

Chapter 5. A checklist for implementing a territorial approach to the SDGs

This chapter proposes an OECD checklist for Public Action to guide policy makers at all levels of government to implement a territorial approach to the SDGs. The checklist provides action-oriented recommendations on planning, policies and strategies; multi-level governance; financing and budgeting; data and information; and stakeholder engagement. Concrete examples and good practices from leading cities, regions and national governments complement the recommendations and aim to inspire other governments in their efforts to localise the SDGs.

The SDGs represent a comprehensive framework to promote synergies and manage trade-offs across sectoral policies in an integrated manner, to engage all actors in the policymaking process, both internally from the local, regional or national administrations and from the non-governmental sphere. They also provide a framework to monitor progress and set more ambitious targets as well as create accountability with the local population.

The first four chapters of the report have showcased how cities and regions are increasingly using the SDGs to design, shape and implement their development strategies, policies and plans. This final chapter presents a Checklist for Public Action directed to governments at all levels to facilitate the implementation of a territorial approach to the SDGs. The checklist provides action-oriented recommendations around five main categories that emerged as key pillars for a territorial approach to the SDGs, namely: i) planning, policies and strategies; ii) multi-level governance; iii) financing and budgeting; iv) data and information; and v) engagement. The checklist also presents some examples and good practices on how to implement the recommendations, both from the pilots of the OECD programme and other cities and regions.

Planning, policies and strategies

- Define and shape local and regional development visions, strategies, plans and re-orient existing ones using the SDGs as a guiding framework, taking into account pressing and emerging challenges posed by megatrends such as climate and demographic change, urbanisation, digitalisation and globalisation.
- Use the SDGs to promote synergies and manage trade-offs among sectoral policies and across levels of government in order to overcome silos and fragmentation, linking social, economic and environmental dimensions either at the goal or target level.
- Use the SDGs to address concrete local challenges that require a holistic approach to fit for the future, such as clean forms of urban mobility, affordable housing, gender equality, access to green spaces, balanced urban development, clean water and sanitation, air quality, solid waste management, territorial inequalities or service delivery.
- Identify place-based priorities through a participatory and multi-stakeholder process. Cities, regions and national governments should prioritise issues based on the SDGs and relevant to their territorial specificities. When identifying place-based priorities, the indivisibility and interconnectedness of the SDGs should always be considered.
- When implementing the SDGs, combine stakeholder engagement with scientific tools and evidence-based analysis to prioritise actions, manage trade-offs and guide decisions. The development of a matrix that shows the interconnectedness of the SDGs and impacts of decisions in one area on the others, is a key tool to that effect.
- Mainstream the SDGs in the design and implementation of international co-operation activities, where they exist. For instance, decentralised development co-operation programmes could be shaped around the SDGs where the city/region has a comparative advantage and strongest potential for knowledge sharing and peer-to-peer exchange, building on existing networks.

Box 5.1. Selected examples from cities and regions on the “Planning, policies and strategies” pillar

The **city of Bonn, Germany**, has gone through a comprehensive process to localise the SDGs through its new Sustainability Strategy. The 2030 Agenda is seen as an opportunity to bring together the city’s global responsibility agenda with actions promoting sustainable development within the city itself. As such, the Sustainability Strategy was designed to respond to key challenges and strengths of the city, for which some SDGs were identified as particularly relevant. For instance, promoting clean air and reducing CO₂ emissions are high on the political agenda in Bonn. As several other German cities, Bonn is struggling to reduce NO₂ levels to comply with European norms. This is particularly challenging in light of Bonn’s growing population and persistently high rates of individual motorised vehicle traffic in the city, due to – among other things – high commuting flows. Mobility is thus a hot topic in the public debate. Increasing rents and housing prices, with implications on housing affordability, are other challenges dealt with by the city within the confined city limits and the desire to keep green spaces intact (50% of the city’s surface are protected green areas).

