diagnosis

Organisation of the workshop

The workshop shall provide a platform where stakeholders can share, compare and confront their views on the city-to-city partnerships they are involved in. To allow for an in-depth assessment of the implementation of the ten G20 Principles, the number of meetings shall be determined according to the needs of the assessment (e.g. five principles per workshop or one workshop to cover all ten principles). Further meetings may be needed depending on the opportunities for stakeholders to provide input in between the workshops and to build consensus on the assessment and actions needed. An important component of the organisation of the workshop is the actual assessment. In addition to the familiarisation with the G20 Principles, stakeholders should be informed about the underlying scoreboard that measures the fulfilment of the different principles.

Open communication and transparent discussions are key success factors for the assessment. During the workshop, the moderator and lead institutions should clarify any misinterpretations and try to understand the reasons behind diverging opinions. This refers to both the level of implementation of the G20 Principles and possible priorities of actions for the future. Doing so could help the lead institution and participating stakeholders, to analyse the variety of perceptions, which can be due to different levels of knowledge, experience and interest. The workshop should provide the opportunity for stakeholders to share ideas and suggestions on how identified gaps and challenges could be addressed. These suggestions should feed

into an action plan and an implementation timeline to facilitate the improvement of policy outcomes over the short, medium and long terms.

Action

Setting up accountability mechanisms and reassessment

For the successful implementation of the G20 Principles, self-assessment workshops should not remain a one-off event. Instead, the lead institution should keep the dialogue going among stakeholders and consult them in the development and implementation of follow-up actions after the assessment. Ideally and to the extent possible, the lead institution should aim to generate future opportunities for stakeholders to continue to engage and track progress on the objectives defined in the workshops. An accountability mechanism to facilitate this process and verify that stakeholders' inputs were considered and addressed could be set up. In addition, the self-assessment could be repeated over time to identify expected changes resulting from targeted actions, e.g. through elaborating an action plan. Every reassessment should take all three steps of the methodology into account. That means for example potentially redefining the lead institution, key stakeholders, objectives and roles of the workshop if necessary. Such reassessment could be conducted on a regular basis and feature in governance and policy changes. The application of the five-level scoreboard could furthermore allow for the comparability of results over time.

Reference

OECD (2018), *OECD Water Governance Indicator Framework*, OECD, Paris, https://www.oecd.org/regional/OECD-Water-Governance-Indicator-Framework.pdf. [1]

Note

[1] Including the Principles on Quality Infrastructure Investment, the G20 Guidelines on Quality Infrastructure for Regional Connectivity and the G20 High Level Principles on Sustainable Habitat through Regional Planning.

4 Testing the self-assessment framework in pilot city-to-city partnerships

This chapter draws lessons from the pilot testing of the self-assessment framework in 27 city-to-city partnerships supported by the European Commission. Findings show that peer-to-peer learning and a territorial approach are the two G20 Rome High-level principles on city-to-city partnerships for localising the SDGs (G20 Principles) in which surveyed city-to-city partnerships score the highest, while the G20 financing principle is where they score the lowest. In most cases, city-to-city partnerships address concrete local challenges such as urban mobility, affordable housing and gender equality.

Results from the pilot self-assessment of city-to-city partnerships

Between 21 October and 18 November 2022, the self-assessment framework was pilot tested in 27 of the 57 partnerships participating in the EC programme Partnerships for Sustainable Cities (Box 4.1). Results show that:

- The G20 principle of peer-to-peer learning scores the highest. The 27 partnerships rated the implementation of the principle with an average score of 3.70 on a scale from 1 to 5 (see Figure 4.1 for an overview of the results). Overall, partnerships consider peer-to-peer learning to be a key component of their activities. Most of them include knowledge-sharing activities with city representatives and territorial stakeholders to exchange and learn from each other's experiences and engage in international networks and fora to share best practices and learn from peer cities.
- The promotion of city-to-city partnerships as a means to enhance the implementation of a territorial approach is the second highest-rated G20 principle with an average score of 3.44 on a scale from 1 to 5. the majority of surveyed city-to-city partnerships use their partnerships to address concrete local challenges such as urban mobility, affordable housing and gender equality and have established partnerships in policy areas that can help exploit the territorial development potential of the city.
- Stakeholder engagement is the third G20 principle for which the average score of partnerships' self-assessment is higher than 3 (3.12). Many partnerships identify place-based priorities through a participatory and multi-stakeholder approach, although the objectives of stakeholder engagement and the expected use of their inputs in the city-to-city partnerships are not always clearly defined. Furthermore, the majority of partnerships have not put in place regular assessments of stakeholder engagement costs or obstacles at large.
- The other G20 principles on capacity development, multi-level governance, digitalisation, data and indicators, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and rural-urban connectivity all received scores between 3 and 2.7 on a scale from 1 to 5.
- Financing is the G20 principle which received the lowest score, averaging 2.38. Several partnerships are facing challenges to mobilise sufficient funding to shape their activities according to the needs of the local stakeholders and project partners. They often also lack access to economic instruments such as taxes or fees to catalyse needed revenues as well as to (innovative) financing tools such as green bonds, land value capture mechanisms or infrastructure funds.

Box 4.1. The pilot-testing process

To create incentives for pilot testing the self-assessment framework for city-to-city partnerships to localise the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the OECD organised a webinar on 21 October 2022 gathering more than 50 participants from interested city-to-city partnerships participating in the European Commission (EC) Partnerships for Sustainable Cities programme, the EC and its co-ordination facility. The goal of the webinar was to familiarise the stakeholders engaged in the city-to-city partnerships with the proposed self-assessment framework and the 10 underlying G20 Principles. Furthermore, it focused on the methodology, questions and process for carrying out the self-assessment framework.

Building on the webinar, the 57 partnerships supported by the EC were invited to pilot test the self-assessment framework between 21 October 2022 and 18 November 2022 based on the methodology and questions presented in Chapter 3. Twenty-seven of the partnerships did so by responding to an online survey. Twenty-three of the respondents were from local governments, one from another public

sector entity and three belonged to the category “Other”. The main objective of the pilot testing was to test the applicability and robustness of the checklist and receive additional feedback on the questions.

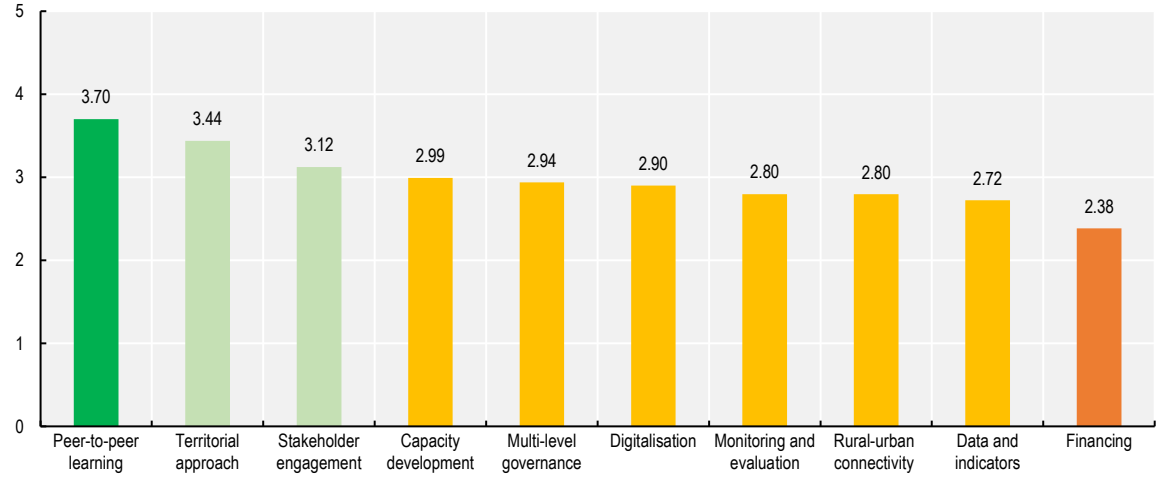
To that end, the different partnerships provided a score for each question of the checklist assessing their compliance with the G20 Principles through an online survey. In all cases, the self-assessment was carried out by the partnerships using the five-step scoreboard described in Table 3.1. The average score of all partnerships for each individual question of the checklist was calculated as the unweighted average of the scores provided by each partnership. Based on that, the overall score per each of the G20 Principles is the unweighted average of the average score for each question.

While such a self-assessment is ideally conducted using the methodology described in Chapter 3, the respondents did not provide any explanation of whether their assessment was based on an individual scoring on behalf of the entire partnership or if the various stakeholders of the partnership were actually involved in the assessment. Participating partnerships were also invited to add suggestions to improve the framework, propose missing questions, ask for clarification regarding existing questions, share additional remarks on the framework and provide comments on the guidance to carry out the self-assessment.

The self-assessment framework received positive feedback from partnerships and was considered a relevant tool to help them reflect on their activities. Comments and suggestions on the questions, guidance and scoreboard were used to revise the self-assessment framework, in particular the questions of the checklist. The first global meeting of partnerships organised on 7-8 March 2023 in Brussels was used to present the M&E framework to those partnerships that could not attend the webinar and collect additional feedback from participants. The original list of questions used for the pilot testing can be found in Annex A. The list of respondents can be found in Annex B.

Figure 4.1. Results of the pilot testing of the self-assessment framework

Average score for each of the ten G20 Principles



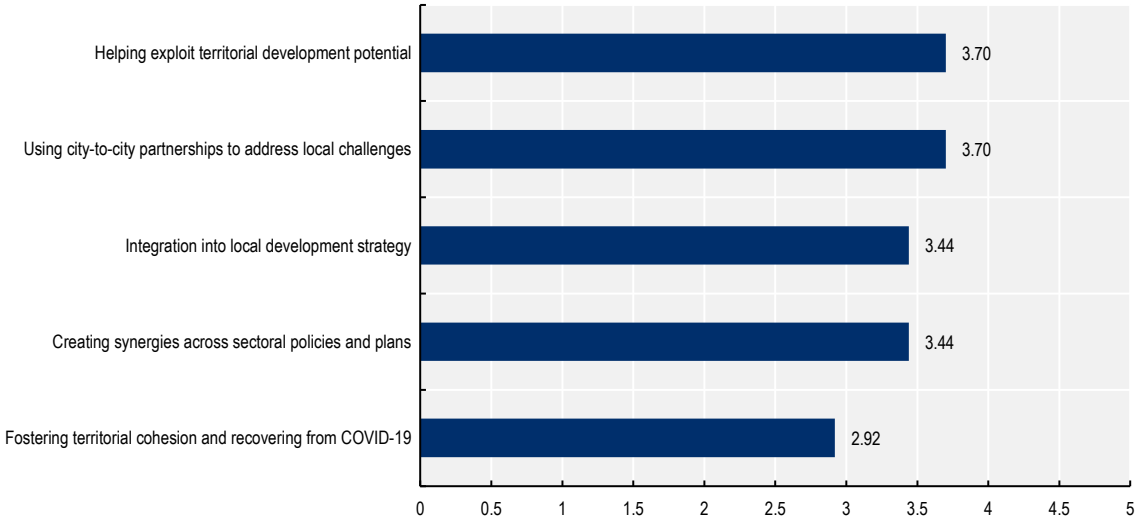
Note: Scoreboard: 5 points - The G20 principle under investigation is complete and relevant in all aspects; 4 points: The G20 principle under investigation is in place but the level of implementation is not complete; 3 points: The G20 principle under investigation is in place but is not implemented; 2 points: The G20 principle under investigation does not exist yet but the framework is under development; 1 point: The G20 principle under investigation does not exist and there are no plans or actions taken for developing it;
Explanation of the colours: Scores between 3.5 and 4 – dark green, scores between 3.5 and 3.0 – light green, scores between 3.0 and 2.5 – yellow, scores between 2.5 and 2.0 – orange.
Source: OECD survey on the self-assessment framework for city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs.

