

A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITIES

Scottish Local Government
International Engagement

Scoping Exercise



Foreword

In March, COSLA Convention agreed that a scoping exercise of Scottish Local Government international engagement should be launched.

We want positive, meaningful connections with the rest of the world. We want to continue to work, cooperate and learn from the experiences of our sister organisations in other countries and indeed work with them in our European organisations, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and worldwide membership body United Cities and Local Government (UCLG), the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and in other available international opportunities.

However, COSLA is only one part of the Scottish Local Government family. Individual Councils have both at political and officer level, positive connections and memberships in Europe and beyond. Hence there is merit in looking at existing and untapped engagement opportunities together.

Equally, we should explore how we can increase cooperation with the Scottish and UK Governments to participate in international events and organisations whenever this makes sense for both national and local governments.

The aim of the exercise is to raise awareness of the wide range of international opportunities. Secondly, to examine the added value and practicality of existing or additional engagements, both on an individual basis and collectively as Scottish Local Government.

Clearly, the scoping exercise agreed by Convention is **open-ended**. It need *not* result in additional or reduced international engagement but provide the information for each Council and COSLA to decide their way forward.

To do this, in addition to this consultation launched today and open until August 26th, COSLA is keen to host a session with interested elected members in Verity House, Edinburgh in September. The main findings will be reported to the October Convention, potentially resulting in the development of a Scottish Local Government International Engagement Strategy 2020-2030.

We look forward to sharing views with all the Scottish Local Government family and beyond.



**Mandate of the
COSLA Convention 29 March
Musselburgh**

Overview

Scottish Local Government international engagement, both in the EU and beyond, is vast and expansive. All Local Authorities have some international links, being members of 26 international organisations or networks and 11 international campaigns. At least 60 Scottish Councillors have an international mandate, six of them being official representatives in European and international institutions (two at the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and four in the EU Committee of the Regions). However, there is little awareness of each Local Authority, groups of Councils, professional associations or COSLA respective engagement. While this reflects a given Council or organisation's individual priorities, this can also result in engagement opportunities being missed or left vacant.

32 SCOTTISH COUNCILS ENGAGE INTERNATIONALLY

26 INTERNATIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

11 INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

60 COUNCILLORS HOLDING INTERNATIONAL ROLE

**6 COUNCILLORS REPRESENTING SCOTLAND IN
INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS**

Why engage internationally?

International relations are a reserved matter, so in principle only the UK Government is expected to carry out such links.

However, the reality is more nuanced, for a number of reasons:

- Firstly, a significant part of current engagement is EU-related and is in place as a result of EU decisions having a direct bearing on Councils. While this will likely decrease in any conceivable future scenario of UK-EU relations, the UK has indicated it will remain aligned to a range of EU environmental, social, procurement, state aid or trading standards rules. This is why individual Councils and COSLA are so far planning to continue membership of bodies such as the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), Eurocities (Glasgow, Edinburgh) or the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR). This is also the reason that COSLA is negotiating the establishment of a UK-Committee of the Regions joint body that would carry on some access to the EU institutions that we currently enjoy via the Scottish CoR members.
- Secondly, there are wider international agendas that will affect Local Government: a current one is the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which the UK will report on to the UN this July and September and which concern a significant amount of Local Government responsibility. Equally, as do standards in the likes of Local Development, rural policy and urban-rural matters developed at the OECD.
- Local Authorities often wish to promote what they are doing internationally as well as learn from others. There are a variety of improvement networks that Local Authorities and COSLA can or are already be part of.

Scottish Local Government and Scottish Government are sub-state actors in the international arena. As sub-state institutions both have equal rights to engage internationally, so they can work together to strengthen Scotland's international profile.

Lack of engagement can result in opportunities being missed, sometimes to the detriment of Local Government interests.

By contrast, Scottish and UK Government resources and drive are comparatively vast. Local Government could not justify such an expense at the best of times. However, there are opportunities to meaningfully engage internationally *without necessarily deploying significant resources*, be that by pooling information, sharing best practice or simply by making other parts of the Local Government family aware of opportunities.