The **region of Southern Denmark** has been incorporating the SDGs in the new Regional Development Strategy (2020-23). The overall concept of well-being and quality of life, the six strategy tracks, the specific regional goals and as well as the action of the region are linked to specific SDGs and are designed to contribute to their achievement. In particular, the region has decided to focus on 11 goals that are mostly relevant in their context: SDG 3 on health, SDG 4 on education, SDG 5 on gender, SDG 6 on water, SDG 7 on clean energy, SDG 9 on industry and infrastructure, SDG 10 on inequalities, SDG 11 on SDGs, SDG 12 on sustainable consumption, SDG 13 on climate and SDG 14 on life below water. The regional government has followed a thorough participatory process to engage local stakeholders in the development of this new Regional Development Strategy. This includes a public consultation process with local municipalities, education institutions, museums and other interested parties, a dedicated “Consultation Conference” opened to the public and a dedicated consultation with partners on the German side of the Danish-German border.

The **province of Córdoba, Argentina**, is using the 2030 Agenda to improve the effectiveness and impact of its governmental action. The provincial government considers sustainability a key principle guiding provincial policies, which aim to build a “sustainable state” enabling all the inhabitants of the province to enjoy a better quality of life. The government has aligned the three axes of governmental action – social justice, sustainable economic growth and institutional strengthening – with the SDGs and will continue to push its strong social inclusion agenda. In particular, the province has prioritised SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 10 relating to poverty, food security, education, health, gender and inequalities. At the same time, to make the most of the interconnected and holistic framework of the 2030 Agenda, the province has developed a matrix to identify and measure the synergies and the trade-offs among those SDGs driving social inclusion and others.

The **Basque Country, Spain**, has developed the Agenda Euskadi Basque Country 2030 to align this administration’s governmental programme and related sectoral policies to the SDGs. This document localises the SDGs to the territorial characteristics of the Basque Country. It also aims to provide a common language to enhance co-ordination in public action among sectoral departments in the Basque government. In this sense, the General

Secretariat of the President’s Office is responsible for co-ordinating the implementation of the agenda in the Basque Country and the General Secretariat of Foreign Affairs to foster partnerships and exchange on ways forward for its implementation with other regions, countries and international organisations. An annual monitoring report is expected to document the achievements and distance to the SDGs targets, with discussions in regional parliament.

Multi-level governance

- Use the SDGs as a framework to align policy priorities, incentives, objectives across national, regional and local governments.
- Develop capacity-building programmes across government levels – including for public officials in the administration – in cities and regions of all sizes. National enabling frameworks and knowledge-sharing platforms can help to spread frontrunners’ models that can be replicated at sub-national level.
- Consider the relevance and transformative nature of SDGs to assess and improve existing governance frameworks and test new governance models towards more holistic and bottom-up policymaking. The concept of “planetary boundaries” can help to identify more sustainable solutions.
- Engage regions and cities in the process of Voluntary National Reviews to strengthen vertical co-ordination, facilitate multi-level dialogue around success stories and persistent challenges, and encourage the SDG monitoring at the subnational level to unpack regional disparities and go beyond national average. Where they exist, use Voluntary Local Reviews as an opportunity to drive better multi-level governance of the SDGs by shedding light on local initiatives, developing indicator frameworks that allow for national and subnational measurement and increasing international visibility.
- In countries where national territorial reforms are planned or in place, consider the relevance of the SDGs to build a common vision and identity in implementing the reform and to promote co-operation across administrative borders to address critical issues at the most appropriate scale.