Principle 1: Territorial approach

Most surveyed city-to-city partnerships use their partnerships to address concrete local challenges such as urban mobility, affordable housing and gender equality. Sixty-seven percent of respondents rated their usage of the partnership to tackle local development issues as 4 or 5 on a scale from 1 to 5. Seven percent stated they do not use their partnership to address local challenges, while 11% do not yet do so but are developing a framework on how the partnership can address their local development challenges in the future. Most partnerships focus on policy areas that can help exploit the territorial development potential of the city. Furthermore, in around 20% of the cities, the partnerships are reported to create synergies across sectoral policies and plans. In an additional 30% of the cities, the partnerships create such synergies but stated there was potential to further exploit synergies. On the other hand, less than 20% of the partnerships do not create synergies across sectoral policies and plans through their activities. Fifteen percent of them are still assessing how synergies could be generated in the future (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2. Implementation of G20 Principle 1 on a territorial approach

Respondents' average rating of different ways in which their city-to-city partnership fosters a territorial approach



Note: Scoreboard: 5 points - The G20 principle under investigation is complete and relevant in all aspects; 4 points: The G20 principle under investigation is in place but the level of implementation is not complete; 3 points: The G20 principle under investigation is in place but is not implemented; 2 points: The G20 principle under investigation does not exist yet but the framework is under development; 1 point: The G20 principle under investigation does not exist and there are no plans or actions taken for developing it.
Source: OECD survey on the self-assessment framework for city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs.

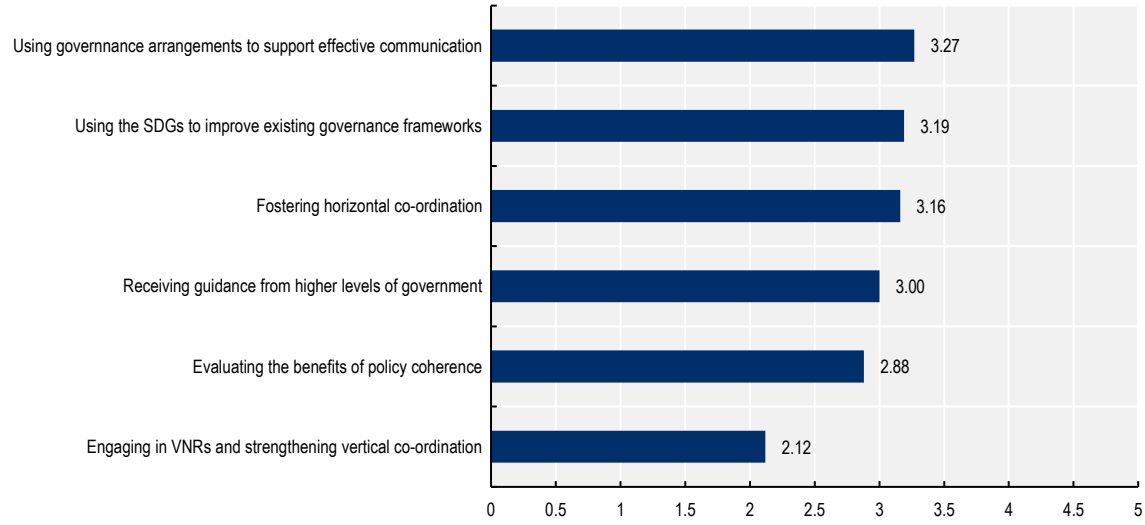
City-to-city partnerships are often integrated into local development strategies. Among the 27 partnerships conducting the self-assessment, 56% rated the integration of their partnership into the local development strategy as either 4 or 5 on a scale from 1 to 5, while 11% do not and 15% are still assessing how this could be done in the future. In addition, some partnerships use their activities to foster territorial cohesion and recover from COVID-19. While 20% of partnerships do so and reported no major concerns, an additional 12% use their partnership to foster territorial cohesion and recover from COVID-19 but identified some challenges. Twenty-eight percent of partnerships rated their usage of their activities with a score of 3 out of 5, whilst 40% either do not consider territorial cohesion and COVID-19 recovery in their partnerships at all or still need to develop a respective framework.

Principle 2: Multi-level governance

Around half of the partnerships use the SDGs to provide a framework for a more holistic and bottom-up design of their activities. Eight percent of partnerships only consider their usage of the SDGs as complete and relevant in all aspects. Thirty-five percent use the SDGs to provide a framework for more holistic and bottom-up policy making but identified some challenges. Around 30% consider the SDGs as a tool to do so but do not yet use them. Another 23% still needs to consider how to use the SDGs to improve governance frameworks. Four percent do not use them yet and have no plan to do so in the future. The SDGs can also be a tool to improve multi-level governance frameworks. Close to half of the partnerships foster horizontal co-ordination and trade-off management across sectoral departments in the implementation of the SDGs. Eight percent do so with no major concerns noted, while 36% identified remaining challenges regarding horizontal co-ordination. On the other hand, there are several partnerships that either do not foster horizontal co-ordination at all (8%) or that are still developing a framework for doing so (20%) (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3. Implementation of G20 Principle 2 on multi-level governance

Respondents' average rating of different ways in which their city-to-city partnership fosters multi-level governance



Note: Scoreboard: 5 points - The G20 principle under investigation is complete and relevant in all aspects; 4 points: The G20 principle under investigation is in place but the level of implementation is not complete; 3 points: The G20 principle under investigation is in place but is not implemented; 2 points: The G20 principle under investigation does not exist yet but the framework is under development; 1 point: The G20 principle under investigation does not exist and there are no plans or actions taken for developing it.
Source: OECD survey on the self-assessment framework for city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs.

Half of the city-to-city partnerships have governance arrangements and/or working practices that support effective communication with other levels of government. Nineteen percent of the partnerships rated these arrangements with a score of 5 out of 5. Thirty-one percent rated them as 4 out of 5. However, another 12% stated not to have such governance arrangements in place and have no plans to develop them, while 19% are starting to develop them. In terms of guidance and support from other levels of government regarding the implementation and development of city-to-city partnerships, close to 40% of partnerships rated them as 3 on a scale from 1 to 5. All other options (1, 2, 4 and 5) were selected by 15% of partnerships. These figures reveal a need for further support from other levels of government to city-to-city partnerships in most of the surveyed municipalities.

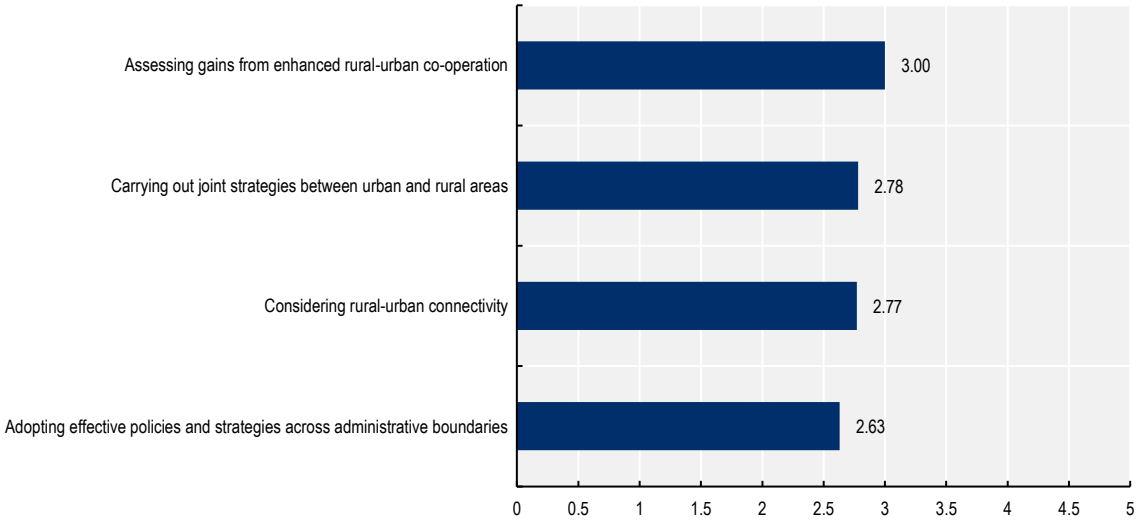
The engagement of cities and their partnerships in the process of Voluntary National Reviews is limited. Among the surveyed partnership, 38% stated not to be engaged in the process of VNRs and not using their partnerships to strengthen vertical co-ordination with regional and/or national levels of government. An additional 38% do not do so either but are currently developing a framework to improve vertical co-ordination. Only one partnership stated to have been engaged in a national VNR process and is using its activities to strengthen vertical co-ordination with regional and/or national levels of government. This was also the case for another three partnerships, which however identified some challenges in the process.

Principle 3: Rural-urban connectivity

The focus on rural-urban connectivity in city-to-city partnerships could be strengthened. Around 20% of partnerships do not consider rural-urban connectivity and do not facilitate territorial linkages between urban and rural areas. Another 23% do not yet take urban-rural linkages into account but are developing frameworks to do so. Around 30% of partnerships rated their consideration of urban-rural linkages with a score of 4 or 5 out of 5. Overall, the average self-assessment score of the partnerships for this question of 2.8 underlines that further efforts are needed to better connect urban and rural areas in city-to-city partnerships (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4. Implementation of G20 Principle 3 on rural-urban connectivity

Respondents' average rating of different ways in which their city-to-city partnership fosters rural-urban connectivity



Note: Scoreboard: 5 points - The G20 principle under investigation is complete and relevant in all aspects; 4 points: The G20 principle under investigation is in place but the level of implementation is not complete; 3 points: The G20 principle under investigation is in place but is not implemented; 2 points: The G20 principle under investigation does not exist yet but the framework is under development; 1 point: The G20 principle under investigation does not exist and there are no plans or actions taken for developing it.
Source: OECD survey on the self-assessment framework for city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs.

