

Territorial Governance – a Lever for Equitable and Sustainable Development



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The advanced regionalization reforms implemented to date have moved in a progressive direction and reflect the public authorities' will to provide the country with a territorial governance that meets the new challenges of regional development and effectively fulfils citizens' expectations.

Four years after the entry into force of the three organic laws on territorial collectivities, along with the publication of 68 implementation decrees thereto pertaining, in addition to the adoption of the national administrative decentralization charter, the current territorial governance model seems – in the light of analysis and drawing on the insights gathered from the experts interviewed – it still falls far from the ambition initially sought.

Examining how the various players operate and the relationship between them and with the stakeholders has revealed several shortcomings. These are mainly related to ownership, implementation and operationalization of steering and coordination mechanisms at national and territorial levels. This situation can be explained by many factors:

- Legislative and regulatory texts lack precision, particularly in areas relating to the powers of local and regional authorities.
- There are inadequate financial resources dedicated to local and regional authorities that are heavily subordinate to the State authority.
- The human resources system lacks appeal at territorial level.
- Participatory democracy and citizen participation mechanisms are ineffective.
- The lack of a unified territorial information system that is accessible to all the stakeholders.
- The inexistence, at the territorial level, of an independent follow-up and monitoring mechanism.
- Based on the above findings, the CESE hereby recommends speeding up Morocco's ongoing process of advanced regionalization, by putting in place a series of operational measures that could be structured along the following lines:
- The priority area is to clearly define the powers of local and regional authorities. Emphasis should be placed on:

- Amending the organic laws relating to territorial authorities to further clarify their powers and thereby clearly define the scope of action of the different levels of territorial collectivities.
- Putting in place instruments enabling the region to fully exercise its prominent role in relation to other authorities and with respect to the areas of competence of these. These role players are instrumental in the implementation of Morocco's Regional Development Plan (French: PDR) and the Regional Land Management Plan (French: SRAT).
- Giving the Kingdom's major urban agglomerations a special metropolitan status that fits their specific needs, such as in many other world countries.
- The second recommended action area concerns the strengthening of coordination and evaluation mechanisms, particularly through:

 - Reviewing the current mode of governance for the preparation and implementation of the Regional Development Plan (PDR), by creating a dialogue and coordination entity with representatives of elected (provincial and municipal) councils and decentralized departments under the co-chairmanship of the Wali (governor) of the region concerned and the President of the Council of the same region.
 - Institutionalizing an annual regional consultation conference with all regional stakeholders, the main objective being to ensure continuous coordination, convergence and integration of territorial policies.
 - Conducting studies to assess the impact of development actions and programs of regions but also local authorities and decentralized departments on the population's living environment.
 - The third area concerns improving the financing mechanisms for territorial collectivities, particularly through the following measures:

 - Develop a strategic vision of financing local and regional collectivities, both in the medium and long run. This vision should be adapted to the new requirements for territorial development and the new powers conferred on local and regional administrations.
- Reduce local taxation to two local taxes covering, on the one hand, taxes related to housing and those relating to economic activity on the other.
- Condition the approval of local authority budgets on effective implementation of internal audit and management control functions provided for in the organic laws on local authorities.
- The fourth area is promoting participatory democracy locally, by completing the system of citizen participation provided for in Article 12 of the Constitution, which gives civil society actors in the public sphere and NGOs the right to contribute, within the framework of participatory democracy, to the enactment, the implementation and the evaluation of the decisions and initiatives of elected institutions and public authorities. This system requires the adoption of a law that defines the terms and conditions of operation and outlines the roles and responsibilities of the parties involved.