More fundamentally, there is also a case that could be made for Local Government to be **funded by the Scottish and UK Governments** to carry out such international engagement on the issues and representative bodies that specifically concern Local Government, as it is the case in many of our neighbouring countries.

Since the March Convention mandated COSLA to launch this scoping exercise, work has been undertaken in terms of baseline research on how Councils engage internationally as summarised in this consultation document, as well as identifying the procedure and timescales for this exercise to be carried out.

This exercise focuses on Scottish Local Government international engagement opportunities, particularly those less well known beyond the EU, rather than internationally related policy and projects developed in Scotland or led by individual Councils, groups and consortia.

This questionnaire is being circulated to Councils and partners with the following questions:

1. How does Scottish Local Government engage internationally at present?
2. How would Scottish Councils like to engage post-UK exit (EU/Internationally)?
3. What are the opportunities that exist on an individual and collective basis?
4. What are the potential partnerships with sectors, organisations and countries?
5. What are the capacity and resource constraints (and assets)?

Members and officers are asked to consider the questions set out in this document.

Wider engagement will also be established with UK and Scottish Government and their agencies, academia, and the business and third sectors.

In addition to a survey, a series of one-to-one and focus group meetings with various officers and networks will be carried out over the coming months culminating with a dedicated session for Councillors (particularly those holding an international role) in September.

The main findings will be reported to Convention, potentially concluding in a **Scottish Local Government International Engagement Strategy 2020-2030** being developed as a result.



Local & Regional Europe
L'Europe locale & régionale



United Nations
Framework Convention on
Climate Change



Detail

1. How does Scottish Local Government engage internationally at present?

Scottish Local Government international engagement, both in the EU and beyond, is vast and difficult to grasp in its entirety.

All Local Authorities have some international links, being members at least of 26 international organisations or networks and 11 international campaigns.

At least 60 Scottish Councillors have an international mandate, six of them being official Scottish Local Government representatives in European and international institutions (two at the **Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities** and four in the EU Committee of the Regions).

However, **there is little awareness of each Local Authority, groups of Councils, professional associations or COSLA respective engagement.** While this reflects a given Council or organisations individual priorities, this also results in engagement opportunities being missed or left vacant.

A more fundamental question is: why engage internationally? International relations are a reserved matter, so in principle only the UK Government is expected to carry out such links. However, the reality is more nuanced, for a number of reasons:

- Firstly, a significant part of current engagement is **EU-related**, and it is in place as a result of EU decisions having a direct bearing on Councils. While this will likely decrease in any conceivable future scenario of UK-EU relations, the UK has indicated it will remain aligned to a range of

EU environmental, social, procurement, state aid or trading standard rules. This is why individual Councils or COSLA are so far planning to continue membership of bodies such as COSLA's umbrella the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), Eurocities (Glasgow, Edinburgh) or the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR). This is also the reason that COSLA is negotiating the establishment of a **UK-Committee of the Regions** *joint body* that would carry on some access to the EU institutions that we currently enjoy via the Scottish CoR members.

- Secondly, there are **wider international agendas** that will end up affecting Local Government: a current one is the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** which the UK will report to the UN on this July and September and which concern a significant amount of Local Government responsibility. Equally, as do standards on rural policy, urban-rural matters, or more specific issues such as the 2016 Scottish schools reform which stemmed from international bodies such as the **Council of Europe**, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (**UNECE**) or the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (**OECD**), the **Open Government Partnership** (OEP) or the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (**UN HABITAT**) among others.

KEY INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE BODIES

The **EU Committee of the Regions (CoR)** is the official EU representative institution of local and regional (or devolved, federal, autonomous) governments. It scrutinises and makes proposals to amend EU legislation. COSLA nominates and provides the secretariat of 4 Cllrs. Four MSPs are also members.

UK-CoR Joint Committee/Contact Group: this new body will be created to ensure that political dialogue with representatives of the local and regional level in the UK continues after withdrawal. COSLA Convention has agreed that the political leadership of the organisation and COSLA nominated CoR members could attend meetings on a case by case basis.ⁱ

The **Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe** is the body that gathers local and regional representatives from all European states (including Russia and Turkey and the exception of Belarus). Its core purpose is to scrutinise respect for local democracy in particular the European Charter of Local Self Government and human rights of both Councillors and voters, election observation and monitor local and regional decentralisation. As it sits outside the EU, COSLA will continue providing the secretariat of two councillors and the Scottish Parliament of two MSPs.

