



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency



CITIES OF SOLIDARITY SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL AND THE 10 CRITERIA



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COVER PHOTO:

Young artists work on a mural in a community center supported by UNHCR in San Salvador, El Salvador.
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Cities of Solidarity Framework

The backbone of the Cities of Solidarity (CoS) framework is the **ten criteria**, a stylized representation of key aspects of local integration dynamics used as a model of reference that structures core elements of CoS, over time and across geographical boundaries. Such organizing components provide reference for the definition of assessment parameters and indicators and give substance to the central idea of the initiative - what constitutes social inclusion of displaced persons at

the local level and which capacities and resources must be fostered in local public administration and social partners to ensure effective and sustainable integration.

The table below provides a brief description of each criterion and its respective macro area. In doing so, it states the interdependence among inclusion factors, institutional inclusion factors and networking dynamics of CoS.

Macro area	Criteria	Brief description of points of assessment:
Inclusion conditions, access to rights and urban environments	Civil-Political inclusion	Role of the city and communities in: fostering and supporting access to civil and political rights and freedoms, access to public services and spaces. Including migrants and refugees in the design and implementation of policies and programs that affect them, jointly with local communities. Facilitating access to justice and conflict administration institutions and mechanisms.
	Economic inclusion	Role of the city in fostering and supporting access to and full enjoyment of economic rights. Encompasses labour market, social security, housing land and property.
	Legal Inclusion	Role of the city and communities in ensuring respect for the rights and protection attached to refugees and other persons of concerns' equal migratory status by competent authorities, enabling access to legal and civil documentation, preventing the incidence of practical barriers and supporting advocacy and public information for better access and enjoyment of such rights, as well as directly acting for the removal of formal or practical barriers at local level to the extent of the city's authority and competences, advocating for such objectives whenever possible.
Public Administration environment and Public Policy	Social-cultural inclusion	Role of the city and communities in fostering and supporting access and full enjoyment, of: 1) social rights, through education, healthcare, social services, social protection and others necessary for social cohesion; and 2) cultural rights, encompassing linguistic integration, inter-cultural exchanges, recognition and appreciation of cultural diversity. It also encompasses the capacity of creating an urban environment that embraces cultural encounter and pro-actively prevents and combats xenophobia.
	Institutional Capacity	Effective capacity to formulate, deliver, monitor and evaluate public policies and services, analyzing the necessary inputs and being held accountable.
	Institutional Commitment	Effective capacity to decide and follow pre-established plans and policies with temporal coherence, institutional memory, technical soundness and budgetary adequacy.

	Institutional Coordination	Effective capacity to ensure internal mechanisms of coordination of public policies and services, preventing overlapping and gaps in program and services delivery, and with external, especially national and subnational policies and services.
	Reception and Outreach	Effective capacity and available services, structures and plans to provide reception, sheltering, initial information and essential services to new arrivals. Encompasses the capacity to effectively establish communication channels with newcomers and hosting communities.
	Referral systems for persons with specific needs	Availability of referral and integration mechanisms between local, national, other subnational institutions, services and programs, and with civil society as well, to avoid the duplication of services and minimize transaction costs while seeking public services and information.
Advancement of Cities of Solidarity Mechanism	Championing and networking	Effective participation in CoS networking activities and in the promotion and expansion of CoS community, such as: dissemination of good practices; hosting CoS conferences, events, exchanges, secondment programs and technical visits; provision of mentorship to other participating cities; preparation of case studies; dissemination of innovative practices.

The first macro area “inclusion conditions, access to rights and urban environments” reflects the four dimensions that make up local integration. Under “public administration and public policy”, are emphasized institutional factors that may underpin and implement inclusion dynamics in a sustainable and equitable way. Finally, championing and networking performs the role of articulating criteria, allowing the entire approach to acquire a collective dimension, further explored in the section on community learning and network. Considered as 10 interdependent, complementary dimensions, the CoS

criteria effectively work as building blocks for an interdisciplinary tool – encompassing the nexus of social inclusion – institutions – networks and identifies local policy action.

A key characteristic of the proposed framework is its **modular structure**, to which the 10 criteria outlined above also provide coherence and reinforce synergies. As seen in the following sections, this modular structure is conceived as a coherent set of tools, but also to be used separately.

