



Policy Brief

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

How to build effective governance in food system management and food policy implementation



The Multilevel Governance approach

The term Multilevel Governance (MLG), combine the adjective multi-level which refers to the **increased interdependence between different political arenas** (national, sub-national, supranational), whilst the term 'governance' signals the **growing interdependence between public authorities and nongovernmental actors at various territorial levels**.

In Food Trails, two dimensions of horizontal governance are identified:

- **Internal horizontal governance** refers to **connections between the multiple departments of a municipality** aiming at developing policy integration. It also refers to the **relationships between the municipality and public agencies or other institutional bodies or organisations**.
- **External horizontal governance** refers to the **connections between the municipality and diverse private and civil society actors at the municipal level**. It also refers to **coordination and collaboration among institutions of the same level** that can occur through institutional and formalised inter-municipal cooperation promoted by laws and rules, or strategic horizontal cooperation. It also refers to coordination and **collaboration among institutions of the same level** that can occur through institutional and formalised inter-municipal cooperation promoted by laws and rules, or strategic horizontal cooperation.

To better understand and visualise the relationships existing between the cities and the other institutional levels, that constitute the multilevel institutional architecture in which urban food policies are embedded, an operational tool for mapping the MLG has been developed and tested by the City of Milan as part of Horizon Europe **CLEVERFOOD** project's activities.

The tool, defined MLG mapping grid, was firstly described in the CLEVERFOOD report "Comparative analysis of existing Urban Food Policies", where the tool was tested with three pilot interviews in October 2023. The results were three grids showing the MLG approach of the cities of **Milan, Bordeaux and Barcelona**.

The aims of the grid are:

- **Mapping the multilevel governance structure** and identifying the most relevant food policy actions and public services in each city.
- **Identify how administrative competences are allocated** within the different governance levels and what kind of interaction there is between them.
- **Develop a visual representation of the food system governance** for each city to better understand the topic and compare the different contexts.

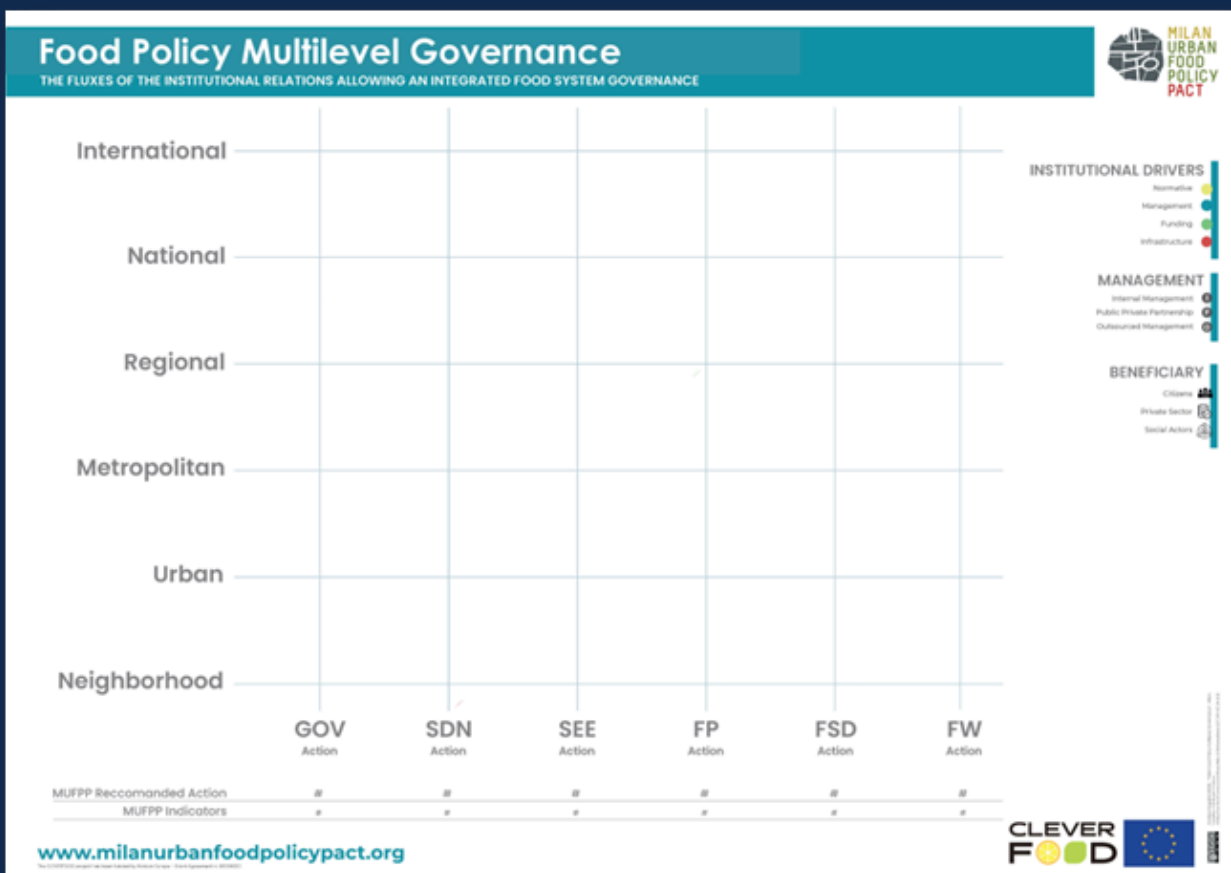
The MLG mapping grid

The tool is a mapping grid which is structured in two axes: the **vertical axis** represents the **different institutional levels**: neighborhood, urban, metropolitan, regional, national, international.