The **Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)** is the European umbrella organisation of national associations of local authorities from the whole European continent and Turkey save Russia and Belarus. COSLA is the Scottish member. It nominates three members of its Policy Committee who have often held Spokespersonships. COSLA has also long chaired various committees including that of local economic development. CEMR also provides access to the European Social Dialogue.

United Cities and Local Government (UCLG) is the worldwide municipal organisation. COSLA is the Scottish member and its President sits in its ruling World Council. UCLG is an advisory organisation of the UN and has long campaigned for the Sustainable Development Goals and local empowerment.

The **Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)** is an international organisation made up by 30 states, most of Europe plus Japan, the US, Korea, Mexico or Australia. Its purpose is to coordinate economic and social policies. Some of its roundtables of Ministers and Mayors, Local Economic Development (LEED) Forum, Education, Rural Development are open to local participation and have often defined standards then adopted by Scottish legislation.

UN HABITAT, the **United Nations Human Settlements Programme**, is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities. It is the focal point for all urbanization and human settlement matters within the UN system. Its Assembly and associated forums are open to participation of local government. It developed the UN HABITAT III agenda.

EUROCITIES is the network of major European cities. Its members are the elected local and municipal governments of major European cities. It brings together the local governments of over 140 of Europe's largest cities and over 45 partner cities, across 39 countries. Edinburgh and Glasgow are members.

The **Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR)** brings together some 160 regions from 25 states from the European Union and beyond. Several Scottish Councils are active members through its various geographical Commissions (e.g. North Sea Commission).

The **Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF)** works to promote and strengthen democratic local government across the Commonwealth and to encourage the exchange of best practice.

KIMO is a Local Authority international environmental organisation designed to give municipalities a political voice at regional, national and international level. Scottish island Councils are active members and its secretariat is in Shetland.

Metrex is the network of 50 European metropolitan regions and areas has its secretariat in Glasgow.

ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability is a global network of more than 1,750 local and regional governments committed to sustainable urban development. Glasgow and Aberdeen are members.



CPMR NORTH SEA COMMISSION

I.C.L.E.I
Local Governments for Sustainability



CPMR ISLANDS COMMISSION

ESPON
EUROPEAN SPATIAL PLANNING OBSERVATION NETWORK



SNGWOFI
World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment

★ URBACT
Driving change for better cities

GOLD

Global Observatory on Local Democracy and Decentralization



MIGRATION SCOTLAND

LT LARGS TOWN TWINNING

QUESTION 1. How does Scottish Local Government engage internationally at present?

Q.1.1. How does your Council/organisation engage internationally at the moment?

Q.1.2. Do you plan to diversify or reduce engagement in the event of Brexit?

Q.1.3. Are there international bodies that you would be interested in engaging with, but you/your organisation cannot do it on its own?

Q.1.4. Is it necessary to foster more cooperation within the wider Local Government sector or is cooperation already sufficient?

2. How would Scottish Councils like to engage post-UK exit (EU/Internationally)?

Promoting and Sharing Best Practice:

Local Authorities often wish to promote what they are doing internationally as well as learn from each other. Only a few months ago, the City of Edinburgh Council hosted the Eurocities European Congress and in 2010 Aberdeen hosted the CPMR annual conference. Equally, COSLA has been offered that a Scottish Local Authority host the three yearly European Council of CEMR as well as hosting **the OECD Local Economic Development (LEED) Forum in 2020**.

Similarly, there are a variety of improvement networks that Local Authorities and COSLA are already or could be part of. Just on sustainability, there is the **UN/EU Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy** (eight Councils are full members and

COSLA is the official supporting organisation in Scotland), the **Under2 Coalition on Climate** (the Scottish Cities Alliance is likely to join), the **NAZCA Platform of the United Nations**, the so-called **Bonn Registry** or the **Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities**.