Cities of Solidarity: Methodology for assessment and policy agenda setting (prioritization)

As mentioned, the heart of the framework is the possibility for cities to align different levels of commitment to a comprehensive process of institutional capacity strengthening to improve local integration/social inclusion outcomes. This is meant to have flexibility from the diagnosis phase and throughout the commitment processes, with freedom to adhere to any steps offered by the framework.

Following this principle, the proposed methodology relies on the basic assumption that cities are the best equipped to conduct first assessment of their current institutional situation and to define the amount of resources available, including time, financial, human, technological and political resources – the degree of commitment – to invest. Alternatively, in a public administration perspective, this methodology can

assist public managers to identify institutional capacities and challenges, defining key elements for a policy agenda setting.

For this purpose, the present proposal defines a self-assessment tool that can work as an autonomous tool to provide guidance in identifying challenges, possibilities and specially focus for local action.

Equally, this tool can also provide an entry point to engage third parties; such as local civil society, UN agencies and other partners, as well as other cities involved in the CoS framework. A proposed methodology is defined in the diagram below, detailing core elements of self-assessment.



The CoS proposal is based on a tailored assessment methodology, that can be adapted to each local context. By forming the Local Steering Committee (LSC), a city will be able to engage with the CoS framework in a more integrated and sustainable way, assuring that relevant sectoral areas, civil society partners, and other actors **may** join in the process and contribute to the achievement of a comprehensive diagnosis.

The self-assessment may also occur in an autonomous manner, independently from UNHCR of any other partner. The filling of the self-assessment tool consists of a set of questions that may help cities' technical staff to identify and prioritize key topics in the public agenda. It also aims at identifying key aspects to the definition of institutional goals through individualized itineraries for action, based on the institutional demands of cities themselves.

The self-assessment tool is structured in a way to reflect the 10 CoS criteria and to propose for each criteria, wider objectives and potential commitments, that work as a benchmark for municipalities. Each item of the self-assessment tool may perform three functions: 1. Map current situation regarding the core aspects of each CoS criteria; 2. Analyze which concrete actions and attributions fall under the city’s direct constitutional competences, and which government functions belong to other state levels. In this case, the methodology suggests that the municipality also proposes to itself a support role to strengthen this

given aspect, that may be performed by assuming an advocacy or a monitoring role in relation to the responsible state actor; and 3. Identify potential commitments for improving or sustaining the city’s trajectory, and its local community, in the pathway to solidarity, understood as increasing social inclusion conditions for displaced persons and vulnerable communities.

The proposed self-assessment framework, composed by sets of questions organized by each of the 10 CoS criteria is outlined below:

Item	Question	Type of Question	Observations/ Additional questions
1	INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY		
	Objective: Mapping of competencies and identification of spaces for local government action in support of social inclusion of displaced persons.		
	Potential Commitments: Implement, maintain or improve actions and programs regarding most the key policy areas described in item 1. The creation and formalization of plans to ensure non-discriminatory access and effective inclusion of refugees and migrants in each of the sectoral public policies and services described. The creation of clear strategy to suppress barriers of access and effective inclusion of refugees and migrants in each area.		
1.1	Is the City administration, under national constitutional and legal framework, responsible for planning or policy delivery functions on the following policy areas?		Provide any clarification
1.1.1	Access to labor market	N/Y	
1.1.2	Citizen Security and law enforcement	N/Y	
1.1.3	Civil or criminal justice services	N/Y	
1.1.4	Culture	N/Y	
1.1.5	Demographic statistics	N/Y	
1.1.6	Higher complexity health care services	N/Y	
1.1.7	Housing	N/Y	
1.1.8	Leisure	N/Y	
1.1.9	Preventive health care services	N/Y	
1.1.10	Primary Education	N/Y	
1.1.11	Public transportation	N/Y	
1.1.12	Secondary Education	N/Y	
1.1.13	Social Services (except provision of temporary sheltering)	N/Y	
1.1.14	Sports	N/Y	
1.1.15	Temporary Sheltering	N/Y	
1.1.16	Tertiary Education	N/Y	
1.1.17	Water and sanitation	N/Y	