Box 5.2. Selected examples from cities and regions on the “Multi-level governance” pillar

Japan has expanded its SDGs Action Plan 2018 to increase national support to local governments. The second pillar of the Action Plan on “regional revitalisation” focuses mainly on the localisation of the SDGs through its Future Cities initiative comprising 29 local governments, 10 of which have been selected as SDG Model Cities and are receiving financial support by the national government to implement their SDG strategies. The initiative also promotes the establishment of SDG local governance structures following the national “SDGs Promotion Headquarters” headed by the Prime Minister within the Cabinet Office. The national Action Plan also includes the Public-Private SDGs Platform, chaired by the mayor of Kitakyushu. Considered a “model city” within the selection process, Kitakyushu was one of the first cities in Japan to put in place an SDG Future City Promotion Headquarters, headed by the Mayor. The SDGs Headquarters guides

the rest of the city administration in the implementation of the SDGs. Other institutional structures put in place are the SDG Council and SDGs Club, and promoting multi-stakeholder engagement on the SDGs (see further below).

Germany is drawing on previous experiences with Local Agenda 21 to provide technical and financial support to municipalities to implement the SDGs through a multi-level government framework, including the Service Agency Communities in One World (SKEW) of Engagement Global and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Since 2017, SKEW has supported municipalities in eight states (*Länder*) to localise the SDGs through the lighthouse project Municipalities for Global Sustainability. A key feature of this project is the involvement of all levels of government, from the national to state and local levels, while connecting with international governance agencies such as the United Nations. In the city of Bonn, support from the national lighthouse project has translated into a local sustainability strategy with six prioritised fields of municipal action. The strategy will help the city to effectively localise the SDGs and to face a number of key sustainable development challenges such as affordable housing, sustainable transport and maintaining the city's green areas. It also helps to promote Bonn's new profile as a UN City. In the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), the project enabled 15 municipalities and administrative districts to develop local sustainability strategies incorporating the SDGs and aligned with federal and state ones.

Flanders, Belgium, has set up innovative governance models to implement the SDGs holistically. This new governance structure is based on transition management principles, namely: system innovation, taking a long-term perspective, involving stakeholders through partnerships, engaging in co-creation and learning from experiments. The model is moving away from the pyramidal, top-down and hierarchical structure of the public administration towards "transition spaces", which are managed by teams composed of transition managers from the public administration, responsible ministers and external stakeholders, including experts, private sector representatives and civil society. Together, the transition spaces form a network that connects the micro level (multi-stakeholder partners) with the macro level (the Flemish government). By experimenting through innovation systems, the Flemish government aims to identify state-of-the-art practices. One example is Circular Flanders, where around 50 facilitators help to connect procurers with over 100 projects that provide circular economy products and services.

Paraná, Brazil, is establishing partnership agreements to implement the SDGs with the 399 municipalities. Since the beginning of the Social and Economic Development Council of Paraná's (CEDES) mandate in 2016, mayors have mobilised to ensure the involvement of municipalities. By November 2019, 16 out of 19 regional associations and 315 municipalities had engaged with the state to join a municipal capacity-building strategy. In parallel, Paraná is also strengthening its financial support to municipalities to help them advance the implementation of the SDGs. For instance, cities can access specific funding for institutional strengthening programmes and investments in urban infrastructure. The state is also working on the identification of local, national and international partners that can expand the funding base to support municipalities in their localisation efforts.

Financing and budgeting

- Mainstream the SDGs in budgeting processes to ensure adequate resources are allocated for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to foster policy continuity across political cycles. Governments should allocate financial resources based on the identified place-based policy priorities and key local challenges, and use the SDGs framework as a means to foster integrated multi-sectoral programmes and priorities.
- Use the SDGs to attract new investors by including their perspective early on in the local economic development process. This can contribute to strengthen the role of the private sector as a solution provider and to align priorities between public and private actors.
- Mainstream sustainability criteria in public procurement to achieve economic, social and environmental outcomes aligned with the SDGs. To maximise this potential, public procurement offices need to be aware of the potential benefits of sustainable public procurement (SPP) and the mindset and rules/regulations of “lowest price only” needs to change. Clear criteria to promote sustainability should be formulated and applied in SPP.
- Put in place and expand support structures to enable and promote SPP at the local level. Supranational- and national-level organisations and governments should act as positive examples and directly promote and support local SPP practices, as well as work towards coherence in the multi-level efforts towards SPP.