Policies and strategies to achieve the SDGs are often lack co-ordination across administrative boundaries as well as follow a functional approach based on where people work and live. Only one partnership stated that its policies and strategies to achieve the SDGs are co-ordinated across administrative boundaries with no major concerns noted regarding the implementation. Around 20% have not adopted such policies and have no plan to put them in place. Another 26% have not implemented such policies but a framework to do so in the future is under development. Close to 20% have adopted policies to achieve the SDGs that

are co-ordinated across administrative boundaries and cover the entire functional area[1] but their level of implementation is not complete.

Few city-to-city partnerships carry out joint strategies between urban and rural areas to promote an integrated territorial development approach. Among respondents, only 7% have put in place joint urban-rural partnerships with no major concerns noted regarding their implementation. Another 19% have put in place joint strategies between urban and rural areas but assessed their level of implementation to be incomplete. On the other hand, more than 40% either have no such strategy in place and no plan to develop one or still need to elaborate a framework to develop such a joint strategy. The average rating of 2.8 is in line with the limited consideration of rural-urban connectivity in city-to-city partnerships more broadly. Furthermore, there is space to expand the assessment of possible economic, environmental and social gains from enhanced rural-urban co-operation. Currently, 26% conduct such assessments without any major concerns noted. Another 11% do so as well but identified some challenges. However, overall, more than 40% of the partnerships rated their activities in this area with a score of either 1 or 2 out of 5, which means they do not plan to assess the gains from enhanced urban-rural co-operation or still need to develop a framework for assessment.

Principle 4: Data and indicators

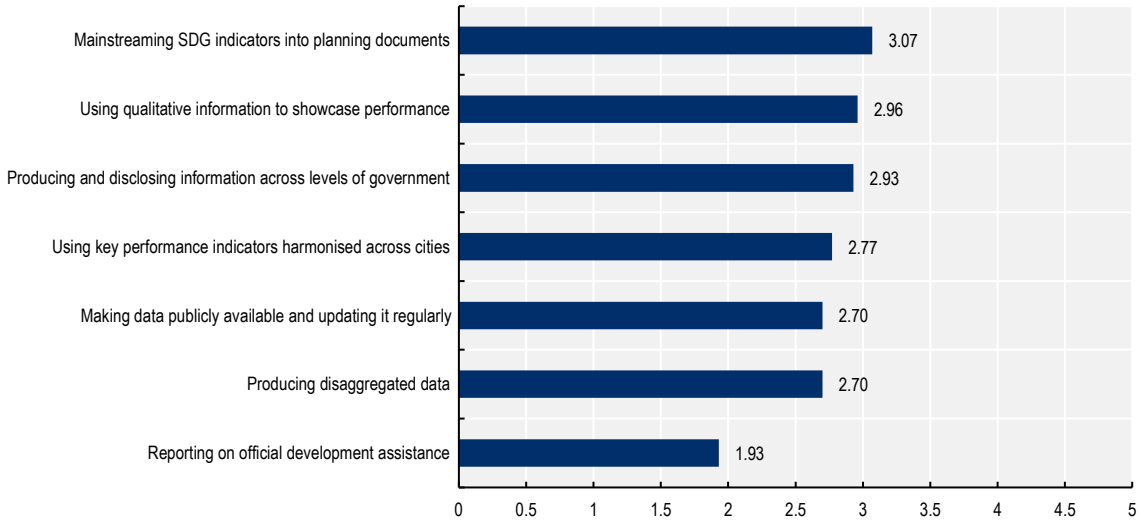
City-to-city partnerships are often lacking key performance indicators that are harmonised between the two partner cities. Among the partnerships responding to the survey, 27% stated not to have agreed on key performance indicators and having no plan to put such indicators in place and harmonise with their partner city. Another 19% do not use such indicators yet but are developing a harmonised indicator framework. Overall, only 15% of the partnerships stated that they have key performance indicators in place that are harmonised across cities with no major concerns noted. In addition, around 20% have established such indicators but identified some challenges using them (Figure 4.5).

Some partnerships produce or collect data on their city-to-city partnership to assess territorial disparities and the partnerships' contribution to the SDGs. Seven percent of the partnerships do so without any major concerns noted regarding the data collection. Another 22% also produce or collect such data but consider the level of implementation incomplete with persistent challenges to solve. At the same time, close to half of the partnerships (44%) do not produce such data and do not have the plan to do so or still need to develop a framework for the data collection. Furthermore, there is potential to expand mechanisms or incentives to encourage local and regional governments to exchange approaches and practices in mainstreaming SDG indicators into planning and policy documents. Almost 40% of partnerships rated the existing mechanisms with a score of 2 on a scale from 1 to 5. In addition, only 11% considered the existing mechanism as being relevant in all aspects with no major concerns regarding their implementation.

In most cases, data and information are not produced and disclosed in a shared responsibility across levels of government and key stakeholders. Fifteen percent of partnerships do not produce and disclose data in a shared responsibility across levels of government and have not yet taken any action to do so. Twenty-two percent still need to develop the mechanisms required to do so. Less than a third of partnerships produce and disclose data in a shared responsibility (rating of 4 or 5 out of 5). The self-evaluation thus emphasises the need to further engage with different levels of government and key territorial stakeholders when it comes to data and information. Consequently, data on city-to-city partnerships are often not publicly accessible and regularly updated. Only one partnership stated to regularly update and publish data on their activities. An additional 26% do publish data on their partnership but consider the level of implementation as incomplete and identified some challenges. Furthermore, more than 40% provided a score of 1 or 2, which means they do not yet make data on their partnership publicly accessible.

Figure 4.5. Implementation of G20 Principle 4 on data and indicators

Respondents' average rating of different ways in which their city-to-city partnership uses data and indicators



Note: Scoreboard: 5 points - The G20 principle under investigation is complete and relevant in all aspects; 4 points: The G20 principle under investigation is in place but the level of implementation is not complete; 3 points: The G20 principle under investigation is in place but is not implemented; 2 points: The G20 principle under investigation does not exist yet but the framework is under development; 1 point: The G20 principle under investigation does not exist and there are no plans or actions taken for developing it.
Source: OECD survey on the self-assessment framework for city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs.

Some partnerships use qualitative information to showcase their performance. Close to 40% of partnerships provided a score of 4 or 5 when being asked about the usage of qualitative data. More than a third do not yet use qualitative data but are currently developing a framework to exploit qualitative information such as storytelling. Finally,10% do not use qualitative data and have no plans and actions taken for future usage.

Most partnerships do not collect data and report on official development assistance (ODA). Forty-eight percent declared they do not report on ODA and have no actions taken to do so in the future, while 26% do not yet report on ODA but consider doing so at a later stage. The remaining 26% rate their efforts to collect data and report on ODA with a score of 3 (11%) or 4 (15%), while no partnership reports on ODA without facing major concerns in doing so.

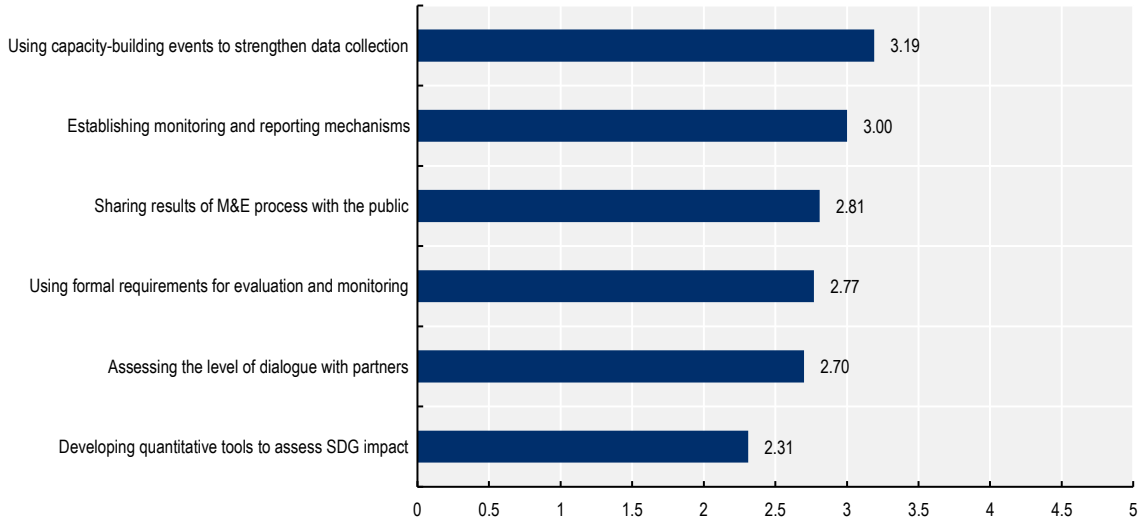
Principle 5: Monitoring and evaluation

Several partnerships have not yet established monitoring and reporting mechanisms to assess their activities. While 33% of the partnerships use monitoring and reporting mechanisms, such as joint reviews, surveys, polls and evaluation reports, but consider their implementation to be incomplete, only 7% noted no major concerns regarding the implementation of their monitoring and reporting mechanisms. Fifteen percent have not established such mechanisms and have no plans to take action in the future. Close to 20% do not yet have them in place but are currently developing them. In terms of formal requirements such as agreements on methodologies and evaluation components, about half of the partnerships stated not to follow any or to be in the process of developing them. Only one partnership noted no concerns or challenges regarding the existence and application of formal M&E requirements. Furthermore, the sharing of results of M&E processes to the wider public is limited. On average, partnerships assessed their activities in terms of results sharing to provide transparency and accountability with a score of 2.8 on a scale from 1 to 5. Only one partnership stated to be sharing results of the M&E

process and having experienced no major concerns in the process. Another 20% share their M&E results but consider the level of implementation to be incomplete (Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6. Implementation of G20 Principle 5 on monitoring and evaluation

Respondents' average rating of different ways in which their city-to-city partnership uses monitoring and evaluation



Note: Scoreboard: 5 points - The G20 principle under investigation is complete and relevant in all aspects; 4 points: The G20 principle under investigation is in place but the level of implementation is not complete; 3 points: The G20 principle under investigation is in place but is not implemented; 2 points: The G20 principle under investigation does not exist yet but the framework is under development; 1 point: The G20 principle under investigation does not exist and there are no plans or actions taken for developing it.
Source: OECD survey on the self-assessment framework for city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs.

Most partnerships organise capacity-building events to strengthen data collection, management, storage and reporting processes. Fifty-two percent of the partnerships rated their activities in the area of capacity building with a score of 4 out of 5, even though some challenges have been identified regarding their implementation. Another 4% provided a score of 5 out of 5. Eleven percent of partnerships stated not to have organised any capacity-building events yet. Less than 40% stated to assess the level of dialogue and participation of the different actors involved in the city-to-city partnership, which reveals room for improvement. More than a fourth do not conduct such assessments and do not plan to do so in the future.