1.2	Please indicate what kind of action, program, plan, or strategy is currently in place at L.A. level for each policy area below regarding refugees and migrants. Consider that even if a given public policy does not fall under the L.A. sphere of competency, advocacy activities or cooperation with the responsible state-level actors may be indicated.		
1.2.1	Access to labor market	Open	
1.2.2	Citizen Security and law enforcement	Open	
1.2.3	Civil or criminal justice services	Open	
1.2.4	Culture	Open	
1.2.5	Demographic statistics	Open	
1.1.6	Higher complexity health care services	Open	
1.1.7	Housing	Open	
1.1.8	Leisure	Open	
1.1.9	Preventive health care services	Open	
1.1.10	Primary Education	Open	
1.1.11	Public transportation	Open	
1.1.12	Secondary Education	Open	
1.1.13	Social Services (except provision of temporary sheltering)	Open	
1.1.14	Sports	Open	
1.1.15	Temporary Sheltering	Open	
1.1.16	Tertiary Education	Open	
1.2.17	Water and sanitation	Open	
1.3	Does the city have a formalized strategic plan or any organizational document containing vision, objectives, goals and timeframes for implementation of local goals with a perspective of local integration and equal treatment of population UNHCR serves?	N/Y	
2	INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT		
	Objective: identification of main organizational areas for the establishment of temporal coherence of actions, programs and plans at local level.		
	Potential commitment: Implement, maintain or improve mechanisms to build predictable organizational environments in which long-term public policies and programs can unfold, including proper budget and funding, ensuring the implementation of durable integration plans, particularly across local government changes, comprehending local integration actions.		
2.1	Are budget and planning functions responsive to size and needs of the population UNHCR serves and commensurate to the local population?	N/Y	Describe actual mechanisms to fulfill egalitarian conditions for the allocation of funds for PoC compared to the host population
2.2	Is there any multiannual plan, preferentially approved by local legislature, encompassing local integration of population UNHCR serves?	N/Y	Please state if the presentation of such plan or proposal is envisaged by local administration.

INSTITUTIONAL COORDINATION			
3	Objective: Identification of spaces and channels for coordination among local institutions and actors, preventing gaps or overlapping of functions and decision-making flows.		
	Potential Commitment: Implement, maintain or improve coordination strategies, through an internal coordination mechanism. Propose integrated strategic documents coordinating with different levels of government of neighboring L.A.		
3.1	Does the city receive funds from different national levels (such as federal or state agencies) to implement actions, policies and programs directed at population UNHCR serves?	N/Y	
3.1.1	If the L.A. make part of any metropolitan or urban integration area, are there any integrated plans for the inclusion of refugees and migrants	N/Y	
3.2	Does the city maintain social participation mechanisms that are effective in promoting coordinated action towards social inclusion of refugees and migrants?	N/Y	What could be done to improve current situation?
ECONOMIC INCLUSION			
4	Objective: Identification of existing initiatives and spaces for improving the access to labor, land and property in non-discriminatory ways.		
	Potential commitment: Implement, maintain or improve "POC-friendly" procedures, services and approaches to facilitate in non-discriminatory bases, access to labor market, labor information, land, property, sustainable livelihoods and financial services.		
4.1	Does the L.A. have an information center for workers that offers guidance, training or services to population UNHCR serves on labor and social security issues?	N/Y	Does it intend to establish such services?
4.2	Does the L.A. provide technical vocational skills training for population UNHCR serves?	N/Y	
4.3	Describe any existing public financial services currently or potentially accessible to population UNHCR serves, such as microfinances, social incubators and others.	Open	
4.4	Is it possible for the L.A. administration to employ as public servants or in other capacity population UNHCR serves?	Y/N	Describe
SOCIO-CULTURAL INCLUSION			
5	Objective: Identification of existing initiatives and of spaces for improving the access to social and cultural rights by the population UNHCR serves.		
	Potential commitment: Implement, maintain or improve programs to foster a culture of respect for diversity and interculturality in schools, culture and community centers, public facilities and spaces, and to engage PoC and local communities in shared spaces and activities, contributing to inclusive and diversity aware environments.		
5.1	Does the city have a formal cultural policy document or any other formal declaration stating goals towards cultural inclusion of PoC?	N/Y	Is the city willing to prepare such a plan?
5.2	Does city budget for culture include provisions to fund cultural manifestations of PoC communities?	N/Y	
5.3	Does the city educational policies include mechanisms for effective inclusion of PoC children and adults in all stages of education services?	N/Y	

