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Italy – Croatia

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Multi-Level Governance and Governance for Capacity Building Training

Online lessons

TREND - R. D'Amico

What is Multi-Level Governance (MLG)?

- **Definition:** Multi-level governance refers to a system where decision-making responsibilities are shared across multiple layers of government—local, regional, national, and supranational.

Concept originally developed by The Committee of the Regions, in a White Paper in 2009.

- **Key Characteristics:**
 - Overlapping competencies across various levels
 - Cooperation and negotiation among different actors
 - Blurring of boundaries between public and private actors

Why is Multi-Level Governance Important in the EU?

Rationale:

- EU policies affect Member States differently, requiring cooperation at various levels.
- Ensures that decisions consider local, national, and EU-wide interests.
- Balances power between EU institutions, Member States, and regions.

Multi-Level Governance means working together across different levels of government, to deliver policies more effectively.

Examples of Multi-Level Governance in the EU:

- Regional development policies
- Environmental legislation

What Multi-Level Governance means today ?

Evolution of the Concept:

- Multi-Level Governance has evolved due to the increasing importance of inclusive and participatory approaches.

Core Principles:

- **Collaboration, Shared Responsibility, and Collective Decision-Making:**
 - Essential for creating sustainable and equitable solutions.
 - Necessary to address complex problems that transcend national borders.

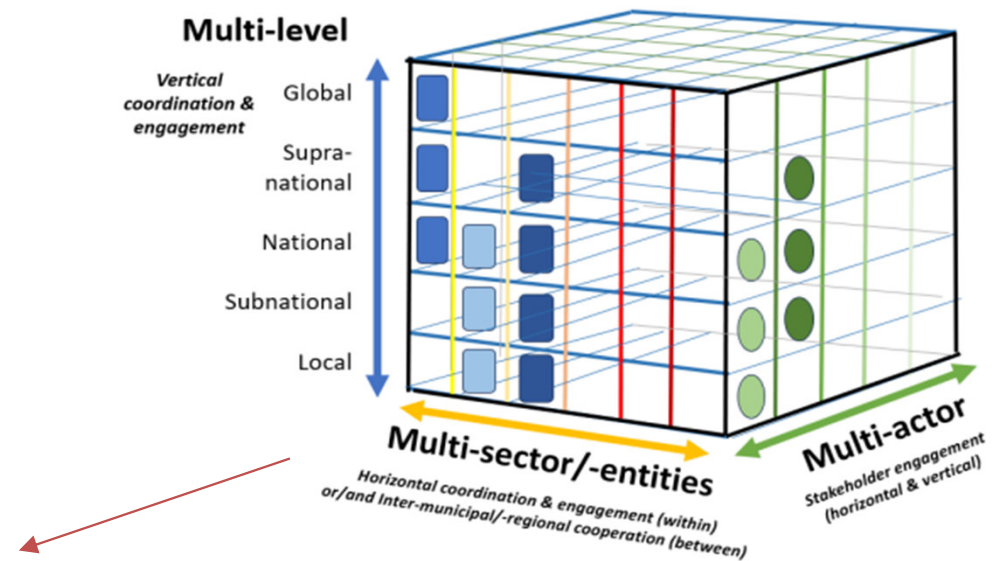
Key Features of Modern Multi-Level Governance:

- Recognizes the need for active involvement and cooperation from various actors in decision-making and implementation.
- Includes diverse stakeholders such as:
 - Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and broader civil society.
 - Private sector entities.
 - Intergovernmental cooperation structures at different levels.

Three dimension of Multi-Level Governance

New dimension

This refers to relations within a single tier of government, such as multi-sector interactions or inter-municipal and inter-regional cooperation. It can also involve different tiers, crossing levels and entities, including cross-border collaboration.



Multi-Level Governance in the Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development

MLG is part of the eight elements of Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development, which aims to align policies across different levels to ensure they consistently contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) promoted by the United Nations.



The Levels of Governance in the EU

Supranational Level (European Level):

- Institutions: European Commission, European Parliament, and European Court of Justice
- Role: Enacts policies and regulations that apply across Member States.

National Level (Member States):

- Governments and parliaments of each EU country
- Role: Responsible for setting the overall policy direction and providing the level of funding + Implement EU policies and adapt them to national contexts.

Regional and Local Levels:

- Regional governments, municipalities, local councils
- Role: Address local needs and participate in EU decision-making through regional committees (e.g., Committee of the Regions).