Box 5.3. Selected examples from cities and regions for the “Financing and budget” pillar

In the **United Kingdom, Bristol** has established a new mechanism to harness the resources needed locally to implement the SDGs. The Bristol City Funds is a mixed funding mechanism that provides loans and grants to deliver key priorities under the One City Plan. The funds operate as a source of investment and grant funding to support projects that will help transform Bristol and achieve the SDGs. Bristol City Council is also considering how to leverage the potential of its procurement policy to advance the implementation of the SDGs. The Social Value Act in 2012 required cities to embed social value into its procurement policy. Today, the city has mapped the targets, outcomes and measures against the SDGs to demonstrate how it can contribute towards the city’s SDG commitments.

In the **city of Mannheim, Germany**, the 2030 Mission Statement describes how the city is implementing the SDGs at the local level and progress expected by 2030. Building on the city’s vision to leave no one behind, Mannheim has actively involved its population in framing the vision statement through a participatory approach. More than 2 500 citizens were directly involved in one of the 50 workshops carried out while a further 10 000 contributing via opinion polls. This vision subsequently served as the foundation for Mannheim’s budget planning in March 2019. The new budget planning is currently being discussed and will be based on the new city strategy Mannheim 2030, including its 126 impact goals and 412 local indicators developed throughout the process.

Data and information

- Use data and qualitative information (e.g. storytelling, community of practices) to showcase the performance and positive stories of cities and regions on the SDGs. User-friendly open data portals can help increase the transparency of the actions towards the SDGs, where contributions by different actors can be showcased.
- Leverage SDGs data and localised indicator systems to guide policies and actions for better people's lives. In particular, for more comprehensive assessment and policy responses, cities and regions should combine data and indicators at different scales, from those related to administrative boundaries (the unit for political and administrative action) to those related to functional approaches (the economic geography of where people live and work).
- Strengthen the indicators systems to monitor progress across levels of government on SDGs, and to guide future policies and actions. The SDGs offer an integrated framework to improve monitoring and evaluation culture at all levels of government. Ensuring that data sources are consistent, and therefore indicators comparable, is an important way to strengthen the measurement and accountability.
- Constantly strive to document better local and regional performance to unpack regional disparities and go beyond national average. This implies pushing forward the statistical frontier to allow cities and regions to measure progress for all SDGs where they have core competencies or prerogatives as well as to use the indicators to start a policy dialogue with their stakeholders and peers.

Box 5.4. Selected examples from cities and regions on the “Data and information” pillar

In **Kópavogur, Iceland**, the municipality follows a data-driven approach to localising the SDGs and is developing indices to monitor the implementation process. The SDGs were formally adopted in 2018 as part of the municipality's comprehensive strategy where 15 SDGs and 36 targets have been prioritised. The aim of the strategy is to ensure residents' quality of life, improve efficiency and participate in the global effort towards sustainability. The implementation of the strategy is systemic, as it will be realised through strategic action plans tied to the annual budget that will be revisited yearly. Following the certification of the ISO 9001 quality management standard, the municipality developed a data warehouse with around 50 local databases. This was the first investment in data-driven infrastructure to improve policymaking. To further strengthen the municipality data developments, the information technology (IT) office has developed an innovative management and information system: Mælkó. The main functions of Mælkó are to link performance indicators to tasks and goals to follow-up on the progress of plans and projects and to create composite SDGs indices. The municipality has created a databank of around 250 performance indicators to choose from to monitor progress towards the SDGs, including the ISO 37120, the Social Progress Index scorecard and the newly developed Child-friendly City Index. However, the municipality will also draw on its local context-specific indicators, other comparable Icelandic indicators and the results of the OECD pilot to complement its indicator framework.