Other campaigns such as the Council of Europe **European Local Democracy Week (ELDW)** would suit ongoing work on local governance or local taxation. Participation is also possible in **the World Forum on Democracy** organised every year at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. OECD, UN and Council of Europe networks of course can provide continuity for Councils and are unaffected by UK's withdrawal from the EU.

QUESTION 2. How would Scottish Councils like to engage post-UK exit (EU/Internationally)?

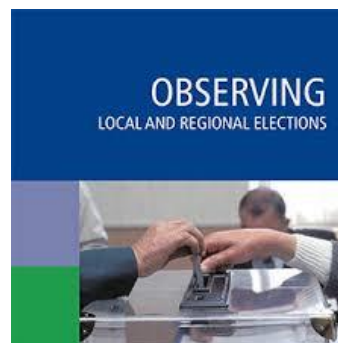
Q.2.1. Are you aware of the initiatives mentioned above? Would you/your organisation be keen to engage in any of them?

Q.2.1. Is there merit in developing shared awareness of current participation levels in the various fora and programmes and hosting of international events?



Council of Europe ONE in FIVE
campaign **to stop sexual violence**
against children

Contribution of the **Congress of Local
and Regional Authorities**



Erasmus+

Interreg 
North-West Europe



Interreg 
Northern Ireland - Ireland - Scotland
European Regional Development Fund



Interreg 
North Sea Region
European Regional Development Fund EUROPEAN UNION

 **Horizon 2020**
European Union Funding
for Research & Innovation

 **Interreg**
Atlantic Area
European Regional Development Fund  EUROPEAN UNION

LOCAL 2030
LOCALIZING THE SDGS

 **Arctic
Cooperation**



The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

UNISDR



**GLOBAL
TASKFORCE**
OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL
GOVERNMENTS

3. What are the opportunities that exist on an individual and collective basis?

Awareness:

Despite Scotland being relatively small and the fact that at 32, Scotland has one of the lowest number of Councils in the world, its diversity can make it difficult to cooperate. As a result, opportunities can be missed.

For instance, only over the last few months LG had the opportunity to send delegates to the **UN Global Climate and SDGs Synergy Conference** (Copenhagen, 1-3 April 2019), the **UN HABITAT Assembly** (Nairobi, 26-28 May), the **Open Government Partnership** (Canada, 29-30 May), and the Council of Europe Smart Cities Conference (Hungary, 12-13 June).

*Back in 2010, COSLA set up the **Scottish Locally Elected European Representatives group (SLEER)** and **SENLO**, an equivalent outfit for officers. It also set up a Scottish CoR and Congress members section. However, together with the **EMILE** group of elected European members set up by the Scottish Government, they proved ineffective. In the case of COSLA, the engagement with members has tended to happen via COSLA established political structures and with Councils officers via regular reporting and purpose-driven meetings on a given matter.*

Opportunities:

Forthcoming opportunities involve: the presentation of the UK report at the United Nations on delivering the UN Sustainable Development Goals (July and September), the **UCLG Assembly** (Durban, November), the **10th World Urban Forum** (2020, Abu Dhabi), the **CEMR Congress** (Innsbruck, Austria, 6-8 May 2020). Later this year, the bids to host the **CEMR Congress 2023**, the **CEMR Equality Conference 2022** or the **UCLG World Congress 2022**, to name just a few, will be launched.

Thus, there is scope to take a more strategic approach to such engagement involving the whole Local Government sector so that Scottish Local Government is aware of these opportunities and is able to engage, be that individually or collectively, where it provides added value.

Similarly, it will be possible to continue participating in a range of European conferences such as the **European Sustainable Energy Week**, **European Week of Regions and Cities**, **EU Green Week**, etc. both in Scotland and in Brussels (e.g. the recent Glasgow-COSLA Training Session on sustainability for elected members), where COSLA and many Councils have organised workshops or provided speakers.

QUESTION 3. What are the opportunities that exist on an individual and collective basis?

Q.3.1. Are you aware of these international organisations and events? Would you/your organisation be keen to explore any of them further?

Q.3.2. Are there specific thematic policy areas or specific activities your Council would like to advance, either individually or working with others, including with COSLA?



