



Localising Global Gateway

Connecting *Intermediary* cities and *Investing* together for more *Inclusive* and *Innovative* sustainable cities and regions

Brussels 29th of November | 1st of December 2023



FINAL REPORT

Thank you for joining in person!

Let's RECOGNISE the value of INTERMEDIARY cities



OPENING SESSION (& CLOSING of the CoR's 158th plenary)



LRA LEADERS are on the FRONTLINE!

EU & its PARTNERS create a MORE SUSTAINABLE future despite GLOBAL TURMOILS

- Strengthen PARTNERSHIPS
- more INCLUSIVE MULTILATERALISM



takes SHAPE in CITIES

OPTIMISING DECENTRALISATION and LRA's = KEY to meeting SDG's



COOPERATION is a PEACE PROJECT

MULTILEVEL governance

DON'T leave anyone behind

We want LONG TERM RESPECTFUL Relationships

The involvement of COMMUNITIES is KEY for the SUCCESS of GLOBAL GATEWAY



29 NOV - 1 DEC '23 CITIES & REGIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS 2023 FORUM



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29 Nov - 1 DEC '23

CITIES & REGIONS
FOR INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS 2023 FORUM

WELCOME



COOPERATION
with GLOBAL SOUTH

The co-organisers of the 8th Cities and Regions for International Partnerships Forum, the **European Committee of the Regions (CoR)** and the European Commission's **Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA)**, welcomed 258 people from 71 countries to the Forum, which was held from 29 November to 1 December 2023 in the CoR building in Brussels.

This 2023 edition of the biennial Forum was entitled **'Localising Global Gateway'**. It was the first in-person edition since 2019, as the 2021 edition was held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim of this edition was to help bring a **territorial approach** to the EU's Global Gateway agenda, by addressing the spatial dimension of development and **empowering Local and Regional Authorities (LRAs)** as key developmental actors.

At the Forum, representatives from around 160 Local and Regional Authorities (LRAs) – cities, municipalities, regions from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe – were invited to bring their expertise and knowledge to identify current priorities, needs and challenges, along with possible solutions and good practices for sustainable development. The outcomes will help the EU shape the Global Gateway to be a more efficient and successful instrument in the coming years. The forum also provided mayors and local officials with a unique opportunity to recreate links and networks amongst each other, with a view to strengthening decentralised cooperation.

Specifically, in a spirit of co-creation, Forum participants came up with concrete recommendations on four key themes: Innovation, Intermediary cities, Inclusion, and Investment. In other words, to join them up, recommendations for 'Localising Global Gateway, connecting Intermediary cities and Investing together for more Inclusive and Innovative sustainable cities and regions.'



GLOBAL GATEWAY

GEOGRAPHISED APPROACH to INVESTMENT

URBAN AREAS

ACCESS → INTERNATIONAL MARKETS

SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE projects

Global Gateway is the EU's worldwide strategy for investing in sustainable infrastructure projects and establishing economic partnerships. It is a unique values-based offer, promoting the principles of democracy, equality and human rights.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen launched the Global Gateway strategy in 2021. By 2023, 90 flagship projects had been initiated in the Africa and the Latin America and Caribbean regions. These projects benefit both the EU and its partner countries, empower local communities, tackle global challenges such as climate change, improve digital connectivity, promote sustainable transport, and enhance health, and education and research systems.

Importantly, the Global Gateway strategy and its projects aim to provide a critical contribution to the 2030 agenda and to bridging the financing gaps towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). On the other hand, LRAs, and Associations of Local Authorities (ALAs) are also vital to the SDGs, given the **OECD** estimates that 65% of the 169 targets underlying the 17 SDGs will not be reached without proper engagement of and coordination with local and regional governments.

The **official opening** of the 2023 Forum took place in the European Parliament.