5.3.1	Is the respect for diversity present in curricula of public school system?	N/Y	
5.3.2	Do PoC families have specific channels to address issues concerning social and cultural demands towards local administration?	N/Y	
5.4	Is the L.A. encouraging or supporting organizations working to fight racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination?	N/Y	
5.5	Does the L.A. organize festivals and activities to nurture diversity and cultural dialogue?	N/Y	
5.6	Does the L.A. involve or support local communities and civil society organizations in cultural and social activities that foster mutual understanding and respect for PoC cultural identities? How?	Open	Is the city willing to commit to foster partnerships with civil society in the cultural sphere?
6	CIVIL-POLITICAL INCLUSION		
	Objective: Identification of existing initiatives and spaces for improving the access civil and political rights.		
	Potential commitment: Implement, maintain or improve social participatory procedures to harvest PoC's opinions and political preferences regarding the development of local public policies.		
6.1	Does the L.A. implement or support the implementation of any legal aid program, legal advice and support access to justice?	N/Y	Is it willing to implement or support the implementation of such services?
6.2	Does the city hold public policy debates and participatory channels for the participation of social movements and communities' representatives from PoC?	N/Y	
6.3	Please list any participatory body with participation of civil society in which there is participation of PoC.	Open	
7	LEGAL INCLUSION		
	Objective: Identification of any existing gaps and barriers to full exercise of rights for legal reasons and the role of cities in helping POC bridging such gaps.		
	Potential commitment: Implement, maintain or improve actions to minimize the bureaucratic burden for PoC to access and be de-facto included in public services and in civil life in general, such as public information campaigns, training and sensitization of public servants, refugee-sensitive local level regulations on bureaucratic procedures.		
7.1	Does the city provide or support measures to improve access to justice for PoC, such as the offer of legal advice or support to the work of public defenders regarding PoC?	N/Y	
7.2	Does the city develop informative campaigns directed at PoC and general population about PoC rights and status?	N/Y	
7.3	Does the city include age, gender and diversity perspectives in the design of plans, policies and programs?	N/Y	

REFERRAL SYSTEMS FOR PERSONS WITH SPECIFIC NEEDS			
8	Objective: Identification of strategies of coordination and referral among local services, preventing gaps and overlapping service provision.		
	Potential Commitment: Implement, maintain or improve referral strategies and approaches to rationalization of services, avoiding unnecessary segregation of services. Includes mechanisms for collecting POCs opinions and views on service provision in general.		
8.2	Are there ombudsperson's services, units or persons in position to adequately receive and process suggestions and complains about POC-related affairs?	N/Y	
8.3	Does the city have a "citizen's chart" indicating existing relevant services and programs in an accessible way to POC, through an online platform?	N/Y	
8.3.1	Is this document available in the languages spoken by the main refugee communities living in the city?	N/Y	
8.4	Does the city have formal, effective fora or administrative spaces dedicated to articulation and social dialogue with private sector actors, NGOs and other stakeholders/partners of public-private projects, programs and actions regarding POC local integration?	N/Y	
8.5	Is there a phone-based or online information service for the POC demands in their main languages?	N/Y	
8.6	Is there a grievance mechanism in place for CoS population of concern?	N/Y	
RECEPTION AND OUTREACH			
9	Objective: Identification of plans and preparatory infrastructure for the reception of POC, public information and outreach for POC.		
	Potential Commitment: Implement, maintain or improve reception infrastructure and communications strategy focusing on disseminating correct and timely information to POC in a sustainable and effective way.		
9.1	Does the city provides funds or participates in the management/ delivery of any of the following reception facilities?		
9.1.1	Reception centers	N/Y	
9.1.1.1	Provisory or Permanent?		
9.1.2	Community centers	N/Y	
9.1.2.1	Provisory or Permanent?		
9.1.3	Specific shelters for POC	N/Y	
9.1.3.1	Provisory or Permanent?		
9.1.4	Shared equipment, used by POC and local population	N/Y	
9.1.4.1	Provisory or Permanent?		
9.2	Does the city have a local arrangement (or participate in a federative arrangement) that provides planned reception activities and routines regarding the arrival of POC?	N/Y	
9.2.1	Does the city participate in resettlement programs?	N/Y	
9.2.2	Does the city implement special measures covering the special needs of children, elderly and women among POC?	N/Y	
9.3	Does the city have communication and outreach provisions of plans regarding the topics below?	N/Y	
9.3.1	Information needs of POC and presentation of city policies, initiatives and other partners' initiatives to local integration.	N/Y	
9.3.2	Information and social awareness among general population regarding POC, cultural diversity, and fight against xenophobia, racism, sexism.	N/Y	