Few partnerships have developed quantitative tools to assess their potential contribution to the SDGs. None of the partnerships provided a score of 5 out of 5 for assessing the impact of their activities on the SDGs. Fifteen percent stated to have developed such tools but considered their level of implementation to be incomplete. Thirty-five percent have not developed quantitative tools to assess the potential impact of their city-to-city partnership on the SDGs and have no plan to do so in the future. An additional 15% have not yet established such quantitative tools but are working on a framework to develop them.

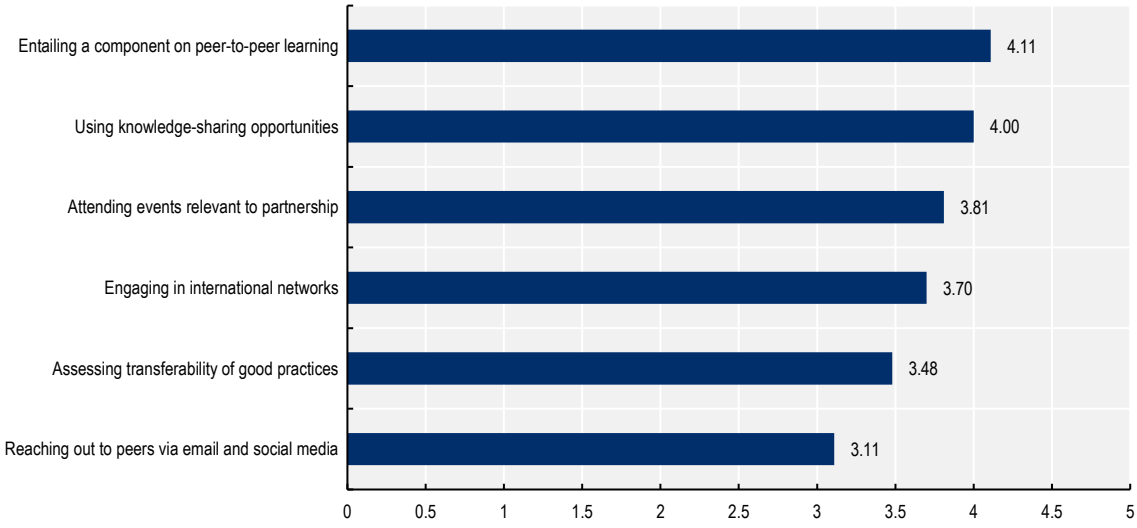
Principle 6: Peer-to-peer learning

Peer-to-peer learning is a key component of city-to-city partnerships. Among those partnerships responding to the survey, 85% rated their activities on peer-to-peer learning with a score of 4 or 5 out of 5. That means that they have a peer-to-peer learning component in place no major concerns noted regarding its implementation (37%) or that they have such a component in place but still face some challenges regarding its implementation (45%). The remaining 15% of partnerships provided a score of either 2 (11%)

or 3 (4%), which underlines that peer-to-peer learning is widespread in those partnerships responding to the survey (Figure 4.7).

Figure 4.7. Implementation of G20 Principle 6 on peer-to-peer learning

Respondents' average rating of different ways in which their city-to-city partnership involves peer-to-peer learning



Note: Scoreboard: 5 points - The G20 principle under investigation is complete and relevant in all aspects; 4 points: The G20 principle under investigation is in place but the level of implementation is not complete; 3 points: The G20 principle under investigation is in place but is not implemented; 2 points: The G20 principle under investigation does not exist yet but the framework is under development; 1 point: The G20 principle under investigation does not exist and there are no plans or actions taken for developing it.
Source: OECD survey on the self-assessment framework for city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs.

Most city-to-city partnerships have put in place knowledge-sharing opportunities among the partnering cities that involve city representatives and territorial stakeholders to exchange and learn from each other's experiences. More than three-quarters of the partnerships rated their activities in terms of knowledge sharing with a score of 4 (42%) or 5 (35%), which underlines the importance the partnerships attribute to knowledge-sharing opportunities. Twelve percent have not yet engaged in knowledge-sharing activities but are working on putting them in place, while none of the partnerships stated having no knowledge-sharing activities at all between city representatives and stakeholders such as schools, civil society, the private sector and academia in place and no plans to implement them.

In addition, many partnerships engage in international networks and fora to exchange best practices and learn from peer cities. More than 60% of partnerships rated their international engagement and peer learning with a score of 4 (41%) or 5 (22%). Furthermore, most partnerships attend events such as webinars that are relevant to the thematic areas of their city-to-city partnership to get inspiration. Thirty-seven percent evaluated their participation in such events with a score of 5 and another 26% with a score of 4. Few partnerships (7%) do not attend thematically relevant events and have no plans to change that, while 4% do not yet take part in peer-to-peer learning events but consider doing so in the future.

Actively reaching out to peer cities via email or social media to search for new practices and innovative approaches to policy making in the framework of city-to-city partnerships is less common. While around 40% of partnerships rated their outreach activities with a score of 4 (19%) or 5 (22%) out of 5, a similarly large share is not actively reaching out to peers via email or social media to search for new practices and innovative city-to-city partnership approaches. Fifteen percent stated not to do so and not having plans and actions taken related to that. Twenty-two percent do not reach out to peer cities but are developing

plans and ideas to do so in the future. Good practices by peer cities and stakeholders can be inspiring for city-to-city partnerships and the majority of partnerships assess how they could be transferred to their cities. Twenty-two percent of partnerships evaluate how their peers' good practices could be relevant to their partnership. Another 41% consider how good practices could be transferred to their city but identified some challenges in doing so.

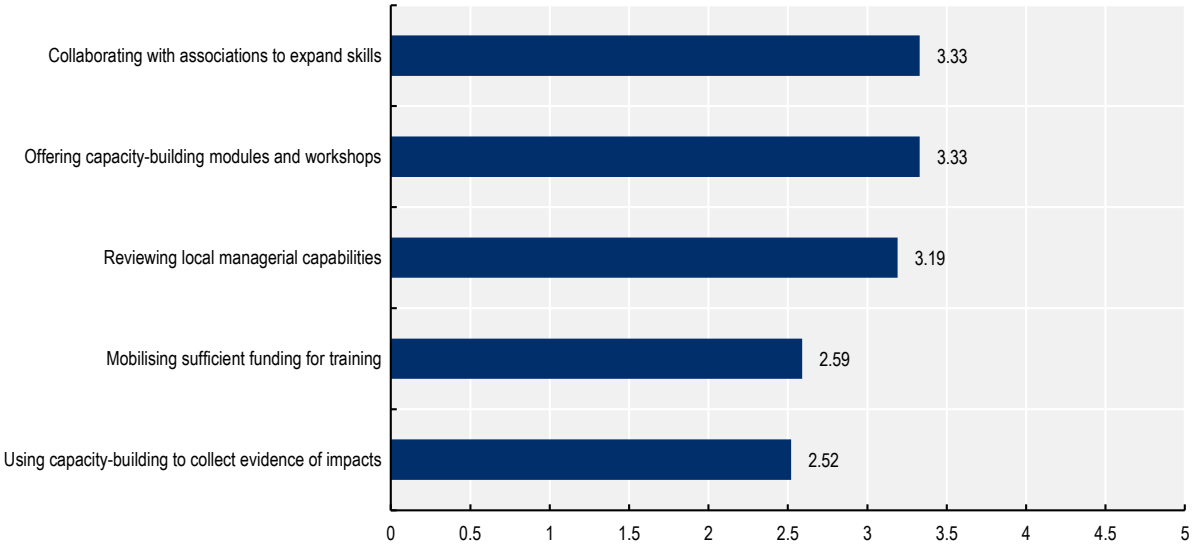
Principle 7: Capacity development

Most partnerships offer capacity-building modules and workshops that can help address imbalances and create bridges among actors and territories with different levels of expertise. While 11% of partnerships are offering capacity-building activities and have noted no major concerns regarding the implementation, 41% use capacity-building modules and workshops but identified some challenges in doing so. On the other hand, less than 20% of partnerships do not offer any such activities or have only started developing them (Figure 4.8).

Not all partnerships review and analyse the local managerial capabilities and required skills for carrying out all of the activities associated with designing, setting, implementing and monitoring the city-to-city partnership. While the average score of the self-assessment for this aspect is 3.2 on a scale from 1 to 5, only 12% consider their review and analysis of local capabilities and skills as complete and relevant in all aspects with no major concerns noted. Thirty-five percent of partnerships review and analyse local managerial capabilities but identified some challenges in doing so. On the other hand, more than 20% of partnerships are not engaged in such reviews and have no plan to do so in the future or still need to develop a suitable analysis framework.

Figure 4.8. Implementation of G20 Principle 7 on capacity building

Respondents' average rating of different ways in which their city-to-city partnership fosters capacity building



Note: Scoreboard: 5 points - The G20 principle under investigation is complete and relevant in all aspects; 4 points: The G20 principle under investigation is in place but the level of implementation is not complete; 3 points: The G20 principle under investigation is in place but is not implemented; 2 points: The G20 principle under investigation does not exist yet but the framework is under development; 1 point: The G20 principle under investigation does not exist and there are no plans or actions taken for developing it.
Source: OECD survey about the self-assessment framework for city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs

Capacity-building activities in the public service to collect and analyse evidence about the impacts of different policies implemented in the framework of the partnership are an exception. None of the partnerships stated to have such activities in place with no major concerns noted regarding their implementation, while 22% have put them in place but identified related challenges. However, close to 50% do not use capacity-building activities to collect evidence of the impact of the activities of the partnership or are still in the process of shaping such activities. Thirty percent have developed capacity-building activities but do not implement them.

The lack of funding is an obstacle to training relevant stakeholders in city-to-city partnership monitoring. None of the partnerships rated its mobilisation of funding with a score of 5 out of 5. Thirty percent declared to mobilise sufficient funding to train their relevant project stakeholders but identified some challenges in securing the necessary funds. The remaining 70% rated their funding mobilisation with a score of 1 (22%), 2 (26%) or 3 (22%), which emphasises that further efforts are needed to ensure that sufficient financial means are available to train and upskill relevant territorial stakeholders.

More than half of the respondents collaborate with local government associations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or research centres to consolidate and expand skills and competencies for effective city-to-city partnerships. More than 20% of the partnerships answering the survey use such collaboration and noted no major concerns regarding the implementation. Another 30% do collaborate with partners but identified some challenges in the implementation. While 7% have no intention to work together with regional, national or global associations of local governments, NGOs or research centres, 26% have not yet started a collaboration but are developing a framework to do so.