Jutta Urpilainen (Commissioner for International Partnerships) explained that: *“The €300 billion Global Gateway strategy extends the twin green and digital transitions beyond Europe’s borders. Instead of creating dependencies, it cultivates **equal partnerships**, and instead of short-term investments it promotes **long-term sustainability**.”*



Apostolos Tzitzikostas (First Vice-President of the European Committee of the Regions):

*“Our aim is to contribute to **a territorial approach** to the EU Global Gateways agenda, in view of **decentralised cooperation and partnerships**.”*

Patrick Molinoz (Chair of CIVEX (Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs), CoR):

*“The involvement of LRAs is essential to ensure that Global Gateway **investments are sustainable and in synergy with local development strategies** and the needs of the population.”*

EQUAL PARTNERSHIPS



The following debate between elected speakers or their representatives gave examples of how the Global Gateway is benefitting communities around the world. For instance, a partnership between LRAs in Peru, France and Italy, in territories impacted by extreme climate events, led to climate adaptation plans to diminish future impacts of floods and droughts. Adaptation infrastructure was built in Peru, while Europeans learnt from traditional Peruvian water-management techniques.

A partnership between localities in south-east Asia and European cities is helping cities like Hue in Vietnam address the challenges of heritage tourism and adaptation to climate change. The representative from Greater Amman Municipality explained how ARLEM (Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly), an assembly of local and regional representatives from the EU and its partners in the Mediterranean region, plays a pivotal role in enhancing cooperation to promote sustainable development, cultural exchange and socio-economic growth, for example in the Amman Green City Action Plan.

Decentralised cooperation between Nîmes (France) and Fimela (Senegal) led to education initiatives and finding a second life for buses and other vehicles that are still in good condition. Another partnership is supporting development in the Autonomous District of Abidjan, Ivory Coast, focusing on education, gender equality, and water and sanitation; one initiative is an award programme to encourage young emerging entrepreneurs. Addressing the impacts of conflict, partnerships have been established between cities in Finland and Ukraine.

Regions specialising in education (Lombardy, Italy) and high-tech innovation (North Brabant, Netherlands) pointed out that investment in EU regions with specific competencies feeds into Global Gateway projects, bringing prosperity to regions worldwide. Others stressed the need to keep in mind inclusion, ensuring international cooperation is guided by human rights, gender balance, the rule of law, transparency, and democracy.

“This Forum is an excellent opportunity to provide reinforcement to strengthen and further institutionalise the political dimension of our partnership for development with the European Union.”

Fatimetou Abdel Malick (Mayor of Tivragh-Zeina, Mauritania).

“We thank the EU and partners for the visionary idea to localise the global agenda. There is not a one-size-fits-all approach to accomplishing goals. Adopting different strategies like localisation goes a long way in addressing cultural barriers to translate and tailor applicable policy.”

Florence Namayanja (Mayor of Masaka, Uganda).

DECENTRALISED COOPERATION AND EU SUPPORT TO LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES IN PARTNER COUNTRIES



Key experts from EU institutions and programmes gave examples of how the EU is helping LRAs meet sustainability targets. For instance, the [Partnerships for Sustainable Cities programme](#) has launched 57 city-to-city partnership projects, linking cities in Europe with cities in the Global South, to strengthen social, environmental and economic sustainability. Another recent initiative, the [Global Gateway Civil Society and Local Authorities Dialogue Platform](#) formally embeds civil society organisations and local authorities in Global Gateway implementation in partners countries.

Decentralised cooperation involves the exchange of knowledge and expertise at the subnational level. It is key to partnerships between cities and regions under the Global Gateway strategy. The main barriers to city-to-city partnership are a lack of autonomy in cities and regions, and a high degree of dependency on national finances. In a presentation on decentralisation trends, there was a clear need expressed for up-to-date information to monitor decentralisation processes, and to establish channels of political dialogue between European Union Delegations and LRAs.

The EU is promoting peer-to-peer exchanges to build resilient, green and digital cities through decentralised cooperation between LRAs in the EU and third countries. The European Committee of the Regions said they were doing this via a series of mechanisms: [ARLEM](#) (Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly); the [Libya-Nicosia Initiative](#); [CORLEAP](#) (Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for Eastern Partnership); Joint Consultative Committees and Working Groups with potential candidate countries; and a specific Working Group and Support Package for Ukraine.

Moreover, the European Commission has selected 12 strategic corridors in Africa for investment, to foster trade by facilitating the exchange of goods and people. New transport infrastructure will support cities along the corridors, with a focus on interconnections and intermediary cities.