While the **horizontal axis** represents the different areas of policy intervention of the **Milan Urban Food Policy Pact**:

- Governance (GOV)
- Sustainable Diets and Nutrition (SDN)
- Social and Economic Equity (SEE)
- Food Production (FP)
- Food Supply and Distribution (FSD)
- Food Waste (FW)

The tool was developed as a grid indeed to show where and how the different thematic competences are faced by different governance levels. The image below shows an empty grid to be filled:



For each policy initiative analysed, the grid helps to **explore the vertical relationships between the government body and higher and lower institutional level** focusing on four institutional drivers:

- **Normative:** which refers to the norms, regulation or laws that promote and regulate the single policy initiatives/services.
- **Management:** it can be of four types: internal management by providing directly or through a public in-house company (a); public-private partnership: shared responsibility among public & private actors (b); outsourced management by externalising to the market through public tender (c); hybrid model which is a mix of two or more of the previous systems (d)

- **Infrastructure:** which refers to the physical infrastructures that are needed to implement the intervention/service
- **Funding:** that refers to the financial resources that are needed to implement/provide the initiative/service.

Another layer of analysis regards the beneficiaries of each policy action, in order to understand who the target of the intervention is.

The main categories identified are:

- **Citizens:** general public or targeted social groups;
- **Private sector:** companies, corporates, businesses, retailers, etc;
- **Social actors:** NGOs, associations, foundations.



How to complete the grid

The tool can be compiled by the different government authorities, each time enhancing their point of view and thus deepening the MLG architecture in the different levels of government, according to the type of subject which is filling in the canva. It can be done both directly online, or first on paper and then digitalised according to the preference of who is using the tool and to the scope of the mapping activity.

1st STEP - Identifying the areas of intervention

The mapping process starts from the government level where the actors identify the areas of intervention (SDN, SEE, FP, FSD, FW) in which they are active and for each of the selected area they describe the most relevant policy actions (according to the sub-categories) in each of the areas of interventions

Objective: identifying the main public service managed by the actors filling the canva per each of the MUFPP category.

2nd STEP - Multilevel Governance analysis for each MUFPP category

The compilation of the canva proceeds from left to right, analysing in a clustered manner the articulation of governance for each of the MUFPP categories.

Objective: identifying the level of governance responsible for each of the above-mentioned institutional drivers and the management model of the policy.

3rd STEP - Identifying of the beneficiaries

Once the governance framework is set, it is possible to focus on the beneficiaries, to understand who can benefit from the policy action and who the actor responsible for it appoint to be the target.

Objective: identifying direct/indirect beneficiaries of the service/action/policy.

4th STEP - exploitation of the interconnection between policy actions

Lastly, the tool allows to understand also how the different policies intersect and to exploit their interconnection. The distribution of functions and competencies and the level of discretionary powers of different levels of government influence the capacity of cities to develop and implement integrated food policies

Objective: tracing the visual representation of interconnections between the different thematic and power dimensions.

The MLG in Food Trails' cities

Based on the reflections on the concept of MLG and the opportunity offered by the mapping grid, a **dedicated workshop with Food Trails cities** was organised in November 2023. The workshop provided another test moment for the tool, involving this time the 11 partner cities. The process helped the consortium in understanding of the different policy contexts touched by the project and **provided insights for two different reports**: “11 official municipal acts for Urban Food Policy approval” and “Report on connections with the national level”.

The **details about the MLG mapping grids filled out by Food Trails cities** can be found in the Food Policy report available:

<https://foodtrails.milanurbanfoodpolicy.pact.org/resources/11-official-municipal-acts-for-urban-food-policy-approval/>

Nevertheless, here below the main trends are listed, as a general overview on the MLG approaches in the project.

Links with EU/National and Sub-Local levels

The links with higher governance levels show a **focus on funding opportunities** and Food Trails is an example of **how EU funded projects are enabling drivers allowing food policy development**.

Doing advocacy at EU level remain crucial to have a legislative framework to provide structural support to cities and public authorities.

Cities can be clustered in two groups when **looking at the sub-local level**:

- Specific **cities demonstrated a centralised management** of their food initiatives (Tirana, Copenhagen, Bergamo, Milan);
- Specific **cities showed a shared management** between the Urban and the Neighborhood levels (Birmingham, Warsaw, Groningen, Funchal).

Thematic Trends

Links can be observed between different topics:

- On **Governance** there is a tendency to develop urban food policies, with limited links to other levels ;
- **Markets** and **School Canteens** infrastructures **are mostly linked to Food Waste actions**;
- **School Canteens** show a **preminent role of the municipalities**, even when the service is outsourced;
- **Food aid initiatives** are based on the effort and **collaboration with the Civil Society Organisations**;
- **Food Production** is not at the center of significant actions or projects among this group of cities, showing a **lighter commitment on the topic**.

Multilevel Governance. How to build effective governance in food system management and food policy implementation



The concept of multilevel governance (MLG) in the context of food system management and policy implementation is essential to understand and strengthen in practice for the development of solid sustainable food policies. The document starts from the conceptual framework of the MLG to explain the need of cities in visualising their own approach to multi-dimensional topics and challenges. In light of this need, the City of Milan developed a MLG mapping grid able to provide the visual representation of the food system actions and competences and the multilevel responsibilities that lies in each governance body.

The tool, developed under the CLEVERFOOD project and tested in Food Trails, helps to map the multi-level governance structure, to identify relevant food policies and public services, and to understand the interactions between different levels of governance. The document also discusses the importance of identifying the beneficiaries of policies, such as citizens, private sector entities and social actors, and emphasises the need for effective advocacy at EU level to support the regulatory framework.

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September 2024