



Ajuntament de  
Barcelona

Learning  
UCLG

## ***I. INTRODUCTION***

As a decentralised cooperation player, the Barcelona City Council promotes good local governance through its city-to-city cooperation model and can offer a lot of experience in promoting public policies geared towards social cohesion, promoting citizen participation in government action, and in developing a constantly evolving model of political, administrative and fiscal decentralisation. The Barcelona City Council Master Plan 2013-2016 outlines strategic and geographical priorities for collaboration, and allocates 0.7% of Barcelona's municipal budget to fund such initiatives.

## ***II. BACKGROUND***

The Barcelona City Council began its engagement in international cooperation for development and solidarity several years ago with city-to-city cooperation with Sarajevo in the mid-1990s when people in Barcelona mobilized to show their solidarity with Sarajevo as citizens of a city.

This coincided with the civil society movement attached to solidarity and international cooperation activities. There was also a push to get 0.7% of Barcelona's municipal budget to fund international cooperation and solidarity activities. For the first time Barcelona built a specific department in the municipality and initiated activities.

These activities is divided into two major programmes:



1) the grant programme that is called 'Barcelona Solidaria' that is a Grant system for NGOs proposals that uses approximately 65-70% of the budget

2) the bilateral or direct cooperation programme that receives between 30-35% of the budget each year. This 0.7% of the budget is not related to the total budget, but is related to Barcelona's municipal taxes of the city.

The largest part of Barcelona's budget comes from the central government but the city can only fund direct cooperation programmes through funds raised from its own taxes. Sarajevo was the first city to receive funding, the exchange of knowledge and expertise, with the participation of municipal experts, NGOs and technicians from Barcelona who were involved in rebuilding parts of the city. After successful cooperation with Sarajevo, the programme spread to other cities. The department dealing with these activities actually is the Global Justice and International Cooperation Department.

The objective of allocating 0.7% of the City Council budget to global justice projects was set out in the diferents Master Plans for Cooperation in Development, Solidarity and Peace since 2000, and after the budget-cuts of the last years, has been recovered in 2015. The plan establishes the city of Medellín, Maputo, Havana and Tànger-Tetuan, La Havana and Palestinian Cities as priority areas.

The City Council plans to continue this level of funding in the future. Other bilateral agreements have enlarged this list in the last years, but our objective is to concentrate the activities geographically.

### ***III. CITY-TO-CITY COOPERATION: THE APPROACH***

What works for Barcelona is not to build new projects but to back cities' own projects. The first and most important thing to do is to work together to know what the city wants to do; Barcelona does not enforce any project on a city, but rather accompanies cities. Medellín and Maputo provide good examples as the City Council supported their projects, which were demand-driven from their side and backed by political will. Barcelona refers to this kind of an exchange as a 'process' rather than a 'project' because it is understood as a process, and inside this process different projects can be built. The process has to be sustainable in time in order to have real impact and to improve capacity – in this case the project timetable is not useful. At the same time, the process has to be sincere and intensive.

“If we want to build the capacities of cities or accompany them having better municipal administration, the city must do their own work and we can share our experience, both the good and the bad ones, and our expertise. It's good for them to know our successes, but also our mistakes”. – Jordi Cortés Roldan, Barcelona City Council

Within city-to-city cooperation, a multistakeholder approach is used. Barcelona has discovered that the best way to engage is to get involved via partnerships inside the city to organize programmes and activities that are carried out with universities, municipal experts, professional associations, civil society, NGOs and with other entities doing many things inside the city. The concept is to bring the city to all of these activities, not only the municipal experts. The processes, which can include various projects and activities, are always related to building municipal competencies and capacity.

### ***IV. BUILDING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS***

Since 2004, Medellín has been a priority city for Barcelona and together the two cities have built up a strong mutual confidence process, even through changes of government. At the technical level, many good results have been achieved and a lot of this is due to these strong, confident relations that have been established. This provides the space to speak openly and frankly about the problems in Medellín, about mistakes made in Barcelona, as well as the things that are working very well. This level of relationship greatly enables the process and allows it to grow.

The City of Barcelona receives many benefits from this engagement in a lot of ways. For example, the municipal experts who participate in these processes grow both professionally and personally. They are more aware of the reality of different parts of the world and this is very enriching for the municipality of Barcelona.