Private sector and civil society:

- Non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations and associations
- Role: Implement tasks of common interest, for instance in the field of local or regional development, social services, the management of natural resources and important infrastructures.

Inter-municipal and regional cooperation structures:

- Two or more municipalities or regions (or intermediate entities) work together to achieve common goals and solve common problems.

Benefits of Effective Multi-Level Governance

Enhanced Democracy and Representation:

- **Increased Democratic Participation**

Involvement of citizens and local communities in decision-making processes promotes greater engagement and participation in governance beyond elections.

- **Enhanced Local Responsiveness**

Decentralization allows local governments to tailor policies and services to the specific needs of their communities, leading to more effective governance.

- **Effective Relations with Civil Society**

Empowered local authorities can collaborate effectively with civil society organizations (CSOs), grassroots groups, and citizen initiatives.

- **More Citizen Participation**

Direct participation opportunities in daily life improvements foster a sense of effectiveness and rewards, leading to increased engagement.

- **Better Policy Outcomes**

Multilevel governance enables diverse perspectives and expertise, resulting in improved policy outcomes.

- **Increased Quality of Public Services**
Local adaptation of public services enhances quality and citizen satisfaction, contingent on sufficient resources.
- **Greater Transparency and Accountability**
Closer governance to the community enhances transparency, accessibility, and accountability, making actions more predictable.

Better Financial Management

- **More Efficient Service Delivery**

Local governments, positioned within multilevel governance (MLG), understand local conditions better, leading to improved public service quality and outcomes.

- **Better Resource Allocation**

MLG facilitates equitable resource distribution by empowering lower levels of government with decision-making authority and financial resources, reducing regional disparities.

- **Improved Fiscal Responsibility**

Enhanced transparency and accountability promote better fiscal responsibility in managing public funds.

Learning and Innovation

- **Capacity-Building and Learning**

MLG creates opportunities for skill development and knowledge sharing among various levels of government.

- **Local Innovation and Experimentation**

MLG promotes local experimentation and innovation in policy design and implementation, encouraging diverse approaches to problem-solving and policy development.

Challenges to Multi-Level Governance

Direct Multilevel Aspects

- **Coordination and Cooperation:** Managing cooperation between different levels of government and addressing diverging interests.
- **Capacity Building:** Developing local governance and service delivery capabilities.
- **Addressing Inequalities:** Managing disparities arising from devolution of powers and resources.

Multi-Actor Dimension

- **Citizen and Stakeholder Engagement:** Involving citizens and civil society effectively in decision-making processes.

Horizontal Dimension

- **Sector Coordination:** Ensuring collaboration across policy sectors and inter-municipal or inter-regional cooperation.
- **Political Differences:** Navigating differing political priorities and ensuring effective conflict resolution mechanisms.

Complexity Management

- **Decision-Making Transparency:** Ensuring clarity in decision-making processes to avoid excessive complexity.
- **Accountability Issues:** Defining clear responsibilities to enhance accountability across multiple actors.

Capacity Building Needs

- **Tailored Governance Frameworks:** Developing governance frameworks suitable for varying challenges and ensuring synergy across levels.

Case Study 1: Cohesion Policy

Description: The EU's regional policy aimed at reducing disparities between regions.

Governance Mechanism:

- **Supranational:** Funding and framework set by the European Commission.
- **National/Regional:** Member States and regions implement projects using EU funds.

Example Programmes: European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF).

Case Study 2: Environmental Policy

- **Collaboration Across Levels:** The European Green Deal seeks to address climate change through policies that require action at all governance levels. Local and regional authorities are crucial in implementing sustainable practices and ensuring compliance with EU Directive.
- **Stakeholder Involvement:** Engaging various stakeholders, including NGOs and the private sector, to foster collaboration in achieving environmental goals.

Multi-Level Governance in EU funded-projects

Framework for EU Funding

- **EU Budget:** The EU allocates funds for various projects through its budget, particularly in areas like regional development, research and innovation, agriculture, and social inclusion.
- **Funding Programmes:** Key programmes include:
 - **Cohesion Fund:** Targets less economically developed regions to promote economic growth and sustainability.

- **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF):** Supports regional development initiatives.
- **Interregional, Cross-Border, Transnational Cooperation Programme (Interreg):** Strengthens cooperation between regions that share a border, enabling them to work together on common challenges and opportunities.