CHAMPIONING AND NETWORKING			
10	Objective: Identification of new potential opportunities to deepen exchange of good practices with participating cities and engage new cities in CoS network.		
	Potential Commitment: Implement, maintain or improve sustainable contributions to the improvement and advancement of CoS network, disseminating good practices, supporting local, national and international meetings and activities related to CoS participating cities and their staff.		
10.1	Does the city have an online library with good practices, case studies or other inputs on PoC local integration?	N/Y	
10.2	Does the city participate in national or international cities networks?	N/Y	
10.2.1	If yes, please mention, use the field for Observations	Open	
10.2.2	Has the city offered/Is willing to offer interchange opportunities to other cities public servant to disseminate good practices?	N/Y	

This version of the self-assessment tool presented above serves as a benchmark diagnostics tool. The more positive answers obtained by a city, the better in a scale of institutional preparation for granting effective conditions for social inclusion. Implement (create), maintain, and improve services, norms, actions and programs are collectively seen as part of the city administration's solidarity role. Possess a full range of capabilities, in harmony with the assemble of city's constitutional competencies, the means to achieve public expectations that come with them and the discourse to align it with an inclusive line of public awareness are indicators for this objective solidarity.

In this regard, this specific tool, as part of the integral framework, can and must be constantly updated and adapted to national and regional contexts, if necessary, to reflect current state of thinking about social inclusion factors by stakeholders (UNHCR, local governmental or non-governmental partners, third parties among others) and to gradually raise the threshold of desired integration capabilities. It also reflects some idealization of institutional capacities and resources, as well as expected patterns of relationship between State and civil society. In concrete cases the institutional resources to implement effective governance of local inclusion may vary. In guiding the update of a self-assessment tool, one must have in mind that it must point in the direction of idealized goals inviting cities to be challenged, but also keeping realistic goals. Institutional capacity to plan, design and implement

policies, engage with civil society, attract, and offer participatory channels to displaced communities, may not be sufficiently developed. For that reason, the tool may be combined with additional incentives to support institutional change towards better governance of local integration factors, as seen in the following section.

The answers given during the self-assessment phase will serve as a basis to determine the scope of the resulting commitment. Participating cities will identify potential commitments based on the application of this tool. While analyzing potential commitments they will be invited to focus on three sets of possible outcomes:

1. **To implement** (design, create and necessarily deliver) some new program, public policy, service or plan for example, thus non-preexistent.
2. To **Maintain** some public policy, program, or action already existing; and
3. To **Improve**, quantitatively or qualitatively change the state of a given program, public policy, service, or plan.

What the tool proposes, thus, is to support cities categorize their needs and diagnosis, offering a complementary element to all pre-existing municipal planning mechanisms.

ANNEXES

Annex I - Brief Analysis of Added Value of Cities of Solidarity as opposed to compared initiatives

Initially, it is relevant to remark that Cities of Solidarity is a established symbol for local integration of refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons among several relevant stakeholders for more than a decade now in the Americas region. When considering the need to propose an “internal mechanism” to the already well-known brand it is also necessary to balance other factors against this notoriety.

CoS is only comparable with a small group of initiatives. In terms of scope, there is no clear overlapping with existing mechanisms. Similar initiatives comprehend Welcoming America’s Certified Welcome, which is based on the offer of a repertoire of good practices aimed at improving the reception of migrant and refugee persons, deeply inspired in the engagement of local communities, private sector actors and organizations. The core idea is to improve local communities’ capacities to improve the reception of newcomers. This approach serves well the initiative, which is mainly focused on one national context, the United States. Emphasis on locality separates from the scope of CoS.

