



Delivering the Sustainable Development Goals at local and regional level

Recommendations to the European Commission by the subgroup on “SDGs at local and regional level” of the Multi-Stakeholder Platform on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the EU

Subgroup on "Delivering SDGs at local and regional level"

Recommendations

8th June 2018

Foreword

These recommendations were produced in the subgroup "Delivering Sustainable Development Goals at local and regional level" of the multi-stakeholder platform on the implementation of the SDGs in the EU¹. They are based on the contributions made by the subgroup members during their meeting on 16 April 2018 and were adopted on 8 June 2018

- Sub-group members: CEMR, COFACE; Committee of the Regions; Eurocities; EPHA; EEAC; SDG Watch;
- Observers: OECD

Introduction / Background

Local and regional authorities play an important role in implementing the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs objectives, not only SDG 11, but all SDGs and targets. However not all SDGs targets do carry the same relevance at all levels and in all Member States. Local and regional authorities are essential partners towards achieving the SDGs. Many municipalities throughout Europe and globally are raising awareness about the SDGs and are looking for ways to integrate the SDGs into their policy plans: “Local and regional governments around the world consider the 2030 Agenda a once in a generation opportunity to trigger a true universal transformation”².

Territorial dimension

1. Considering the fact most underlying policies and investments are a shared responsibility across levels of government and that about 65% of the 169 targets underlying the 17 SDGs will not be reached without proper engagement of and coordination with local and regional governments³, it is necessary to acknowledge the territorial dimension of the SDGs.
2. It is important to not only focus on the thematic areas, but to apply a territorial approach in implementing the goals, also taking into account the specificities of the territories while at the same time ensuring political coherence through appropriate monitoring of the implementation of all SDGs on the ground.

¹ For further details relating to the platform and its members see https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/international-strategies/global-topics/sustainable-development-goals/multi-stakeholder-platform-sdgs_en.

² UCLG report (2017) on national and sub-national governments on the way towards the localization of the SDGs: https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/localgov_report_localizationsdg_hlpf.pdf

³ UN Sustainable Development Solution Network (2016) Getting Started with the SDGs in Cities. A Guide for Stakeholders <http://unsdsn.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/9.1.8.-Cities-SDG-Guide.pdf>

3. The European Commission should consider the territorial dimension of relevant policies and the consistency with the SDGs, in particular when it comes to EU economic and social governance; for example the annual growth survey could be complemented by an annual sustainable development survey, aligning these two surveys and assessing the impact on each other; and the European Semester with the country specific recommendations could take into account local and regional measures to achieve the SDGs.
4. Local and regional authorities, as well as local civil society, are closest to EU citizens, and are therefore in a position to develop 21st-century service models in line with emerging needs in their communities. EU financial and policy instruments must be used to foster innovation and boost investments in transformative community-based services which support the achievement of the SDGs by 2030.
5. The successful implementation of SDGs requires integrated policies addressing the trade-off between different policy areas and maximising synergies. The European Commission should create an internal task force on SDGs for improving the integration and coordination of European policies and programmes.

Governance

6. The implementation of the SDGs should be driven by vertical and horizontal cooperation: all levels of governance should aim at taking measures to achieve the objectives and involve relevant stakeholders representing citizens, civil society, social partners, business and industry, universities and science, etc.
7. Member States should develop national strategies and involve local and regional governments in the design, shaping, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation process.
8. A permanent dialogue platform at European level should be established in which stakeholders, including representatives of regional and local governments are consulted.
9. Official delegations to the High Level Political Forum should include local and regional representation; Member State representatives should not speak on behalf of local authorities. The EU in its role to report to the HLPF could provide space to local and regional authorities on site.

Monitoring and reporting

10. The voluntary reporting of Member States and the European Commission to the High Level Political Forum should include the perspective of local and regional governments. This is a clear statement of the “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” resolution: “Inclusive regional processes will draw on national-level reviews and contribute to follow-up and review at the global level, including at the High Level Political Forum on sustainable development (HLPF)”.

11. The monitoring and reporting needs to assess the contribution of regional and local levels to avoid distorted results, to allow good analysis and priority setting and contribute to further develop indicators, data and statistics.
12. It still has to be evaluated which indicators are relevant to measure local and regional contributions to the SDGs. The current set of indicators at Member State level has to be widened and local indicators have to be developed.
13. Territorial indicators and disaggregated data are essential to improve government capacity, at all levels, to reach SDGs. Therefore, Eurostat should develop local disaggregated data, working with national statistical offices.
14. Local and regional authorities should be consulted on the indicators, providing input and expertise to check the extent to which the objective addresses a problem for municipalities and the extent to which municipal tasks can contribute toward the overall objective. This will allow developing a catalogue of indicators suitable to municipalities' problems and tasks.
15. We promote the use of online tools, such as the Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities (RFSC), which provide relevant indicators for the subnational level, to assist local and regional governments in the implementation, monitoring and reporting of the progress of the SDGs.
16. More research projects could also be undertaken to help collect data under Horizon 2020, not only for research institutes but also for local authorities
17. The development of a methodology and toolbox for local governments should be supported, and the implementation accompanied and analysed in a number of pilot cities. This could happen with the support of European research programme and the OECD.

Facilitate exchange of experience

18. The EU should build upon the existing efforts and facilitate learning and exchange, and stimulate European cities and municipalities to take (additional) measures to achieve the SDGs. Many local and regional good practices exist and should be widely shared and praised, especially at EU level, to create emulation. Other leading cases exist abroad such as the city of New York, the first city in the world to align and report at the HLPF, submitting a VLR (voluntary local review). European cities would benefit from exchanges and learning from such cases. Social service and policy innovation should be supported in local communities to allow for the systems change needed to achieve the SDGs by 2030. Local leaders, including youth leaders, should be empowered to test new ways of working and upscale successful innovations across the EU.
19. The EU should support national associations of local governments to guide local governments to localise SDGs in a manner that is articulated with the national implementation plans (this both in Europe and in partner countries).
20. European associations of local and regional governments should be supported to accompany their peers in partner countries to assess (potential) impact of forthcoming legislation – the EU partner association being tasked to deliver early

- warning information and to share experiences on impact assessment ex-ante and ex-post.
21. The European multi-stakeholders platform on SDGs should become a permanent body tasked with sharing good practice and knowledge sharing on how to implement SDGs at all levels of governments. Similar platforms exist in some Member States and help all stakeholders to boost their contribution to the implementation to SDGs. The EU may learn from these cases to maximize the efficiency of a permanent multi-stakeholder platform.