Several contributions from the floor, for example from Montevideo (Uruguay), highlighted problems with the distribution of funding from central governments and a general lack of transparency. The representative from the municipality of Quilmes in Argentina, along with others, stressed the vital role of decentralised cooperation among partners at subnational level, when national governments no longer support values such as inclusivity, climate action, or achieving the SDGs. “When state-to-state diplomacy breaks down, city-to-city diplomacy remains steadfast” said Clare Hart from Montpellier (France).

A representative from Pemba (Mozambique), in partnership with an Italian city, explained that their successful decentralised cooperation had influenced national-level programmes and policy, a reversal of the usual situation.

TOOLS FOR LOCALISING THE GLOBAL GATEWAY



Two EU tools are available to facilitate decentralised cooperation. The first, TAlEX (Technical Assistance and Information Exchange) promotes peer-to-peer exchanges between public officials. It supports public administrations in many sectors, and in the past year has involved over 3 000 practitioners coming from national administrations of EU Member States in workshops, expert missions or study visits. TAlEX matches requests for support from third countries with its expert database. “TAlEX is easy to use, and cost-effective compared to traditional technical assistance,” said Michelle Delgado Van Demen (DG NEAR).

The other tool, TALD (Territorial Approach to Local Development) uses **the territorial approach** to address the spatial dimension of development, focusing on the specific characteristics of a region to enable EU Delegations to support decentralisation processes in third countries.

“TALD is a dynamic, long-term method based on a bottom-up, multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral approach that defines tailored strategies for a given territory,” explained Eugène Zapata Garesché (TALD Team).

The aim is to work with subnational governments to deliver better services, environmental management, and economic development. This is achieved by improving local management systems through national policies that support decentralisation and increasing subnational institutional capacity. During the last three years, the TALD Facility has collaborated with EU Delegations to organise training seminars and assess the viability of the territorial approach in specific locations.

David Gomez and Fabián Muñoz Tejeda, from the State of Guanajuato in Mexico, shared their experience of using TAlEX and TALD to develop a framework of financial cooperation for 24 subnational governments in Mexico. They said that international cooperation has been key for developing a reformed pensions scheme that is closer to citizens than the previous model.



BREAKOUT LABS



Participants in 14 breakout sessions contributed ideas on topics related to Innovation, Intermediary cities, Inclusion, and Investment. These labs were dedicated to specific topics, including Resilient cities through disaster preparedness; Smart cities and sustainable urban planning; Sustainable energy, mobility and water solutions; Cross-border cooperation; Citizen participation, freedom of expression and public spaces; Equal access to inclusive services; Financing tools locally available for sustainable urban investments; Private investments; and Education, culture and creative industries to make cities attractive to youth. Five recommendations were harvested from each session and carried into 4 parallel cross-fertilisation sessions. They were prioritised and presented during the final Plenary.

BUILDING GLOBAL GATEWAYS AT LOCAL LEVEL

Espoo (Finland) was given as an example of how Global Gateway can be localised. Markku Markkula (CoR) said the city authority has developed indicators to monitor progress towards sustainability, and a Cities for Sustainability Governance project (with 8 other EU cities) uses SDGs to drive strategic urban governance. Crucially, this engages citizens; saves time and resources by sharing knowledge; and provides cities with adequate tools and investments. Four keynote speakers provided examples on the themes of Innovation, Intermediary cities, Inclusion and Investment, before the discussions that led to the final recommendations.