On the other hand, IOM’s Migration Governance Indicators and OECD territorial approach present two solutions for understanding local aspects of social inclusion through a territorial lens. Both applications apply national and regional aggregate data to follow local integration dynamics, often referring to national and international partnerships. In this sense, CoS approach, to dialogue directly with local administration poses different challenges and offers new data and networking possibilities to understand and intervene in local integration dynamics.

Similar territorialized initiatives can be found in other UN agencies, such as UNICEF’s Child Friendly Cities Initiative. Counting with almost 2 thousand certified cities in Brazil, it might suggest a pathway to manage growing numbers of interested cities applying this kind of certification process. As pointed in one interview,

CFCI as applied in its more numerous national contexts, CFCI is human labor intensive, generating demands that involves some 90% of the entire national office operation. CFCI also relies on an electronic platform that inspired to manage this flow, with different internal areas and persons in charge of segmented aspects of the certification. Without thematic overlapping between CoS and CFCI, they also drift apart in their measurement technical challenges. CFCI in Brazil and in different countries follow different specifications, and are adapted to each national context, while the ambition of CoS is to propose balanced degrees of locally oriented indicators and some degree of comparability.

If compared to OECD territorial framework, CoS is more specifically oriented towards the local decision maker, highlighting the role of local partnerships as focal to achieve successful social inclusion. OECD produced dense materials to provide guidance to different stakeholders interested in approaching a territorial perspective of migrant and refugee local integration. In this aspect, it shares similitudes with IOM Migration Governance Indicators. In both cases, emphasis is given to national and international networks of actors, with incidence in the territory. While OECD uses already structured data, aggregated to the subnational scale at regional level, it has not yet dealt with the challenges to gather primary data and produce indicators at local level. This challenge is a major concern of CoS: not only to aim at municipal level as target audience, but also encourage municipal governments to gain institutional capabilities that include some degree, respecting different sizes and current capacities of municipalities, of data gathering and analysis, and turning local administration in the direction of evidence-based policymaking.

A second criteria to determine CoS convenience and identify its benefit is the balance between risks, costs and opportunities. As it already possesses a trajectory in the Americas region that involves certain degree of

local experimentalism, risks attached to a further effort to establish an integrated framework of action using the umbrella of Cities of Solidarity carry small risks for brand credibility. Particularly considering the Americas region, CoS stocked symbolic capital offers the possibility of engagement of group of cities that have already expressed interest in contributing to test and improve the certification process.

This takes to the second element of analysis, CoS, as part of a process with engagement of UNHCR already gathers a relevant group of cities. This sample represent wide institutional, geographical and social urban environments, which vastly facilitates the development of a prototype round immediately, allowing the methodology to be further probed and adjusted, at same time its networking and learning community already is put to work. The idea of running a prototype round also reduces initial costs and provides a laboratory to adjust more delicate aspects of the proposal, such as the testing and selection of most relevant indicators to be adopted to a growingly larger group of participants, before scaling up definitively.

Similar initiatives in terms of scope and thematic proximity deserve to be analyzed under this lens. Intercultural Cities initiative, by the Council of Europe displays very similar features regarding approach to local characteristics and focus on improving municipal institutional behavior. Besides its geographical scope in Europe, the potential of CoS resides in the possibility of its application through time, generating learning curves progressively larger in cities isolated and as spillover effect among participating cities, catalyzed by collective learning networks and environments. Such factors are deeply connected to maintaining close relationship between the progress of the CoS framework and a deeper understanding of UNHCR mandate in relation to urban institutions and challenges in a reciprocally fed process. This also means that the continuous application of the framework creates incentives both for cities and for UNHCR to mature its urban agenda. As for potential future applications, investing in the application and improvement of its own certification mechanism may pave the way to possible integration with other similar tools focused on local government

and different aspects of local integration, some of them also delivered by UN Agencies. Further application of CoS framework has potential added value of serving and framework for different partners, reinforcing its applicability, such as integration to international development financial institutions framework of analysis.

In conclusion, CoS framework as proposed can occupy an empty niche among similar initiatives, benefiting from favorable conditions of support and engagement among participating cities that represent a significant sample of the target audience, with high motivation and relatively low cost in the short run. As analyzed briefly in Annex III, below, such costs may increase quickly and, considerations regarding long run challenges and potentialities of CoS applications should be balanced as soon as possible.

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