4. Which potential partnerships with sectors, organisations and countries exist?

Sharing can be inexpensive:

A significant part of engagement does not require financial investment but rather a more structured system to collate information than at present.

For instance, through COSLA, Local Authorities are able to feed into the development of international standards on sustainable development (working with our international body United Cities and Local Government's "Waves of Action" and our European one, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions) on issues such as the EU Urban Agenda, various Council of Europe studies and standards setting on local democracy, local finance, and many inquiries from the OECD ranging from issues such as local development to the future of public services.

While collective action has potential to lessen financial cost and strengthen our shared message, such opportunities are underused by Councils and hence benefit in identifying potential blockages, silos, overlaps and knowledge gaps.

Political Representation:

The UK Government attends a range of Local Government related international bodies such as the Council of Europe European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG) or the UN Climate Summits.

Unlike what is standard practice in other countries, there is no predictable mechanism whereby input is actively sought in matters relevant for Local Government in the UK, let alone Local Government

What happens with the EU?

Though not the focus of this exercise, as it is an ongoing matter discussed at a high level in COSLA and Councils (see our [Brexit site](#)), there are a number of engagement opportunities that we already have indication are likely to remain open to Scottish local participation:

- The **European Social Dialogue** enables the COSLA spokesperson to monitor and influence employment legislation with EU institutions, trade unions and our counterparts.
- The **Covenant of Mayors**: COSLA is the Scottish supporting organisation and several Councils are members developing Sustainable Energy (and Climate) Action Plans.
- The **European Urban Agenda** where COSLA and Glasgow participate in various partnerships with other countries and the EU.
- The Committee of the Regions via the new **UK-CoR Joint Committee**.
- The UK has confirmed it will opt into some EU funds such as **Horizon Europe** (research) and **Erasmus** (education).

However, there is *no confirmation yet* on participation in other EU initiatives and programmes:

- **INTERREG 2021-2027** (except the Scotland/Northern Ireland strand),
- **URBACT, ESPON, European Territorial Agenda, EU Network on Rural Development (ENRD), Smart Cities.**

Elected Members being part of official UK Governmental delegations.

Sometimes, UK officials invite a given Local Authority or Elected Member (e.g. Glasgow recent participation in the OECD Ministerial Roundtable in Athens) or an UK Ministry offers participation in a promotional activity (e.g. UK Department for International Trade (DIT) invitation to COSLA to host a stand at the Katowice UN Climate Summit). However, lack of a proper mechanism results in Scotland being often underrepresented, as without a predictable mechanism and under short timescales, it is difficult to mobilise Local Government input let alone participation.

The Scottish Government is increasingly active on the international scene and is a regular contributor either as part an UK ministerial delegation or (co) organising events at international gatherings. However, just with the UK Government there is not yet a mechanism for the many occasions that a Scottish Minister, COSLA or Council could participate, and there is benefit in building synergies. At times, the Scottish Government has participated in events that in other countries are reserved for Local Government given that Scottish Councils and COSLA do not have the discretion and resources that are available in other countries to attend such events.

Other times, just as when the Scottish Government recently decided to bid to host the next UK-China Forum in Scotland, support from COSLA and Local Authorities has also been sought, but this is uncommon.

It is worth noting that while international relations are a reserved matter, paradoxically the grounds for Local Government international engagement is clearer than is the case for the Devolved Administrations: there is an Act of the UK Parliament, the **Local Government (Overseas Assistance) Act 2003**ⁱⁱ that empowers Local

Government to engage internationally. No such provision exists for Devolved Administrations, even if they deploy significant resources to engage internationally.

Clearly, there is scope for a more coordinated, inclusive, cooperative and partnership-based approach to international engagement.

Paradoxically such provisions already exist for the EU and post-Brexit: the *EU Policy Statement on the UK Localism Act 2011*ⁱⁱⁱ sets up a mechanism whereby COSLA/ Councils are meant to be consulted when the UK shapes negotiating positions affecting their powers and finances. In the same way, the *Scottish Government Guidance for policy officials: implementing EU obligations* has similar provisions since 2016.^{iv}

Even in the event of Brexit, the UK Government has indicated its [intention](#) to find another way forward. It confirmed its [goal](#) of a “flexible, non-statutory mechanism that, in essence, replicates the kind of engagement local government has on EU policy through the [Committee of the Regions](#), but in a lighter-touch arrangement.”