In **Viken, Norway**, the new county administration, taking office as of 1 January 2020, was tasked to develop a comprehensive baseline study of regional trends – the “Knowledge Base” – using the SDGs as an overarching framework. The Knowledge Base includes

indicators showing social development trends that relate to all the SDGs and help the county to prioritise actions and targets while monitoring progress towards the SDGs. While county and municipal level data is rather well developed in Norway, the Knowledge Base may incorporate indicators that are currently not available at the regional and municipal levels. These include for example waste management in other sectors than private households (SDG 12), such as the construction sector, which is estimated to make up 25% of total waste in the county. The knowledge base is also seen as an instrument to inform strategic planning. For example, the political Joint County Board for Viken prescribed some specific uses of the Knowledge Base, including informing the formation of new inter-municipal political boards based on functional and socioeconomic regions, as well as opportunities for smart specialisation. Such analyses are essential in the context of Viken, where geographic “mismatches” between the national and subnational levels lead to a complex system of territorial governance with overlapping functions and administrative borders.

The **city of Moscow, Russian Federation**, is localising the UN indicator framework for SDGs to define the set of targets and indicators that are the most relevant at the local level, to enhance co-ordination with the federal government and to benchmark Moscow vis-à-vis other peer cities of OECD countries. Some of the SDG indicators are now being used in city programmes and the local government is planning to use them to define concrete values to achieve by 2030. Moreover, the process for the development of the City Index by the Ministry of Economic Development, Rosstat (Russian federal statistical office) and VEB.RF (Russian state development corporation) represents an opportunity to measure the SDGs using place-based indicators as well as to actively engage cities and regions in the development of the index. Currently VEB.RF is also working with Moscow to promote its data-driven approach to implement the SDGs in other Russian cities.

Engagement

- Use the SDGs as a vehicle to enhance accountability and transparency through engaging all territorial stakeholders, including civil society, citizens, youth, academia and private companies, in the policy-making process. Co-design and implement visions and strategies with territorial stakeholders, in a bottom-up and participatory way to enhance accountability and transparency in the policymaking process.
- Use a combination of various tools to engage territorial stakeholders, such as raising awareness about the SDGs, providing networking opportunities, de-risking investments in SDG solutions through grants or loans, or fiscal incentive for innovative solutions towards sustainability.
- Use the SDGs as a tool for “public service motivation” by linking the daily work of the staff in the administration to the achievement of global goals. This can also help to attract new staff in key services such as pre-school education and social services.
- Support private sector contribution to the SDGs through incentivising public-private partnerships as well as the engagement of private companies in the definition and implementation of local and regional strategies and actions towards sustainability.

- Identify and put in place appropriate frameworks and knowledge-sharing opportunities to support and scale up initiatives that involve stakeholders such as schools, civil society, the private sector and academia in the implementation of the SDGs in a more systemic way.

Box 5.5. Selected examples from cities and regions on the “Engagement” pillar

Youth engagement in the 2030 Agenda is sometimes formalised through youth councils. This has been the case in **Belgium (Flanders), Iceland and Norway (Viken)**, where youth councils have been active in the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. In the Norwegian context, one key strength of the youth councils is their direct access to policymakers, to whom they can present their own proposals without any intermediary. The new youth council in Viken is proactively proposing solutions to help the county administration reach out to youth and inform them about the SDGs, including through social media platforms and by holding information sessions in schools. The Flemish Youth Council has also been an active voice in the SDGs. In 2018, members of the youth council participated in a Belgian youth delegation (together with the Wallonia youth council) to the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) in New York, where they spoke about the involvement of the youth council in the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process for example, delivering the message to policymakers to: “stop thinking of us as the future and start thinking of us as actors of today” (Van Hoyweghen, 2018^[1]). In Iceland, a youth council specifically for the SDGs was set up by the Prime Minister’s Office as a channel to engage youth in the Inter-Ministerial Working Group’s work on the SDGs. Their statement to the government was published in the 2019 VNR of Iceland, highlighting the importance of increased attention to mental health among youth and to issues such as waste management, wetland restoration and limiting the development of heavy industries.