Role of Multi-Level Governance in Project Development

Shared Responsibilities: MLG structures require that responsibilities for project development are shared among different levels of government. This can include:

- **EU Institutions:** The European Commission defines funding criteria and overarching objectives for projects within the programmes.
- **National Authorities:** Member States adapt these objectives to their specific contexts and priorities.
- **Regional and Local Authorities:** They design and implement projects based on local needs and capacities.

Project Identification and Proposal

- **Bottom-Up Approach:** Local and regional authorities often identify projects that address specific community needs, fostering a bottom-up approach that is crucial for effective MLG.
- **Collaboration with Stakeholders:** Various stakeholders, including businesses, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and civil society, are consulted to ensure that project proposals are comprehensive and inclusive.

Project Implementation

Delegated Management:

- **Implementation:** EU funds are often managed through a system of delegated management, where the European Commission entrusts Member States with the responsibility for managing funds and implementing projects.
- **National and Regional Management Authorities:** These authorities are responsible for ensuring compliance with EU regulations, monitoring progress, and managing the distribution of funds.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Performance Indicators: The EU sets performance indicators that must be met to assess project effectiveness. Monitoring is a shared responsibility, involving:

- **Local and Regional Authorities:** They collect data and report on project outcomes.
- **National Authorities:** They aggregate data and ensure compliance with EU requirements.

- **EU Institutions:** The European Commission conducts audits and evaluations to ensure funds are used effectively and goals are met.
- **Feedback Loops:** MLG allows for feedback from local stakeholders to be incorporated into project evaluations, ensuring continuous improvement and learning.

Examples of MLG in EU-Funded Projects

Smart Cities Initiatives

Many EU-funded projects focused on sustainable urban development involve collaboration between local governments, regional authorities, and the EU. For instance, the **Horizon 2020** programme has funded smart city projects that require the active participation of local stakeholders to address specific urban challenges.

Examples of MLG in EU-Funded Projects

Regional Development Projects

Projects funded by the **ERDF** often involve partnerships among regional authorities, local businesses, and community organisations to promote economic growth and innovation tailored to regional needs.

Examples of MLG in EU-Funded Projects

Environmental Projects

Initiatives under the **LIFE Programme** often showcase MLG by bringing together local, regional, and national governments, along with NGOs and citizens, to implement projects aimed at biodiversity, climate change mitigation, and environmental protection.

Challenges of Multi-Level Governance in EU-Funded Projects

- **Complexity:** The involvement of multiple governance levels can lead to bureaucratic challenges, complicating project approval and implementation.
- **Coordination Issues:** Ensuring effective communication and coordination between different levels of governance can be challenging, potentially leading to delays and inefficiencies.
- **Variability in Capacity:** Differences in the capacity of local and regional authorities can affect the quality of project implementation, leading to disparities in project outcomes across member states.

Future Directions

- **Strengthening Local Capacities:** Investing in the capacity of local and regional authorities can enhance their ability to manage and implement EU-funded projects effectively.
- **Improving Coordination Mechanisms:** Developing more robust mechanisms for coordination and communication among different governance levels can facilitate smoother project execution.
- **Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement:** Fostering greater involvement of diverse stakeholders can improve the relevance and impact of EU-funded projects, ensuring they address local needs effectively.

Practical Exercise: EU Project Development Workshop: Multi-Level Governance in Action

Objective: To explore the process of project development under the framework of multi-level governance in the EU, focusing on the collaboration between local, regional, national, and EU levels in addressing specific policy challenges.

- **Select a Policy Challenge:** Choose a policy challenge relevant to the EU that necessitates inter-level cooperation, such as: Renewable energy transition - Urban mobility and transportation planning - Youth unemployment and skills development - Biodiversity and conservation strategies

- **Define Roles:** Assign roles to participants, representing different governance levels and stakeholders, such as: - **EU Institutions:** European Commission, European Parliament, European Council - **National Governments:** Ministers or representatives from various Member States - **Regional Authorities:** Local government officials, regional agencies - **Stakeholders:** NGOs, businesses, research institutions, and citizens.
- **Group Discussions:** Each group discusses their responsibilities, perspectives, and the challenges they face regarding the policy challenge. Groups should identify potential partners and strategies for collaboration with other levels of governance.

- **Project Proposal Development:** Each group collaborates to develop a project proposal aimed at addressing the selected policy challenge. They should consider: - Objectives and goals of the project - Target audience and beneficiaries - Methods and activities to be implemented - Potential partners and stakeholders involved - Funding sources and budget considerations.
- **Presentations:** Each group presents their project proposal to the larger group, explaining their approach and how it incorporates the perspectives of different governance levels.

Questions and answers