Similarly, at officer level a new form of arrangements at officer level such as the *Brussels Based UK Offices and Organisations* network involving UK, Devolved and Local movement officials as well as other UK stakeholders, something that a recent House of Lords report of post Brexit UK-EU relations has warmly welcomed.^v

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

COSLA, as the national association of Scottish Local Authorities, has been working with its international networks CEMR and UCLG on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda, particularly SDG 11 (local development), even before they were approved in 2015. COSLA and the Scottish Government have co-signed the National Performance Framework, which is being used to mainstream the

SDGs into the existing Scottish outcome-based medium and long term, national and local, mutually agreed policy objectives. This can potentially result in Scotland being one of the countries having a more thorough localisation of SDGs.

That said, the COSLA Convention when considering the strategy to localise the SDGs in Scotland, ahead of the drafting of the UK and Scottish SDG reviews, agreed that this should not be just an international reporting exercise but a process of central-local negotiation of shared ambition.

***‘Localising’** means taking into account subnational contexts, challenges, opportunities and governments in all the global agendas, from setting goals and targets, to implementation, monitoring and reporting. Localising is a political process based on local opportunities, priorities and ideas and implementing local agendas to reach local and UN goals.*

***Waves of Action** are UCLG initiatives that focus on collective lobbying and the multiplying effect of synchronising local and regional actions at global level.*

INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS DEALING WITH SCOTTISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT MATTERS.

Council of Europe European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG) is the Council of Europe's intergovernmental committee tasked with addressing issues in the field of democratic governance. A MHCLG Official attends on behalf of the UK and in some instances even chairs it.

Council of Europe Conference of European Ministers responsible for Local and Regional Government is the ministerial equivalent of the CDDG. It has not met since its 2011 meeting in Kiev.

OECD Regional Governance Policy Committee is made of national officials including by the UK Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government. Its Working Parties on Rural Policy, Working Party on Territorial Indicators have often shaped modern thinking on local economic development, multi-level governance, fiscal decentralisation, urban policy including on various Scottish policies.

OECD Roundtable of Mayors and Ministers is a pre-eminent forum to develop inter-governmental approaches for stronger, more effective urban policy, with participation from mayors, national ministers, former heads of state, and civil society. It is UK MHCLG that unilaterally decides who should attend, such as Glasgow participation in the Athens meeting last April. CEMR and CoR have also attended.

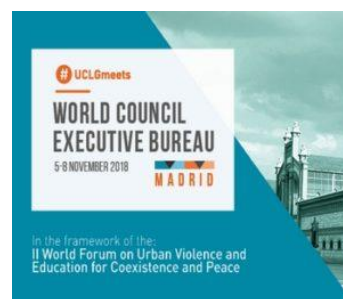
United Nations Advisory Committee of Local Authorities (UNACLA) is made up of UN Member States officials but is supported by UN-Habitat and COSLA's global umbrella body UCLG.

UN HABITAT, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme is an international organisation with an UK representative, though it has a number of forums where Local Government directly participates.

The **Open Government Partnership (OGP)** is an international initiative that aims to secure concrete commitments from national and subnational governments to promote open government. The UK and Scottish Government, UCLG are active members. COSLA has participated via UCLG and Congress.

The **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** is an international climate change treaty intended to limit global warming. Its annual meetings or Conference of Parties (COP) are open to the UK and its delegates, including Scottish Government. COSLA participation in Paris or Bonn local summits has been provided by UCLG/CEMR, though DIT had sought to cooperate with us. The UK has applied to host next year **COP26 in 2020**.

The **United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)** is the annual meeting where progress towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals is assessed. The UK presents this year its Voluntary National Review (VNR) and the Scottish Government is presenting a supplementary Scottish Review. COSLA participation is possible via the UK governmental delegation but in practice is only available via UCLG.