Paraná, Brazil, is promoting agreements with the private sector and civil society to implement the SDGs. The state is using the “*Paraná de Olho nos ODS*” (Paraná keeping an eye in the SDGs) pledge to gain public support from a wide variety of institutions including state, private sector and civil society actors. The pledge encourages institutions to mainstream the 2030 Agenda in their internal functioning and to engage with other partners. Paraná also works to strengthen communication between governments and civil society to better engage citizens in the implementation of the SDGs. For instance, the SDGs art project uses artistic and cultural manifestations to stimulate dialogue on the 2030 Agenda.

The **city of Bonn, Germany**, initiated the campaign “SDG Days – 17 Days for 17 Goals” to engage partners such as UN organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other local initiatives. It was successfully launched in 2018, with at least one event on SDGs taking place every day for 17 days. In 2019, the motto changed to “17 Events for the 17 Goals”. The core objectives are to make the SDGs and the work done in Bonn more visible to citizens and to advocate for wider support in the implementation process. Some of the events taking place during the 17 days include bike tours around sustainable projects in Bonn, an evening walk to urban gardening projects, SDG poetry slams and pub quizzes as well as special events on topics such as biodiversity conservation or migration. Moreover, Bolivia and Ghana are key partners in the city’s international co-operation activities and, as a result, they are also involved in these events. In 2018, a Ghanaian dance

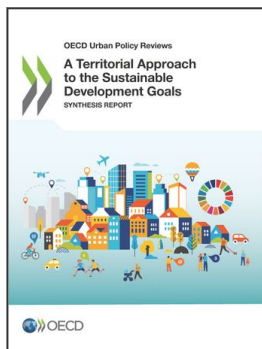
theatre conducted a performance and several workshops and in 2019, an artist from Bolivia was invited to join the special event “One World Construction Site”.

The **city of Kitakyushu, Japan**, is building on its strong tradition of civil society engagement in local policies and actions to move forward the implementation of the SDGs. In the 1960s, a group of women’s associations came together to demand stricter regulation for pollution coming from the city’s heavy industries. Partnerships between the local government, civil society and the industries eventually helped to clean up the skies and sea surrounding the city. To build on this tradition, the city has currently set up a Kitakyushu City SDGs Council, which is expected to provide advice on the actions and directions regarding the implementation of the SDGs through the engagement of various stakeholders from civil society, private sector, finance and academia. The council consists of eight experts from environmental, economic and social fields. The city also created the Kitakyushu SDG Club, where anyone in the city can participate, and quickly gaining over 800 members.

The **province of Córdoba, Argentina**, has co-produced a matrix together with territorial stakeholders to identify and measure the synergies and the trade-offs among social and other SDGs. The political priority of the province of Córdoba on SDGs is to provide continuity to the social inclusion agenda and to the work on well-being. For this reason, the province of Córdoba has prioritised social SDGs (i.e. SDGs 1 to 5 and 10) and co-produced a matrix to identify the drivers of social inclusions and measure the links between environmental/economic SDGs and social SDGs. Over 200 stakeholders from the public, private, not-for-profit and academic sectors have worked on identifying the links between targets and ranking the intensity of the links. The matrix now allows for identifying the key sectors that can drive the social inclusion agenda in the province, to prioritise them, promote synergies and manage trade-offs.

Reference

Van Hoyweghen, N. (2018), “Zouden meer jongeren op een VN-top geen goede zaak zijn voor iedereen?”, <https://vlaamsejeugdraad.be/blog/zouden-meer-jongeren-op-een-vn-top-geen-goede-zaak-zijn-voor-iedereen> (accessed on 14 January 2019).



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