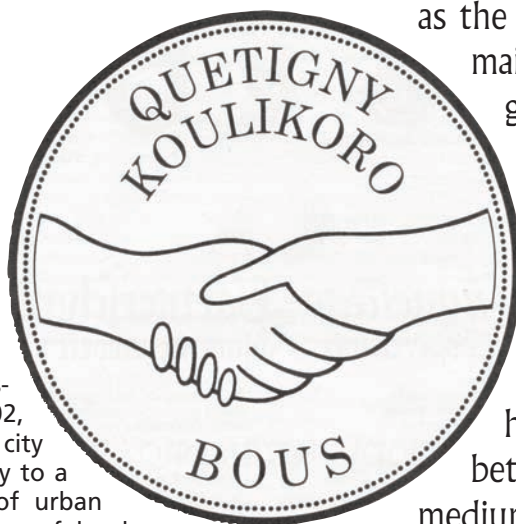


# Cooperation between cities

Since the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the Habitat II conference in Istanbul in 1996 and the Johannesburg summit in 2002, fears of uncontrolled city growth have given way to a more positive vision of urban areas as economic engines of development. Hence the need to involve local authorities in the achievement of global sustainable development goals has been acknowledged, and today the United Nations approach local authorities directly over the accomplishment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

## City networks

This political climate has fostered the emergence of local authorities as a pressure group on the international scene and the formation of city networks in all parts of the world. In 2004, the creation of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) marked an important step in the structuring and influence of local authorities, with the merging of the two major federations – the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) and the World Federation of United Cities (FMCU) – with the Metropolis net-



The town of Quetigny (Côte d'Or department) sought a German partner town (Bous) after having developed links with Koulikoro (Mali).

Cities have never been as present on the international scene as they are today, not only in terms of their population size, but also as the place where the main challenges of globalization take shape. This is seen in the emergence of interdependent networks of cities and hierarchies between large, medium and small towns. Their tools – knowledge sharing and reciprocity – are changing the approach to cooperation in urban issues.

## Europe: cooperation in the broad sense

The concept of decentralized cooperation, which emerged during the Lomé IV convention in 1989, expresses the European Commission's commitment to local forms of governance and the increasing participation of civil society. Decentralized cooperation, according to the EU definition, is not limited to relations established by regional authorities with their counterparts in developing countries, but also includes civil society. As such, decentralized cooperation can be maintained when relations between the EU and the State institutions of an aid-receiving country have been suspended for political reasons, as is the case in Myanmar or Haiti.



Left, from top to bottom:

Urb-AI Rede 10 workshop (poverty mitigation network) in São Paulo, February 2005.

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) founding congress in Paris, May 2005. Opening ceremony and workshop.

S. Mkhathshwa, co-president of UCLG.

Below: World Urban Forum in Barcelona, September 2004.

UN Millennium Project: working group on slum improvement.

work. Responsible for promoting the role and status of local government in the international arena and decentralized cooperation connections, this new organization reflects the growing importance of "city diplomacy" on the international scene.

In both the South and the North, numerous city networks have been established: the Municipal Development Partnership (MDP) in Africa, CALGA and Merco Ciudades in Latin America, CityNet in Asia, and Eurocities for numerous European cities. European action in favor of decentralized cooperation and initiatives such as the Cities Alliance are supported by these networks and contribute to their development and consolidation. Based on exchange, they are the proof that "assistance" cooperation and North-South knowledge transfer are evolving towards more reciprocal cooperation, aimed at consolidating the role and influence of local authorities.

In order to guarantee better urban governance in terms of administra-



tive and financial management as well as service provision, over the last 10 years UN-Habitat and the World Bank, and more recently UCLG, have been developing analysis and assessment tools for urban issues. Urban observatories have thus been created with the aim of improving knowledge and helping local authorities and civil society to develop indicators and statistics and to gather information for urban policy-making purposes.

In the context of the growing importance of local authorities and their concerns on the international scene, decentralized cooperation is beginning to play a major role in terms of redefining and steering local development and official development assistance.



### Strengthening cooperation in the regions

For over 10 years, support mechanisms for stakeholders involved in decentralized cooperation have been set up in almost all the regions of France. They are based on different legal statuses, but offer similar services: pooling information, supporting project promoters, stakeholder consultation and training.

The first was created in 1993 by the Rhône-Alpes region (RESACOOOP). Similar initiatives exist in other regions: Alsace (IRCOD), Basse-Normandie (Horizons solidaires), Bourgogne (AB2C), Franche Comté (CERCOOP), Nord-Pas de Calais (LIANES), Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (MEDCOOP), Pays de la Loire (SGAR and ALCID) and Centre (CENTRAIDER).