1

INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF CITIES AND REGIONS

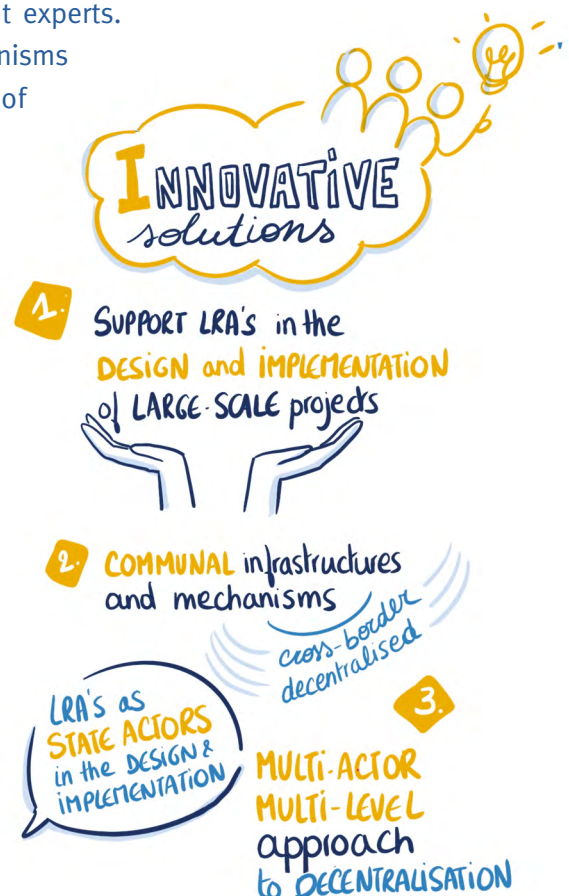
“Innovation is not only about technology”, said Wanjohi-Opil (World Resources Institute), who focussed on Africa where cities face significant challenges but also opportunities due to young populations and the potential of innovative solutions.

In addition to technology, she said that innovation concerns: i) inter-Connected goals (people, nature and climate); ii) Cross-cutting solutions that deliver multiple benefits; iii) Citizen-centred solutions that connect with local communities and vulnerable people; and iv) Collaboration to enhance capacity through innovative solutions addressing inter-connected goals. For example, [DigitalTransport4Africa](#) provides a digital network and resource centre to support and help scale up urban mobility projects in Africa.

Among the **recommendations** (see Annex 1) on innovative solutions for the future of cities and regions, there was a call to avoid ‘business as usual’ approaches, in fact be more innovative, and involve LRAs in all decision-making and implementation processes. Promoting decentralised cooperation and facilitating political dialogue between national and subnational levels was recommended to further empower LRAs.

Support should be provided to LRAs for large-scale projects, notably by funding a pool of project management experts. In addition, communal infrastructure and mechanisms should be developed to support the provision of public services, including cross-border ones.

The systematic involvement of citizens was seen as essential when innovating for crisis management to create resilient cities. Decentralised cooperation, and multi-actor, multi-level approaches were regarded as crucial for smart cities, and for sustainable energy, mobility and water solutions.



2

VIBRANT INTERMEDIARY CITIES

Intermediary cities are generally mid-sized cities (not capital cities) that play an important role in the flow of people, goods, capital, information and knowledge, and in linking urban and rural areas. They are critical for regional and national urban development, though can be overlooked by policymakers. Sustainable development should go hand-in-hand with the democratic involvement of citizens, for example, to create employment opportunities for young people.

São Paulo State promoted how they are working with their intermediary cities to support job creation and sustainable development. The State of São Paulo representative said that its strategy is to expand its predominantly renewable energy mix, educate its population through IT courses and Latin America's largest innovation hub, boost the creative economy and FINTECH sectors, and enhance its connectedness through investing in port, rail/metro and airport infrastructure, as well as a 5G signal network. Regional business coalitions, to structure, finance and execute projects, have helped increase the region's economic attractiveness.

The **recommendations** for achieving Vibrant Intermediary Cities (Annex 1) include incorporating the decentralisation agenda into all European policies and cooperation programmes with partner countries and regions, highlighting the crucial role played by intermediary cities in achieving the SDGs. A key point was creating more funding opportunities for education, culture and creative industries, for example, to support youth-oriented activities.

To improve relevant services to communities in intermediary cities, it was recommended that the creation of inter-communal infrastructure be supported, in partnership with the private sector.

3

INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE AND CITIZENSHIP

The theme of 'inclusive answers for citizens' participation' was addressed using field experiences of the Foundation for Democracy Innovation in African cities. They deploy a range of tools to promote democracy, so that every voice counts.

"To address a global crisis in democracy, first it is necessary to raise awareness, especially among young people and women, and to develop a new narrative to motivate higher levels of citizen participation. This is vital to achieve bottom-up local democracy, close to communities." Achille Mbembe (Foundation for Democracy Innovation).

Among the **recommendations** (see Annex 1) on inclusive governance and citizenship, was one to foster a culture of consultation with relevant stakeholders and LRAs to feed into decision-making processes at all levels. A second recommendation was to conduct a comprehensive assessment of supported initiatives from a human rights perspective.