Principle 8: Stakeholder engagement

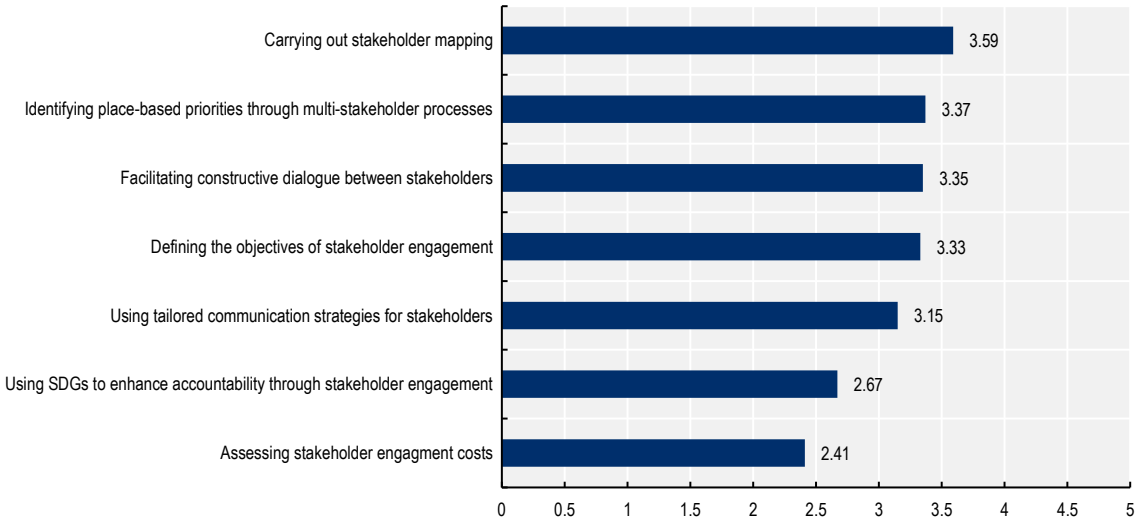
Most partnerships do not use the SDGs to engage territorial stakeholders. Indeed, only 7% of partnerships consider their usage of the SDGs as a stakeholder engagement tool as complete and relevant in all aspects with no major concerns noted, while 30% identified some challenges in using the SDGs to engage territorial stakeholders. On the other hand, more than 50% of partnerships rated their usage of the SDGs as a vehicle to enhance accountability and transparency of the city-to-city partnership through engaging all territorial stakeholders in the policy-making process with a score of 1 (26%) or 2 (26%).

Many partnerships identify place-based priorities through a participatory and multi-stakeholder approach. While 11% of the partnerships stated doing so with no major concerns noted, the majority (52%) have identified place-based priorities in collaboration with stakeholders but faced some challenges in the process. Only a few partnerships (15%) do not use participatory and multi-stakeholder approaches and have no plans for developing them, while 7% do not yet do so but have a dedicated framework under development. Carrying out a stakeholder mapping is a tool often used by partnerships to identify key stakeholders, responsibilities and core motivations. More than 60% rated their stakeholder mapping activities with a score of 5 (26%) or 4 (37%), while only 1 in 5 partnerships do not map its stakeholders and has no actions taken to do so (7%) or still needs to develop a respective framework (15%) (Figure 4.9).

The majority of partnerships have defined the objectives of their stakeholder engagement process. Nineteen percent of them stated to have done so with no major concerns noted, while 33% identified some challenges in the process. However, several partnerships have not set the objectives of how and why they want to engage their stakeholders and how the expected outcomes should be used. Seven percent have no plans and actions for developing stakeholder engagement objectives, while another 22% have started to develop a framework to define the objectives at a later stage. In line with that, not all partnerships facilitate a dialogue between stakeholders on policy incoherencies or areas of disagreement regarding the city-to-city partnership. While 19% and 27% respectively rate their efforts to facilitate a dialogue between stakeholders with a score of 4 or 5, more than 20% stated not to be engaged in such efforts or still developing a framework to do so.

Figure 4.9. Implementation of G20 Principle 8 on stakeholder engagement

Respondents' average rating of different ways in which their city-to-city partnership fosters capacity building



Note: Scoreboard: 5 points - The G20 principle under investigation is complete and relevant in all aspects; 4 points: The G20 principle under investigation is in place but the level of implementation is not complete; 3 points: The G20 principle under investigation is in place but is not implemented; 2 points: The G20 principle under investigation does not exist yet but the framework is under development; 1 point: The G20 principle under investigation does not exist and there are no plans or actions taken for developing it.
Source: OECD survey on the self-assessment framework for city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs.

The majority of partnerships have not put in place regular assessments of stakeholder engagement costs or obstacles at large. While 30% do not conduct such assessments and have no plans to put them in place, another 30% do not yet assess stakeholder engagement but started developing a framework to do so. On the other hand, only one partnership regularly assesses stakeholder engagement costs and obstacles without facing any concerns regarding the implementation. Furthermore, there is space for improvement concerning tailored communication strategies for relevant stakeholders. Close to 40% of partnerships rated their communication strategies for relevant stakeholders with a score of 1 or 2 out of 5. Nevertheless, more than half of the partnerships have put such tailored communication strategies for stakeholders in place, 19% of them without facing any major concerns regarding their implementation.

Principle 9: Financing

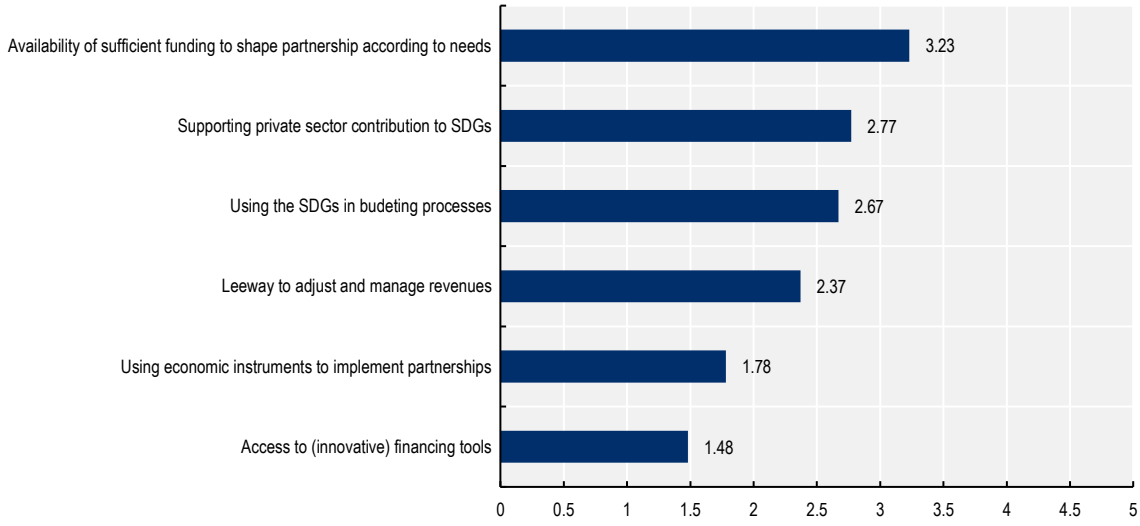
Several partnerships are facing challenges to mobilise sufficient funding to shape their activities according to the needs of the local stakeholders and project partners. More than 20% of the partnerships rated the availability of such funding with a score of 1 or 2 out of 5 with an additional 27% providing a score of 3. On the other hand, 38% stated to have sufficient funding available to shape the partnership according to the needs of the local stakeholders and project partners but faced some challenges in acquiring this funding. Twelve percent noted that sufficient funding is available and identified no major concerns. However, there is not much leeway for local governments to adjust and manage revenues to respond to the needs of their city-to-city partnerships. On average, the partnerships rated the possibilities to adjust and manage resources accordingly with a score of 2.4. None of the partnerships stated having sufficient leeway to manage resources without any obstacles. Eleven percent stated that there is a certain leeway but with some challenges to using it (Figure 4.10).

Financial instruments such as taxes or fees are barely used to catalyse revenues needed to implement city-to-city partnerships. Most partnerships (56%) stated not to use such financial instruments to access funding and have no plans to do so in the future. Furthermore, more than 80% of partnerships do not have access to innovative financing tools such as green bonds, land value capture mechanisms, infrastructure funds or pooled financing to re-risk investments. Moreover, 74% have no plans and actions taken for using such tools in the future. The average scores of 1.8 for the usage of financial instruments and 1.5 for the access to innovative financing tools emphasise their sporadic use.

Public-private partnerships, the engagement of private companies and the use of SDGs for budget allocations are limited in city-to-city partnerships. Close to 30% do not incentivise public-private partnerships and the engagement of private companies. Another 12% have not yet done so but a framework to do so is under development. At the same time, more than 50% of partnerships rate their support for private sector contributions to the SDGs with a score of 3 (27%) or 4 (27%) out of 5. A small share of 8% of the partnerships is incentivising public-private partnerships as well as the engagement of private companies in city-to-city partnerships and noted no concerns regarding its implementation. Furthermore, more than half rate usage of the SDGs to allocate budget across the identified priorities in their partnerships with a score of 1 (22%) or 2 (30%). Only 11% are using the SDGs in budgeting processes with no major concerns noted.

Figure 4.10. Implementation of G20 Principle 9 on financing

Respondents' average rating of different ways with which their city-to-city partnership uses financing



Note: Scoreboard: 5 points - The G20 principle under investigation is complete and relevant in all aspects; 4 points: The G20 principle under investigation is in place but the level of implementation is not complete; 3 points: The G20 principle under investigation is in place but is not implemented; 2 points: The G20 principle under investigation does not exist yet but the framework is under development; 1 point: The G20 principle under investigation does not exist and there are no plans or actions taken for developing it.
Source: OECD survey on the self-assessment framework for city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs.

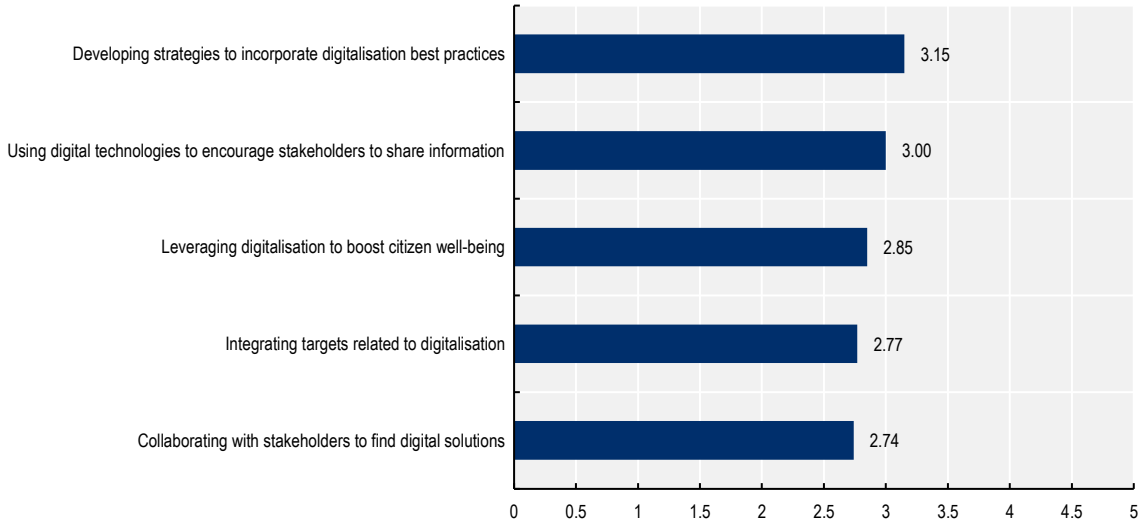
Principle 10: Digitalisation

There are disparities regarding the development of strategies to build human, technological and infrastructural capacities of local governments to make use of digitalisation best practices. While about 50% of partnerships rate their development of such strategies with a score of 4 (30%) or 5 (19%) out of 5, more than 30% have not developed strategies to incorporate digitalisation best practices in their city-to-city partnerships and 15% are still working on a framework to do so. Similarly, in terms of the usage of

digital technologies to encourage stakeholders to exchange information with each other, there are few frontrunners (7%) that face no major obstacles in using digital tools. At the same time, 33% are using tools such as interactive online platforms but identified some challenges linked to their application. More than a third of partnerships do not use such digital technologies for knowledge exchange or are still in the elaboration phase (Figure 4.11).