*In addition to political cooperation between mayors, many twinning arrangements between French cities and developing cities involve civil society in cooperation projects. From top to bottom, signing twinning agreements between Lao (Burkina Faso) and Bourgne (Territoire de Belfort), Timbuktu (Mali) and Saintes (Charente-Maritime), Antsirabe (Madagascar) and Montluçon (Allier).*

### Local initiatives

Decentralized cooperation action falls entirely under the responsibility of French regional authorities. Initiatives are consequently scattered and aimed at various objectives. However, authorities are now seeking to join forces on a single national strategy in order to allow cities, both small and large, in the North and the South, to take part in common international action.

This is primarily a matter of political cooperation between mayors, based on commitments between counterparts. Mobilizing regional civil servants and civil society-based structures, these projects and programs aim to build management capacities and develop greater autonomy for partners. Reciprocity – through cultural exchange, support for local associations, the promotion of local skills and centers of excellence – is one of the objectives.

### Regional roots

The regional dimension of public policy is now largely acknowledged by financial backers. Local authorities are increasingly recognized as the representatives of projects that transcend the sectoral rationale alone. In this context, decentralized cooperation is capable of mobilizing local actors in both partner regions around

### The strengths of French decentralized cooperation

The town twinning arrangements signed just after World War II are at the origin of French decentralized cooperation. Following the Sahel drought in the 1970s, they took the form of humanitarian action. For some 15 years, local authorities have been developing international activities in their own fields of competence. They thus transmit their expertise in the implementation of public policies, such as decentralization, urban services management, the implementation of urban projects or regional planning. This field of action was recognized by the law of 6 February 1992 and the creation of the National Commission for Decentralized Cooperation within the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs for the support of external action by regional authorities. In France, all the regions, 80% of departments and 80% of municipalities of over 5 000 inhabitants are involved in decentralized cooperation with some 120 countries throughout the world. Action is focused essentially on French-speaking Africa, Latin America, South East Asia and China. The field is currently expanding to include Portuguese- and English-speaking Africa, Central Europe and India.



*Twinning sign in Chauvigny, Vienne (France).*

projects and objectives that have local roots, yet are present in the international arena. Conducted primarily using the authorities' own funds, it guarantees partners long-term commitment. Finally, thanks to the development of co-funding between authorities and national and international backers, it can contribute to the implementation of wide-ranging operational projects, involving regional or national levels of administration and international organiza-

tions. The future will thus see a move towards coordination with other European Union authorities, development agencies and international networks. ■

### One per cent for water

The Oudin-Santini law, adopted in 2005 in France, provides new possibilities for contributing to funding for decentralized and non-governmental cooperation. It allows municipalities and public intermunicipal cooperation organizations to finance decentralized cooperation, emergency aid or solidarity initiatives concentrating on water and sanitation through the public services water and sanitation budget. One per cent of the budget for these services can be reserved for this purpose. Water agencies are also allowed to use one per cent of their budget for international cooperation initiatives.

### Webography

#### Decentralized cooperation

Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs  
Commission nationale de la coopération décentralisée – CNCD  
Database of decentralized cooperation initiatives conducted by French authorities.  
[www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/cncd](http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/cncd)

Cités unies France – CUF  
Regional authorities involved in international cooperation. Information, links, assistance in setting up projects.  
[www.cites-unies-france.org/html/cuf/index.html](http://www.cites-unies-france.org/html/cuf/index.html)

#### French urban planning agencies

Fédération nationale des agences d'urbanisme – FNAU  
[www.fnau-international.org](http://www.fnau-international.org)  
Association des régions de France – ARF  
[www.arf.asso.fr/](http://www.arf.asso.fr/)

#### International cooperation

Metropolis (World Association of Major Metropolises)  
Promotes international cooperation between metropolitan governments.  
[www.metropolis.org](http://www.metropolis.org)  
United Cities and Local Governments – CGLU  
[www.cities.localgovernments.org](http://www.cities.localgovernments.org)

#### Mediterranean

Medcoop (Collectif pour le développement de la coopération décentralisée en Méditerranée)  
[www.medcoop.com](http://www.medcoop.com)

#### Africa

Municipal development partnership – MDP  
[www.pdm-net.org](http://www.pdm-net.org)

#### Asia

CityNet (Asian network of local authorities)  
[www.citynet-ap.org](http://www.citynet-ap.org)

#### Europe

Eurocities  
[www.eurocities.org/main.php](http://www.eurocities.org/main.php)

#### America

Latin American Federation of Cities, Municipalities and Associations of Local Governments – FLACMA  
[www.flacma.org](http://www.flacma.org)

Online webography:  
[www.villesendevenir.org](http://www.villesendevenir.org)