A third recommendation was to promote the use of citizen participation tools in Global Gateway programmes, such that the most vulnerable populations should have a chance to contribute. Therefore, toolkits should be created to foster citizen inclusion.

4

INVESTING locally

The Global Gateway's objective is to invest based on the most important global challenges, while ensuring that such investments are impactful at the local level and are welcomed by the local communities they serve. If official development assistance (ODA) is insufficient, the private sector can bridge the finance gap needed for infrastructure projects; LRAs can play an important role in designing and implementing public-private partnerships (PPPs) at local level.

Investment at local level should focus on making life liveable by fulfilling essential needs, according to Emmanuelle Nasse-Bridier (Fond Mondial Des Villes). She asked why so much investment does not meet local demand, even though the private sector is ready to invest. The reasons include the perception of projects as unviable and the risks as too high, and cities being considered as too small or having too low a credit rating. The next step includes providing more access to relevant tools, she said: "It is better to focus on a small number of projects having a big impact and build trust, and pitch and market those projects to make them attractive."

The main recommendations (see Annex 1) for Investing locally were building the Global Gateway strategy with LRAs as the key actors; and inviting the EU Delegations to work with LRAs in its implementation along with other local expertise.

It was emphasised that LRAs and their agencies, such as those overseeing transport, waste, water and energy, should have direct access to financing for international SDG-related investments and value-driven projects, without state intermediation.

The initiation and implementation of public-private partnerships should be simplified and promoted using a people-centred approach, and investors must be involved earlier in the projects. Finally, more data about Global Gateway projects and partners should be available at all levels.



REACTIONS TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS



Representatives from DG INTPA (Martin Seychell), CoR (Christophe Rouillon), DG REGIO (Peter Berkovitz), DG NEAR (Mathieu Bousquet), the European Investment Bank (EIB; Dietrick Zambon) and UN-HABITAT (Michal Mlynar) gave their immediate thoughts on the recommendations.



There was agreement that the recommendations provide a valuable resource. DG INTPA and CoR said that the recommendations and work done during the Forum will serve as a reference point to shape the Global Gateway in future. They both committed to act on the recommendations, as was the case for previous Forums. CoR added that the Global Gateway is linked to the promotion of values, but the EU must be realistic and not impose the will of the strongest.

The important role of the decentralisation process was highlighted by DG INTPA and DG REGIO, to enable LRAs to become primary agents for delivering services, and for partners to tap into knowledge and capacities at subnational level. They both also highlighted intermediary cities, because they are connectors and allow areas to function in an integrated manner; moving away from the traditional dichotomy of urban and rural areas (DG REGIO).

DG NEAR and EIB both approved of going beyond 'business as usual'. DG NEAR linked the recommendations with its initiatives, for instance, the Mayors for Economic Growth in Eastern Partnership countries, which aims to make cities more attractive for people and investment; and cited MEDUSA, a high-level optic fibre to connect 500 universities from North Africa with many universities in Europe, as an example of a transformative infrastructure programme.

On investment, the EIB outlined how it is helping many cities become sustainable, and to adapt to climate change, through instruments such as the City Climate Finance Gap Fund. The EIB is also working through new partnerships with technical assistance and experts, for example, to restructure public transport in Dakar (Senegal).

UN-HABITAT, based in Nairobi (Kenya), has programmes in 92 countries that focus on many issues relevant to the Global Gateway. It is involved in the Local 2030 Coalition, whose mission is localising the SDGs, with an office opening in Bilbao (Spain) for this purpose.

Among the general take-aways, the in-person meeting (for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic) and working as equal partners around challenges identified by the participants themselves was seen as a key factor to the Forum's undoubted success.

CLOSING

300 
from 71 countries

MORE than
160 cities
and regions



In closing the Forum, DG INTPA and the CoR as co-hosts of the event committed to communicate the recommendation of the Forum to the Global Gateway Board and to the Global Gateway Civil Society and Local Authorities Dialogue Platform, but also to use them in their own work and to disseminate them beyond the Forum participants through key partners and stakeholders, including EU Delegations and Associations of Local Authorities.