Figure 4.11. Implementation of G20 Principle 10 on digitalisation

Respondents' average rating of different ways with which their city-to-city partnership fosters digitalisation



Note: Scoreboard: 5 points - The G20 principle under investigation is complete and relevant in all aspects; 4 points: The G20 principle under investigation is in place but the level of implementation is not complete; 3 points: The G20 principle under investigation is in place but is not implemented; 2 points: The G20 principle under investigation does not exist yet but the framework is under development; 1 point: The G20 principle under investigation does not exist and there are no plans or actions taken for developing it.
Source: OECD survey on the self-assessment framework for city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs.

Some partnerships have integrated specific objectives related to digitalisation in their city-to-city partnership. Twelve percent successfully use such digitalisation objectives without facing any major obstacles, while 23% use them with challenges remaining to be solved. On the other hand, more than 40% have not or have not yet set specific targets related to digitalisation in their city-to-city partnerships. Furthermore, some partnerships collaborate with stakeholders such as entrepreneurs, start-ups and innovative civil society organisations to find smart and digital solutions for urban development problems. Eleven percent of partnerships rate their collaboration activities with a score of 5 out of 5, followed by 19% with a score of 4 and 26% with a score of 3. However, there are also 22% stated that they do not collaborate with stakeholders on smart and digital solutions and have taken no action for doing so in the future.

There is potential to expand the usage of initiatives and approaches that effectively leverage digitalisation to boost citizen well-being and improve urban services. Out of the 27 partnerships responding to the survey, only 3 (11%) use such initiatives without facing any major challenges. Five partnerships (19%) have put in place initiatives or approaches that effectively leverage digitalisation but consider its level of implementation as not yet complete. On the other hand, close to 40% do not use such initiatives or are still developing a framework to put them in place.

Note

[1] The OECD and the EC have jointly developed a methodology to define functional urban areas (FUAs) in a consistent way across countries. Using population density and travel-to-work flows, an FUA consists of a densely inhabited city and of a surrounding area (commuting zone) whose labour market is highly integrated with the city. The ultimate aim of the EU-OECD approach to FUAs is to create a harmonised definition of cities and their areas of influence for international comparisons as well as for policy analysis on topics related to urban development.

5 Policy implications for city-to-city partnerships and ways forward

This chapter draws policy implications from the pilot testing of the self-assessment framework by 27 partnership promoters. In addition, the chapter suggests ways forward using the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework that go beyond the pilot testing. In particular, its application should help document and facilitate more robust evidence-based territorial policies to achieve the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), while strengthening multi-level governance, building capacity and improving transparency and accountability, including for official development assistance (ODA) reporting.

Policy insights from the decentralised development co-operation policy dialogue

This chapter presents policy insights from the policy dialogue conducted over 2 years with more than 100 stakeholders from the European Commission (EC) Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), the co-ordination facility of the Partnerships for Sustainable Cities programme and representatives of those partnerships. The first section highlights the main policy implications derived from the results of the pilot testing with 27 partnerships, while the second takes a more macro-level perspective going beyond the pilot testing. It proposes ways forward for city-to-city partnerships using the M&E framework.

Territorial approach

Cities could further promote their city-to-city partnerships as a means to enhance the implementation of a territorial approach. City-to-city partnerships hold the potential to focus further on activities aiming to address concrete local challenges such as urban mobility, affordable housing and gender equality. The key thematic areas could be based on specific priority SDGs and areas of expertise that are a priority for both partners. In that context, guidelines for DDC activities, including city-to-city partnerships that incorporate the SDGs as a guiding principle, can promote policy coherence between the external development actions and the implementation and localisation of the SDGs in their territory, e.g. by setting joint priorities and engaging in external activities based on the local and regional core competencies. Another way to ensure that city-to-city partnerships have a long-term impact is the integration into local development strategies, which is an area where the surveyed partnerships have space for improvement. On top of that, principles such as territorial partnership, reciprocity, proximity and territorial governance should be better acknowledged in city-to-city partnerships to increase the exchange of knowledge, good practices and peer-to-peer learning.

Multi-level governance

Strengthening multi-level governance and co-ordination is key to greater effectiveness of city-to-city partnerships. A well-functioning multi-level governance framework for DDC allows for the promotion of coherent DDC strategies and horizontal and vertical co-ordination of DDC actors and stakeholders. It can for example be beneficial for cities if their region provides incentives to contribute to their DDC priorities and programmes in order to increase their impact. One way to do so is through regular networking meetings between municipalities and regions acting in the same partner country. These can help exploit synergies such as the common use of infrastructure and resources and improved co-ordination between actors involved in projects in the same geographic area. In addition, the SDGs could be used as a tool to define and align priorities for DDC across levels of government. The framework of the 2030 Agenda provides an opportunity to set common goals and targets for DDC between municipalities, states and the national level, e.g. through the prioritisation of specific SDGs.

Rural-urban connectivity

City-to-city partnerships should enhance rural-urban connectivity and co-operation, including between primary and intermediary cities. A functional approach to territories (based on where people work and live rather than administrative boundaries) allows for better analysis and provision of policy solutions to issues that span beyond a city's administrative boundaries such as transport, water, solid waste, climate change and labour market dynamics. It is therefore important that city-to-city partnerships facilitate territorial linkages between urban and rural areas and carry out joint strategies to promote an integrated territorial development approach. While some partnerships assess possible economic, environmental and social gains at a functional scale, there is still room for improvement to co-ordinate strategies across administrative boundaries within a functional urban area.

Data and indicators

City-to-city partnerships should aim to expand the production and collection of disaggregated data on their activities. Poor quantity, quality and accessibility of data and information are one of the most common explanations for the lack of awareness of the relevance of city-to-city partnerships, duplication of efforts, fragmentation of actions and lack of co-ordination. To increase the availability of relevant data on city-to-city partnerships, further efforts are needed to encourage the exchange of approaches and practices in mainstreaming SDG indicators in planning and policy documents. Joint working groups with territorial stakeholders and key actors involved in the partnership could support the production and disclosure of data and information in a shared responsibility, which is an area where many partnerships see space for improvement. Such dialogues could also help to agree on key performance indicators across cities involved in the partnership. To expand information, city-to-city partnerships could implement DDC knowledge-sharing activities at public events, social media and online webpages showcasing the tangible outcomes and benefits of DDC projects.

Monitoring and evaluation

Putting in place M&E frameworks is key to assessing the implementation of city-to-city partnerships and their impact. M&E frameworks should be underpinned by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) principles of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability and linked to the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation indicators and SDGs. They should assess the level of alignment between the actions of the partnership and local and national policies in partner countries, the level of ownership over the process, the level of dialogue and participation by partner organisations in the definition, implementation and M&E of the project as well as the potential for reciprocity among partners. Formal M&E requirements support the development of such M&E frameworks. A harmonised or standardised approach to M&E of city-to-city partnerships can allow for comparability while leaving scope for individual partnership characteristics and needs. One of the main objectives of M&E should be to contribute to a learning process so that the information gathered informs political decision making and further develop and adjust the partnership in the future. To foster that process and improve transparency and accountability, M&E results should be made publicly available, which was often not the case among the surveyed partnerships.

Peer-to-peer learning

Strengthening the peer-to-peer learning function of city-to-city partnerships could help generate higher returns on investment and benefits for the partners involved. Cities involved in partnerships should set up regular in-person exchanges or joint workshops to foster the transfer of knowledge and share good practices. Furthermore, the provision of staff on loan to work in the administration of the partner city can help transfer expertise and provide learning opportunities. Engagement in international networks and information sharing via webinars are also valuable means to exchange best practices. It can also help to actively reach out to peer cities via email and social media to get inspiration and search for new practices and innovative approaches. Assessing the replicability and transferability of good practices and better acknowledging principles such as territorial partnership, reciprocity, proximity and territorial governance, in city-to-city partnerships can also increase the exchange of knowledge, good practices and peer-to-peer learning.

Capacity development

Municipalities should support capacity development and build local managerial capital and skills for effective, efficient and inclusive city-to-city partnerships implementation. Offering capacity-building training modules and workshops for actors involved in city-to-city partnerships can for example help address

imbalances and create bridges among actors and territories with different levels of expertise and knowledge. National and global associations of local governments, non-governmental organisations and research centres can offer valuable contributions to consolidate and expand skills and competencies needed to deliver intended outcomes. Some local and regional government associations, for example the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG) in Flanders, are developing initiatives for training and peer learning for their members involved in DDC. Capacity-building activities should also be used to collect and analyse evidence about the impact of different policies implemented in the framework of the city-to-city partnerships, which is an area where many surveyed partnerships have space for improvement. Capacity building is often linked to the availability of funding. It is therefore essential that partnerships consider capacity building and skills development as one of their key priorities and, accordingly, allocate a dedicated budget to them.

Stakeholder engagement

Promoting stakeholder engagement helps increase the ownership and accountability of city-to-city partnership activities. Involving multiple actors in city-to-city partnerships spanning sectors and levels of government can help maximise the impact of DDC activities. It can also help empower communities and generate ownership and long-term sustainability, allowing for the generation of place-based knowledge, expertise and good practices. To that end, it is important to identify relevant actors, e.g. through a stakeholder mapping and assessment of their level of involvement, an activity that most surveyed partnerships have already implemented. To improve the impact, the partners engaged in the partnership should clearly define the objectives of stakeholder engagement and outline how they are expecting to use their inputs in the city-to-city partnership. In addition, there should be regular assessments of stakeholder engagement cost and obstacles at large, which is an area where many surveyed partnerships identified space for improvement. One way to promote partnerships with actors such as civil society and the private sector is through the framework of the 2030 Agenda, in particular by linking the SDGs to key territorial development challenges addressed by the city-to-city partnership, e.g. sustainable urban mobility, that are of interest for both public and private actors.

