

Policy Forum on Development: Thematic webinars

Overview

During the second half of October and early November the PFD will be hosting a series of thematic webinars aiming at refining its members' input to the ongoing EC programming exercise. These exchanges are to be organised within the framework of the **Virtual PFD**, which kicked off in April with a broad consultation that engaged over 360 organisations and continued in July with a set of regional meetings and a global meeting co-chaired by Koen Doens, Director General for International Cooperation, in September.

The thematic webinars will bring together **technical experts from the PFD networks** and EC officials in charge of each thematic priority. The objective of the webinars is to gather recommendations from the PFD constituencies on how the programming and implementation of the EU priorities can: i) contribute to reducing inequalities, ensuring a just transition and leave no-one behind, ii) strengthen the enabling environment and the achievement of Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement and be supported by multi-stakeholder partnerships at global, national and local level.

In the same vein as the regional meetings, the PFD thematic webinars should be seen as **part of a broader consultation process** that includes written contributions through virtual tools and as necessary follow up emails - so as to capture the technical insight coming from the PFD networks.

Themes and Calendar

The webinars will take place in three successive weeks, starting on October 20th and finalising on November 3rd. The thematic webinars will focus on 3 priorities:

1. An economy that works for people (October 20th)

While all actors are instrumental to the implementation of the SDGs and the new EC priorities, the expectations around private sector engagement are increasingly high in the current financial architecture. The EU has been using blending to leverage additional resources, a trend most evident in the European External Investment Plan (EIP). However, members of the PFD have questioned the value added of this form of financing. The participation of private finance institutions and private sector directly in development cooperation initiatives funded by ODA poses a number of questions in terms of achieving sustainable and inclusive economic progress; guaranteeing decent work; reducing inequalities; and respecting human rights, as well as social, labour and environmental standards. PFD members advocate for transparency and clear accountability frameworks and refer to clear evidence of the importance of MSMEs and inclusive and sustainable businesses in building an economy that works for people, that respects their rights and puts people and planet first. The PFD calls for attention to the fact that, in many regions, supporting the "real" economy means reaching the huge informal sector.

2. Green Deal (October 27th)

The ambitious European Green Deal is more important than ever, as it must provide guidance for the joint recovery efforts. Initial feedback from PFD members shows the need to forge ahead, while recognising the need for an inclusive approach which pays attention specifically to women and indigenous groups and other local communities, while allowing for active stakeholder participation and protection of human rights in a just transition. The Green Deals that are to guide the EU's external action should engage all sectors of the economy and be supported by a comprehensive investment mechanism designed to help partner countries transition to modern, resource-efficient, diversified and competitive economies. The EU's strengths place it as a global leader on consumer protection, and workers' rights as well as on efforts to address its climate and environmental footprint. Considering the global scale of climate change and biodiversity loss, Europe will strengthen domestic efforts and work to mobilise all development actors as well as other nations to reach our shared 2030 sustainable development ambitions.

3. Digitalisation (November 3rd)

Digitalisation has acquired a crucial role in our economies and societies, leading to radical changes in the way we work, learn and interact with others in our daily lives. In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, digital technologies and solutions have proven to be indisputable assets for managing the emergency and building social and economic resilience. Digital transformation comes with great opportunities for growth and development as well as with new challenges and risks.

New digital technologies and solutions can help all countries, including low-income countries, achieve economic progress and improve well-being. They are key to increasing people's access to public and private services through digital channels, to enhancing governments' accountability and transparency towards citizens, and to raising opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship for all. At the same time, however, digitalisation may have ambiguous impacts on inequalities, de facto, leaving behind those with limited access to digital connectivity and technology, and putting at risk citizens' rights, data protection and democracy in contexts where digital aspects are not well regulated. Those risks need to be addressed so as to avoid the widening of existing patterns of socioeconomic inequalities, especially affecting gender equality and women's empowerment. This technological shift therefore requires solid governance, policy and regulatory frameworks, which prioritize a "human-centric" digital transformation, with a rights-based approach at the core. Taking all these considerations into account, the EU shall aim for a broader understanding of the many interconnected processes at play, which implies the promotion of a multi-stakeholder approach to manage the complexity of the digital transformation.

Methodology

The thematic discussions will be of 2 hours maximum and moderated by the TA Team - potentially with support from technical experts to be appointed by the Task Team. Participants will have background

information to prepare the debate, which will be complemented by a short presentation on the theme of each session to be delivered by the Commission colleagues dealing with those themes in the corresponding unit.

For facilitation purposes, and to ensure coherence across the thematic meetings, we will look into aspects that have marked most of the debates held by the PFD since its creation. The questions below will be narrowed down according to the specificities of each theme:

1. How can the programming and implementation of the EU priorities (Green Deals/Digitalisation/Economy that works for people) **contribute to reducing inequalities, ensure a just transition** and leave no-one behind?
2. How can the **enabling environment** and the realisation of the Paris Agreement and Agenda 2030 (and thereby the roles and work of civil society and local and regional governments) **be strengthened through** the implementation of the Green Deal/Digitalisation/Economy that works for people?
3. How can **multi-stakeholder partnerships (and thereby civil society and local and regional governments)** effectively contribute to implementing the Green Deal/Digitalisation/Economy that works for people at global, national and local level?