“LRAs need their own space to discuss cooperation and forge international associations. We are extremely proud that a Forum we organised jointly with the Commission has served this purpose for 14 years. It has enabled the CoR to enrich multilateral dialogue, which has yielded concrete actions and recommendations.”

Jesus Gamallo Aller (CIVEX Commission, CoR).

“We thank everyone for 3 days of fruitful discussions. The Forum’s recommendations are a rich resource. Participants have provided advice, ideas and inspiration to help build a global Community of Practice on how to implement the Global Gateway and the SDGs. It is also important for all of us to disseminate these recommendations as widely as possible.”

Martin Seychell (DG INTPA).



ANNEX 1: MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF CITIES AND REGIONS

- **Avoid ‘business as usual’ approaches in rolling out initiatives like the Global Gateway in order to ensure sustainability.** Ensure a bottom-up approach by integrating local authorities in Global Gateway decision-making (=a seat at the table), including design and implementation (as public actors), and by advocating for structural decentralisation reforms. **Strengthen inclusive local democracies and empowerment of LRAs** by further promoting decentralised cooperation and by facilitating political dialogue between the national and subnational levels. Promote partnerships between LRAs, civil society, and local communities to foster peace-building dialogue.
- **Provide support to regional and local authorities in the design and implementation of large-scale projects,** notably by funding a pool of project management experts to be mobilised on demand by local authorities. This would enhance LRAs’ effectiveness and capacity for innovation.
- **Encourage and develop communal infrastructure and mechanisms to support the provision of public services, including cross-border ones, based on decentralised LRA initiatives that foster intraregional integration.** The regional and local authorities are best acquainted with the specific realities of its communities and territory. They are in a central position to build mutual understanding through expertise on issues relating to borders, such as environmental, social, cultural and economic development. LRAs should therefore play a key role in development processes and engage in direct dialogue with the European Union.



ANNEX 1: MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE AND CITIZENSHIP

- Encourage and facilitate direct access of LRAs, civil society organizations and citizens to the Global Gateway dialogue at European and local levels and foster a culture of consultation with multistakeholder systems with LRAs to feed into decision-making processes at all levels.
- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of all supported initiatives from a human rights perspective, based on criteria such as gender parity, social inclusion, equality for LGBTIQ diversity, and level of contribution to SDGs, to enhance people and communities' equal access to services and participation in the social, cultural and democratic spheres, including in decision-making processes.
- Promote the use of citizen participation tools in Global Gateway programmes and ensure that no segment of the population is left behind. The most vulnerable populations should have a chance to contribute to Global Gateway projects, notably through targeted capacity building. We encourage the creation of toolkits to foster citizen inclusion.



ANNEX 1: MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

VIBRANT INTERMEDIARY CITIES



- **Incorporate the decentralisation agenda into all European policies and cooperation programmes with partner countries and regions**, highlighting the crucial relevance and role of intermediary cities in achieving the SDGs. When assessing public administration reform and institutional architecture in partner countries, the EU must ensure that legislation delegating competence and powers, as well as training for the local level is effective.
- **Create more funding opportunities for education, culture and creative industries activating an educational cultural gateway soft measure accompanying the main Global Gateway strategy.** A programme to support youth-oriented partnerships, exchanges, transfer of knowledge and co-production between European Culture Capitals and other partner continent's Capitals of Culture initiatives leading to the surrounding regions, should for instance be created.
- **Encourage and support the creation of inter-communal infrastructure and mechanisms to provide relevant services to local communities in partnership with the private sector.**

INVESTING LOCALLY

- The **Global Gateway strategy** must be built and implemented with LRA as the key actors. **The EU Delegations shall be invited to work with LRGs** in the implementation of the GG and should facilitate the access to local expertise. **More data about Global Gateway projects** and partners should be available at all levels.
- LRAs and their agencies (such as transport, waste, water and energy companies) should have **direct access to financing for international SDG-related investments and value-driven projects**, without state intermediation. Application rules, processes and methodologies should be adjusted accordingly, and more innovative mechanisms of access to guarantees should be provided to access financing.
- **The initiation and implementation of public-private partnerships should be simplified and promoted under the condition that they are built in a people-centred approach. Investors must be involved earlier in the projects.**