Financing

Effective financing and efficient resource mobilisation strategies should be developed and there are several means to secure funding for city-to-city partnerships. The SDGs, for example, can be a common language across different levels of government. They can furthermore facilitate engagement with the private sector and attract investors who seek to provide SDG-compatible finance and develop public-private partnerships, which half of the surveyed partnerships have not done yet. In addition, municipalities could explore the use of blended finance vehicles (e.g. pooled financing, guarantees and financing arrangements to catalyse long-term resources). In this context, implementing the OECD DAC Blended Finance Principles to support local development priorities and ensure blended finance can promote a sound local enabling environment for responsible borrowing. Furthermore, facilitating access to innovative financing tools such as green bonds, land value capture mechanisms and infrastructure funds that can help de-risking investments is another way to facilitate access to additional resources for the implementation of the partnerships. Lastly, integrating the SDGs in budgeting processes can help ensure that adequate resources are allocated for addressing the key territorial development issues targeted by the partnership and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda more broadly.

Digitalisation

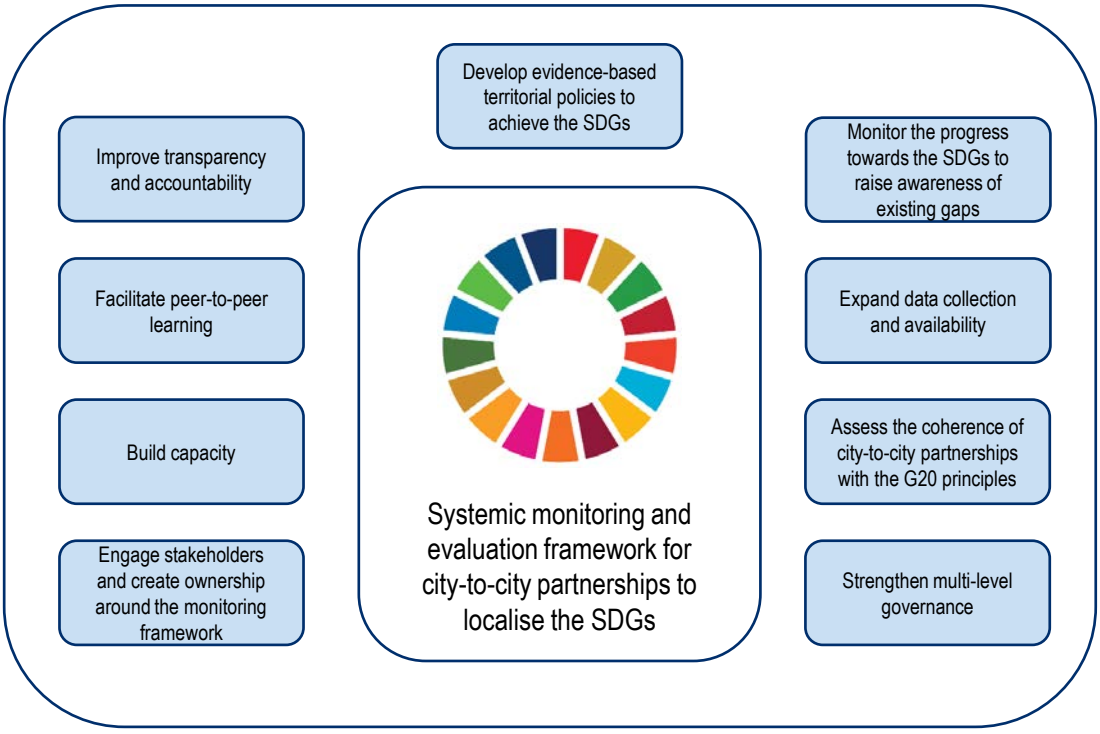
Strategies should be developed to build human, technological, and infrastructural capacities of the local and regional governments to make use of and incorporate digitalisation best practices in city-to-city partnerships. To develop such capacities, local governments involved in city-to-city partnerships should

expand their collaboration with technology-savvy stakeholders such as start-ups and innovative civil society organisations to develop smart and digital solutions for urban development problems. In addition, sharing information is important to guide and improve partnerships. Technology and innovation can be major drivers to encourage and facilitate information sharing, not only between data producers and users but also between DDC actors. It can lead to improved accountability, for example, if used to encourage stakeholders to exchange information with each other via interactive digital platforms. Setting specific targets related to digitalisation, an option implemented by a few of the surveyed partnerships, can be a means to incentivise the update of digital solutions in the partnerships and thus boost citizen well-being by delivering more efficient, sustainable and inclusive urban services and environment.

Proposed ways forward

The proposed M&E framework for city-to-city partnerships (Chapter 3) allows cities to assess the sustainability of their partnerships and their contribution to the SDGs. Using a harmonised indicator set, the framework also allows comparing the progress of different partnerships towards the SDGs. In addition, the indicators and the application of the scoreboard in the self-assessment make it possible to measure developments over time. The list of proposed indicators also incentivises cities to invest in their statistical capacities, in particular to expand and improve data collection for evidence-based policy making. Beyond supporting the assessment of the ten G20 High-level Principles and measurement of progress of the SDGs, the proposed M&E framework holds the potential to help local governments involved in city-to-city partnerships carry out a number of functions summarised in Figure 5.1 and hereinafter detailed.

Figure 5.1. Expected functions of the proposed city-to-city partnerships' M&E framework



- **Develop evidence-based territorial policies to achieve the SDGs**

  The M&E framework should help cities to develop and implement evidence-based and sustainable policies to achieve the SDGs. In particular, the M&E framework should help cities assess their

strengths and weaknesses and define their local needs and priorities to formulate evidence-based policies. The engagement and participatory approach underlying the self-assessment process should provide an opportunity to jointly develop concrete measures with stakeholders to tackle local development challenges and monitor their progress over time.

- **Monitor the progress towards achieving the SDGs to raise awareness of existing gaps and areas to prioritise**

  Local governments engaged in city-to-city partnerships should use the M&E framework to monitor their progress towards achieving the SDGs and thereby raise the awareness of their politicians, policy makers, decision makers and citizens on the remaining distance to travel to reach end values, and the main policy areas to prioritise based on identified gaps. To that effect, they should use the indicators of the simplified or long list depending on their data availability and data collection capacities to assess their strengths and weaknesses regarding the SDGs. Furthermore, local governments should use the indicators to inform policy makers about the impact of the partnership's actions and potential policy areas that require additional efforts and focus. Building on that and as a next step, local governments and territorial stakeholders should adjust and redesign their city-to-city partnerships and activities based on the evidence collected through the M&E process.

- **Expand data collection and availability**

  The proposed M&E framework should help incentivise local governments engaged in city-to-city partnerships to expand their data collection efforts. Joint working groups with experts from the statistical offices and other key actors could facilitate strategies on how to produce data and disclose information from the simplified or long list of the proposed M&E framework. To that end, the cities engaged in the partnership should collaborate with their regional and national statistical offices to expand knowledge and measurement approaches across levels of government and partnerships. Their data collection efforts should also incorporate new sources such as geospatial and satellite data.

- **Assess the coherence of city-to-city partnerships with the G20 Principles**

  Local governments should use the self-assessment framework to assess the coherence of their city-to-city partnerships with the ten G20 Rome High-level Principles on city-to-city partnerships for localising the SDGs (G20 Principles), which provide a relevant tool to initiate, develop and monitor city-to-city partnerships for the SDGs. Applying the G20 Principles in their own partnerships allows local governments to understand on which area of their partnership they need to put an additional focus. The workshops organised as part of the self-assessment process can help collect the views of stakeholders, assess them and jointly develop follow-up actions to make partnerships more sustainable and aligned with the G20 Principles.

- **Strengthen multi-level governance**

  Local governments should use the M&E framework to strengthen their multi-level governance for the achievement of the SDGs. In particular, they should use the process of the self-assessment framework to foster dialogue and communication across city departments and with other levels of government. A harmonised M&E framework for city-to-city partnerships provides an opportunity for the local administration to align priorities across levels of government and to improve the coherence of data collection, targets and indicators. This could also help improve comparability across partnerships and thus better derive good practices and lessons learned that could potentially be replicated by other partnerships.

- **Engage stakeholders and create ownership**

  The process to conduct the self-assessment for city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs should help engage territorial stakeholders in the M&E of the partnership. By stimulating a transparent, neutral, open, inclusive and forward-looking dialogue across stakeholders on what

works, what does not, what should be improved and who can do what in the context of city-to-city partnership, the M&E framework also aims to improve their ownership of the M&E process. The cities engaged in the partnership should conduct a mapping of stakeholders involved to ensure a high level of representation of stakeholders in the assessment, including representatives from the public administration, ideally from different levels of government, civil society organisations, academia, youth and the private sector, donor agencies and financial institutions. The integration of stakeholders in the M&E of the partnership should help them see how their contribution can lead to an improvement of the current institutional setting and policies implemented in the framework of the city-to-city partnership.

- **Build capacity**

  The multi-stakeholder dialogue foreseen as part of the self-assessment should help build capacities among territorial stakeholders involved in city-to-city partnerships. It should help them reflect on various elements of the partnership such as the local policies, multi-level governance and data collection and find solutions to improve them. The exchange with other actors involved in the partnership should also help them acquire the necessary knowledge and evidence of the impact of the activities of the partnership. One way is through capacity-building activities on the measurement of the impact of different policies implemented in the framework of the city-to-city partnership.

- **Facilitate peer-to-peer learning**

  Considering the universality of the M&E framework, local governments should also use it to facilitate peer-to-peer learning to learn how other partnerships have overcome identified obstacles and challenges. It should thus contribute to a learning process and generate new information that can inform decision-making and further improve city-to-city partnerships and DDC activities. It is therefore important that the M&E framework is not only considered a reporting tool but oriented towards the assessment of results building on the critical analysis of information. To foster that process, local governments could set up regular meetings with their peers that are also engaged in city-to-city partnerships to exchange their approaches to M&E and learn from good practices. Engagement in regional, national networks and international fora can help local governments facilitate such peer-to-peer learning on the M&E of city-to-city partnerships.

- **Improve transparency and accountability**

  The M&E framework should help local governments improve the transparency of their activities, reduce information asymmetries and enhance the accountability of their actions. Local governments should aim to generate future opportunities to continue to engage their stakeholders and track progress on the objectives of the partnership defined in the workshops. They should set up an accountability mechanism to facilitate this process and verify that stakeholder inputs were considered and addressed. Furthermore, it is important for M&E results to be made available to the general public to provide greater transparency, which can create opportunities for other DDC actors to learn from success stories and good practices. As an example, knowledge-sharing activities and the disclosure of quantitative and qualitative data in public events, social media and dedicated web pages can help disseminate information and improve transparency and accountability of the partnership.

