



European Committee
of the Regions

The role of local and regional authorities and decentralised cooperation in fragile settings: building on the Nicosia Initiative in Libya

Fragility is rising across the world, but current EU engagement in fragile contexts is insufficient to meet growing needs, as crises multiply and intensify. Urgent action is required to address overlapping political, social, and economic pressures in fragile settings, from the bottom-up.

Fragility is deeply linked to extreme poverty: **61 contexts face high or extreme fragility, home to 2 billion people and 72% of the world's extreme poor.** *

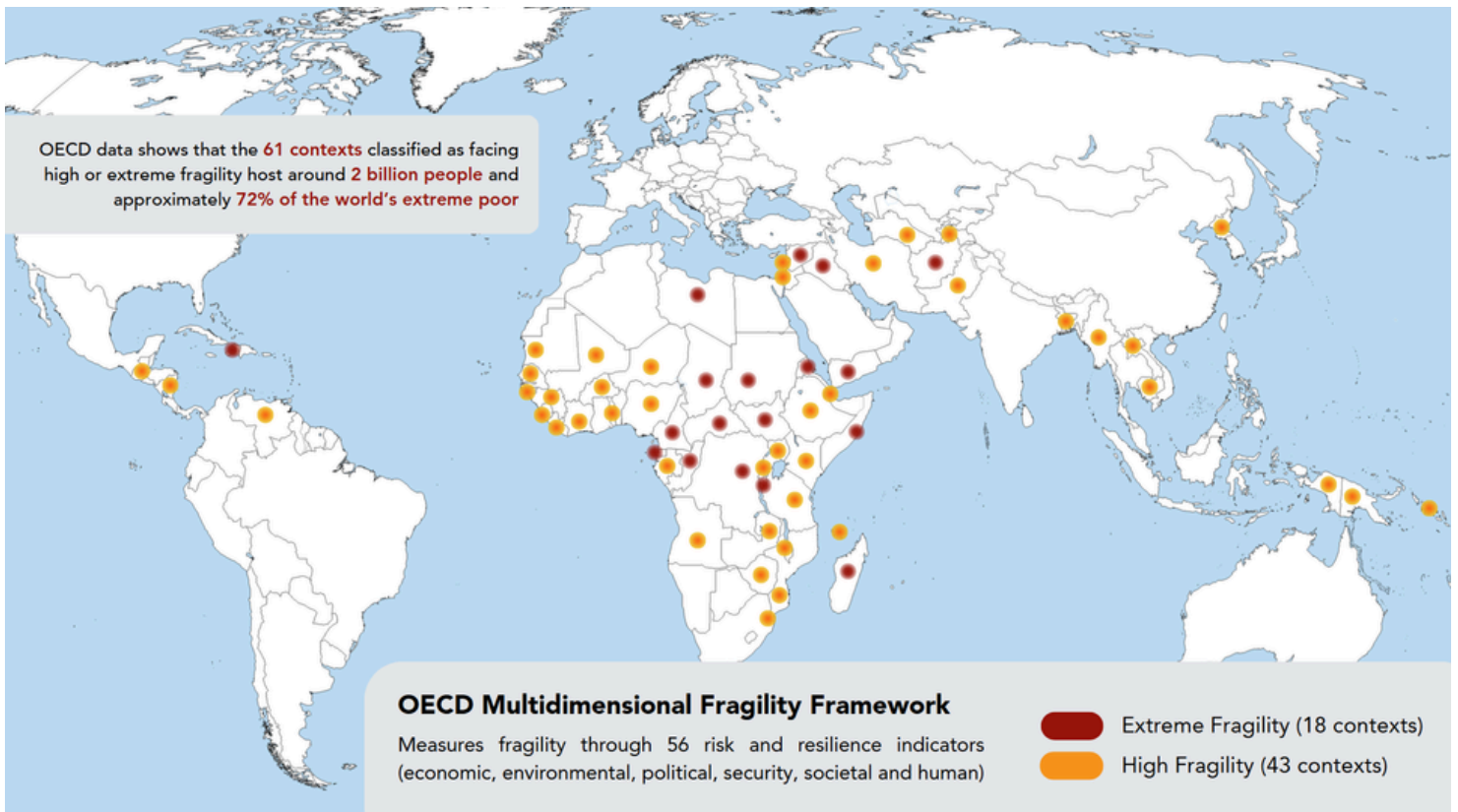
If current trends continue, by 2040, up to **92% of people living in extreme poverty could be concentrated in these highly fragile settings.** *

Fragility refers to the combination of **exposure to complex risks and vulnerabilities, and insufficient resilience of a state, system or community** to manage, absorb or mitigate those risks.**

The **local dimension is critical** as risks and their impacts are most experienced and addressed at the territorial level.