**CLIMATE SUMMIT OF LOCAL
AND REGIONAL LEADERS**
12 NOV 2017 | COP23 | BONN



**CLIMATE
CHANGE**

SOMMET MONDIAL
DES ACTEURS NON-ÉTATIQUES



European Network for
Rural Development



**CLIMATE & SDGS
SYNERGY CONFERENCE**



**1-3 APRIL
COPENHAGEN**



**SUSTAINABLE
ENERGY WEEK**
04-08 JUNE 2018

An initiative of the European Commission



QUESTION 4. What are the potential partnerships with sectors, organisations and countries?

Q.4.1. To what extent is it possible to strategically plan future engagements, share resources and feedback?

Q.4.2. Many forms of participation require only information input. Would it be realistic to create a new system to collect and disseminate this information?

Q.4.3. How should a more coordinated, inclusive, cooperative and partnership-based approach to international engagement be developed?

5. What are the capacity and resource constraints (and assets)?

While Scottish (or UK) Government resources and drive on international engagement are vast, Local Government could not justify such an expense at the best of times.

However, there are opportunities to meaningfully engage internationally without necessarily deploying significant resources, be that pooling information, sharing best practice or simply by making other parts of the Local Government family aware of available opportunities.

For instance, COSLA was able to obtain funding to finance two delegations of Scottish under **30-year-old Councillors** to attend the Europe-Africa Summit last November in Marrakesh and the 8th European Summit of Regions and Cities in Bucharest last March.

More fundamentally, however, there is a **case that could be made in Local Government being funded by the Scottish and UK Government to carry out such international engagement** on the issues and bodies that specifically concern local government, as it is the case in many of our neighbouring countries.

The Congress organises municipal **election observation missions** each year, as well as monitoring missions. These are open to Congress members but may be also open to other elected representatives.

Twinning was one of the pioneering Local Government International engagement activities. Since the UK referendum there has been a renewed interest in setting up new links with Scotland. COSLA is the twinning coordinator for Scotland and facilitates such links. For instance, the **UK-France Mayoral Summit** agreed that this could be a key post Brexit activity.

COSLA alone supports and hosts 2-3 visits to Scotland per year of **municipal delegations from other countries** (mainly Scandinavian ones), as others do within the Scottish LG family.

PLATFORMA brings together and finances the national, European, and international associations of local and regional working on international development.

ONE in FIVE is a prime example of a successful Council of Europe campaign, in this case to stop sexual violence against children, which Congress is a key promoter and is open to Local Authorities to sign up.

A case in point is **international development** which the study commissioned by the then Scottish International Development Minister Humza Yousaf to COSLA in 2016^{vi} showed that Scottish participation in such schemes is among the lowest in the developed world, even with the UK Government (normally carried under the banner of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum) allocating 0.7% of its budget to international development. In other countries, Local Government receives a block grant to carry such projects with Local Governments from other countries.

This is nothing new, as unlike Scottish Local Government, until 2010 our counterparts from England, Northern Ireland and Wales benefited by law of a government grant to finance their European and international memberships.^{vii} Thus there is scope to revisit this so that Local Governments in Scotland and across the rest of the UK can work with the UK and Devolved

KEYWORDS

Subsidiarity: decisions should be taken the level that is closest to the people.

Partnership: different organisations should work together when they share responsibilities.

Autonomy: the capacity to exercise an authority conferred powers without outside control.

No Surprises: commitment not to carry out activities that can be potentially detrimental or interesting to others without prior warning.

Alignment: seeking to avoid artificial differences on matters of common interest.

No Duplication: avoidance of undertaking actions that can be better undertaken by another organisation.

Governments in promoting local democracy, public sector organisation or capacity building.

QUESTION 5. What are the capacity and resource constraints (and assets)?

Q.5.1. If finance is the main barrier for a Council to engage internationally, are there other factors?

Q.5.2. Should the UK or Scottish Government provide a form of block grant for Local Government to engage internationally, be that at political level, policy exchange or on international development projects?

You are invited to reply to this questionnaire by **23 August** at the latest via this [electronic form](#) or if you prefer by email to serafin@cosla.gov.uk.

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