Annex A. List of questions used to test the self-assessment framework

Annex Table A.1. Initial self-assessment framework – List of questions

G20 Principle	Question
Territorial approach	Do you use city-to-city partnerships to address concrete local challenges such as clean forms of urban mobility, affordable housing, gender equality, access to green spaces, balanced urban development, clean water and sanitation, air quality, solid waste management, territorial inequalities or service delivery?
	Are the established city-to-city partnerships creating synergies across sectoral policies and plans at the local level?
	Are city-to-city partnerships integrated into the local development strategy?
	Do you establish city-to-city partnerships in policy areas that can help exploit the territorial development potential of the city?
	Do you use city-to-city partnerships to foster territorial cohesion and recover from COVID-19?
Multi-level Governance	Do the SDGs provide a framework for a more holistic and bottom-up design of your city-to-city partnerships?
	Are you engaged in the process of voluntary national reviews and do you use city-to-city partnerships to strengthen vertical co-ordination with regional and national levels of government?
	Are there governance arrangements and/or working practices that support effective communication on city-to-city partnerships?
	Do you evaluate the benefits of your city-to-city partnership with regards to policy makers and stakeholders (e.g. reduced information asymmetries, optimisation of financial resources use, reduction/elimination of split incentives/conflicts)?
	Do you receive guidance or support from other levels of government regarding the implementation and development of city-to-city partnerships?
	Do you foster horizontal co-ordination across sectoral departments to manage trade-offs across policy domains in the implementation of the SDGs and to ensure decisions taken or progress made in one SDG do not work against other SDGs?
Rural-urban connectivity	Do your city-to-city partnerships consider rural-urban connectivity and/or facilitate territorial co-operation between urban and rural areas to promote an integrated development approach?
	Do you assess possible economic, environmental and social gains from such enhanced rural-urban co-operation?
	Do you adopt a functional approach to design policies and strategies to achieve the SDGs beyond administrative boundaries and based on where people work and live?
	Do your city-to-city partnerships consider rural-urban connectivity and/or facilitate territorial co-operation between urban and rural areas to promote an integrated development approach?
Data and indicators	Do you produce or collect disaggregated data on your city-to-city partnerships for the assessment of territorial disparities and their contribution to the SDGs?
	If you produce them, do you make data on city-to-city partnerships publicly accessible and update them regularly?
	Are there mechanisms or incentives to encourage local and regional governments to exchange approaches and practices in implementing city-to-city partnerships and mainstreaming SDG indicators into planning and policy documents?
	Have you agreed on key performance indicators related to your city-to-city partnerships in co-operation with partner cities?
	In addition to quantitative data, do you use qualitative information (e.g. storytelling, community of practices) to showcase the performance and success stories of the city-to-city partnerships?
	Do you produce or collect disaggregated data on your city-to-city partnerships for the assessment of territorial disparities and their contribution to the SDGs?

G20 Principle	Question
Monitoring and evaluation	Have you established monitoring and reporting mechanisms for your city-to-city partnerships (e.g. joint reviews, surveys/polls, benchmarking, evaluation reports, *ex post* financial analysis, regulatory tools, national observatories, parliamentary consultations, etc.)?
	Do you have capacity-building events to strengthen the data collection, management, storage and reporting processes?
	Have you developed quantitative tools to assess the potential contribution of the city-to-city partnerships to the SDGs?
	Do you share the results of the monitoring and evaluation process with the wider public to provide transparency and accountability?
	Do you assess the level of dialogue and participation by partner organisations and local authorities in the definition, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of the city-to-city partnerships?
	Have you established monitoring and reporting mechanisms for your city-to-city partnerships (e.g. joint reviews, surveys/polls, benchmarking, evaluation reports, *ex post* financial analysis, regulatory tools, national observatories, parliamentary consultations, etc.)?
Peer-to-peer learning	Do your city-to-city partnerships generally include a component of peer-to-peer learning?
	Have you put in place knowledge-sharing opportunities across your city-to-city partnership stakeholders (city representatives, schools, civil society, private sector and academia) to exchange and learn from each other's experiences?
	Do you engage in international networks and fora to exchange best practices and learn from peer cities on city-to-city partnerships?
	Do you actively reach out to peer cities via email or social media to search for new practices and innovative approaches to policy making in the framework of city-to-city partnerships?
	Do you attend events (e.g. webinars) relevant to the thematic area of your city-to-city partnership to get inspiration?
	Do you consider how practices showcased by peer cities or stakeholders could be transferred to your city?
Capacity development	Do you review and analyse the local managerial capabilities and required skills for carrying out all of the activities associated with designing, setting, implementing and monitoring the city-to-city partnerships?
	Based on such a diagnosis, do you offer capacity-building modules and workshops that can help address imbalances and create bridges among actors and territories with different levels of expertise and knowledge?
	Are there capacity-building activities in the public service to collect and analyse evidence about the impacts of different policies implemented in the framework of the city-to-city partnerships?
	Do you mobilise sufficient funding to train relevant project stakeholders in the monitoring of city-to-city partnerships?
	Do you collaborate with regional, national or global associations of local governments, non-governmental organisations or research centres to consolidate and expand skills and competencies needed for city-to-city partnerships to deliver intended outcomes?
Stakeholder engagement	Do you use the SDGs as a vehicle to enhance accountability and transparency of your city-to-city partnerships through engaging all territorial stakeholders, including civil society, citizens, youth, academia and private companies, in the policy-making process?
	Have you carried out stakeholder mapping to make sure that all those that have a stake in the outcome or that are likely to be affected are clearly identified and their responsibilities, core motivations and interactions understood?
	Have you defined the objectives of stakeholder engagement and the expected use of their inputs in the city-to-city partnerships?
	Do you facilitate a dialogue between stakeholders on policy incoherencies or areas of disagreement regarding the city-to-city partnerships?
	Have you identified place-based priorities for the city-to-city partnerships through a participatory and multi-stakeholder process?
	Have you put in place regular assessments of stakeholder engagement costs or obstacles at large?
	Have you put in place-tailored communication strategies for relevant stakeholders?

G20 Principle	Question
Financing	Is there sufficient funding available to shape the city-to-city partnerships according to the needs of the local stakeholders and project partners?
	Do you incentivise public-private partnerships as well as the engagement of businesses in city-to-city partnerships?
	Do you use the SDGs in budgeting processes linked to the city-to-city partnership?
	Do you use financial instruments such as taxes or fees to catalyse needed revenues to implement city-to-city partnerships?
	Does your local government have sufficient leeway to adjust and manage revenues to respond to the needs of city-to-city partnerships?
	Do you have access to (innovative) financing tools such as green bonds, land value capture mechanisms, infrastructure funds or pooled financing instruments that include lending or de-risking investment, such as guarantees for municipal bonds to secure sufficient funding for city-to-city partnerships?
	Do you collect data and report on official development assistance (ODA) as part of your city-to-city partnership?
Digitalisation	Do you have local government strategies to build human, technological and infrastructural capacities to make use of and incorporate digitalisation best practices in city-to-city partnerships?
	Do you use digital technologies – such as interactive online platforms – to encourage stakeholders to exchange information and good practices within the city-to-city partnerships?
	Have you integrated specific targets related to digitalisation into your city-to-city partnerships?
	Do you use initiatives or approaches that effectively leverage digitalisation to boost citizen well-being and deliver more efficient, sustainable and inclusive urban services and environments as part of a collaborative, multi-stakeholder process?
	Do you have local government strategies to build human, technological and infrastructural capacities to make use of and incorporate digitalisation best practices in city-to-city partnerships?

Annex B. Respondents to the self-assessment framework for city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs

Annex Table B.1. List of respondents

	Name of the partnership, institution or municipality responding
1	A City-to-city and Multi-stakeholder Approach for Integrated, Sustainable and Inclusive Urban Development of the City of Pemba (MAISPEMBA)
2	*Amélioration de la gouvernance urbaine et de l'ouverture sociale dans les communes de Haho1, Haho2, Haho3 et Haho4 dans la Préfecture de Haho au Togo*
3	*Asistencia Técnica proyecto*: Adapting Local Integrated Urban Development Plans to the Sustainable Developments Goals Through Multi-Stakeholder and Multi-Governance Approaches – Praia/Madrid
4	*Ayuntamiento de La Palma del Condado (Huelva)*
5	Blue Economy for the Sustainable Towns of Taranto and Gabès (BEST TAG)
6	City Link Banjul (Gambia) – Ostend (Belgium)
7	*Commune de Woluwe-Saint-Pierre – Province du Nord Kivu – Renforcement des compétences administratives et financières de la province du Nord Kivu*
8	*Consorci de la Ribera*
9	Darkhan-Uul Province Municipality/DUPM/School of Agroecology and Business – Mongolian University of Life Science (SAB-MULS)/ Network of Association of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS)
10	*Desenvolvimento inclusivo e sustentável da Fronteira da Paz*
11	Edinet Municipality City Hall
12	*Fondo Andaluz de Municipios para la Solidaridad Internacional (FAMSI)*
13	*Instituto de Planeación y Gestión del Desarrollo del Área Metropolitana de Guadalajara (IMEPLAN)*
14	Jakarta-Berlin Sister City Partnership – Smart Change – Strengthening Urban Governance, Prosperity and Innovation in Jakarta
15	*Mairie de Ouagadougou*
16	*Mancomunitat de La Ribera Alta*
17	*Municipalidad de Córdoba*
18	*Municipalidad de Villa María*
19	*Ñase Tenonde Gotyo: Comunidades Sostenibles, Resilientes e Inclusivas del Paraguay*
20	*Partenariat pour des villes durables*
21	*Partenariats pour les villes durables : Programme de Renforcement des compétences administratives et financières de la Province du Nord Kivu*
22	Partnership for Strengthening Governance Resilience and Greening of Jinja City Council
23	Partnerships for Sustainable Cities: Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Inhambane Province (SIRI)
24	*Projeto AcessoCidades*
25	Research and Education Building Urban Institutions for Local Development (REBUILD)
26	TWIN CITIES in Sustainable Partnership: Co-creation of integrated urban governance for the green, sustainable and inclusive development of SekondiTakoradi – Ghana
27	*União das Cidades Capitais de Língua Portuguesa CML – Câmara Municipal de Lisboa AMD – Autoridade Municipal de Dili (UCCLA)*

OECD Urban Studies

City-to-City Partnerships to Localise the Sustainable Development Goals

City-to-city partnerships and decentralised development co-operation (DDC) can play a key role in advancing the SDGs and in addressing global megatrends, the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and other shocks. This report discusses the framework conditions for effective city-to-city partnerships and takes stock of existing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. As a complement, it proposes a systemic monitoring and evaluation framework for city-to-city partnerships to localise the SDGs, combining self-assessment and SDG indicators. This framework aims to bridge the gap in terms of measuring the progress of cities engaged in partnerships on the 2030 Agenda and their compliance with the G20 Rome High-Level Principles on city-to-city partnerships for localising the SDGs. The report also presents lessons learned from a pilot-testing of this new framework and highlights policy implications and ways forward to enhance the sustainability, transparency and accountability of city-to-city partnerships, in a shared responsibility across levels of government and stakeholders.

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