The EU and its Member States remain the world's largest provider of Official Development Assistance, accounting for **42% of global ODA: €95.9 billion in 2023.*****

While overall EU aid remains high, the **share of ODA directed to fragile and conflict-affected contexts has been declining** in recent years.****



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* OECD (2025). *States of Fragility 2025*.

** OECD (2016). *States of Fragility 2016: Understanding Violence*.

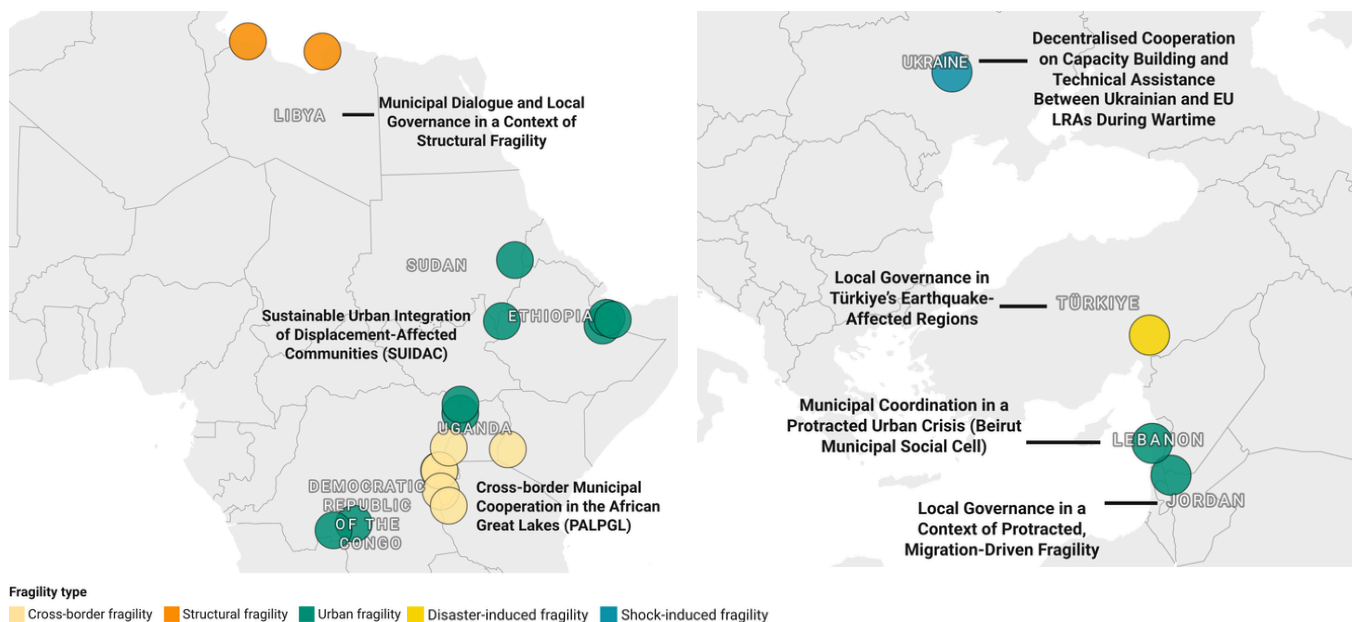
*** EC (2024). *Joint Communication to The European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee, The Committee of the Regions and The European Investment Bank. Building sustainable international partnerships as a Team Europe*.

**** OECD (2025). *Understanding fragility: Why should the EU care?*



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Cities and regions are key to preventing and mitigating fragility: drawing on experience and collaboration, they address challenges like conflict, displacement, and disasters. The maps below present selected case studies from the study, showing how decentralised cooperation and subnational diplomacy operate across different fragile settings, even where national frameworks are weakened.



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While national frameworks remain important, many of the drivers and impacts of fragility are experienced locally, where municipalities act as frontline governance actors.

To strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of engagement at the subnational level and support decentralised cooperation in fragile contexts, **the EU should:**

Invest in decentralisation as a stability and resilience factor

Strengthen the local dimension of its integrated approach to fragility

Improve monitoring and learning on local-level engagement in fragile settings

Embed decentralised cooperation as a core tool for conflict-sensitive, context-specific and realistic engagement

Explore dedicated, predictable and adequate funding for decentralised cooperation, linked to capacity building

Systematically map local governance ecosystems to identify entry points for dialogue and service delivery

Prioritise investment in intermediaries, platforms and municipal networks that sustain decentralised cooperation

