

European territories localise the SDGs

Getting local SDG actions onto the fast track



2025



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Foreword

By **Clifford Galea Vella Maslennikov**
President of the Tramuntana Region (Malta)
Malta High Commissioner to Namibia
Member of the CEMR-PLATFORMA Young Elected Officials Committee



Getting local SDG actions onto the fast track

This year marks the passing of several key achievements of global significance: the 10-year milestone of the Paris Agreement on climate change and the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration advancing women's rights. Global agendas operate in parallel, which means that crucial big picture connections need to be continually made if the SDGs are to be optimally achieved on the ground, and this can only be done by keeping the subnational level involved throughout this process.

European local and regional governments (LRGs) are not immune from the impact of global trends, which can ultimately threaten their ability to deliver on long-term sustainable development objectives on their territories. Faced with the multiple challenges of inflation, increases in the cost of living, geopolitical uncertainties and complex security challenges on top of a dire housing crisis and extreme climate events, municipalities, provinces and regions in Europe are all struggling to balance achieving global sustainability objectives with ensuring their capacity to deliver high-quality public services that continue to run smoothly every day.

Since Malta last participated in COP29 in Baku, it has moved up three places in the country ranking to #24 out of 34 European nations in the 2025 Europe Sustainable Development Report¹. Yet, while Malta has made significant strides, it still has an uphill climb ahead similar to what is being faced by other European countries: urbanisation, social challenges, a sustainable development vision for 2050, complexities tied to housing and urban development, land-use planning, citizens' well-being, promoting cross-sector collaboration and taking action on SDGs.

These challenges continue to underscore the critical role played by LRGs as the level of governance closest to citizens and the key actors ideally placed to address these crises. LRGs are uniquely qualified to develop solutions that effectively respond to the diverse needs of their communities, irrespective of local contexts. With only 17% of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) currently on track and, according to the OECD, 65% of the SDG targets achievable only through strong local and regional actions, the message is unmistakable. Moreover, with 70% of global emissions originating from cities, more attention and resources need to be directed toward these LRG-managed territories. The SDGs offer a timely and vital framework for driving a successful post-crisis recovery. Now, with less than 5 years until 2030, there is no time for inaction and the path forward is clear: we must confront these substantial challenges and seize any opportunities to decisively speed up our actions and hasten our progress.

¹ This report, published by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and the University of Dublin, highlights Malta's upward progress from 27th place in the previous report. <https://eu-dashboards.sdgindex.org/>

However, to do so, local and regional governments must first be empowered to act. To effectively implement the SDGs, LRGs need to be equipped with all the resources necessary for them to deliver on their mandate: financial, human, know-how, legal support framework, tools, etc. Without these resources, subnational governments may struggle to deliver on their mandate of providing concrete solutions and improving inhabitants' daily life—even though it is for this very reason that citizens elect local governments.

The commitment at the local level to sustainable development is remarkably high. In July 2025, Malta will be presenting its second Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the SDGs at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in New York. Prepared by the Sustainable Development Directorate in collaboration with local authorities, civil society, the private sector, academia and citizens, the review will examine the country's progress and identify the sectors in need of improvement in view of enhancing their political and institutional effectiveness.

Mirroring global trends, Malta has undergone significant changes such as rapid urbanisation, with over 77% of people now residing in urban areas, and an ageing population, with a median age of 40.7 years. The UN projects that, by 2050, 68% of the world's population will live in cities, up from 50% today. This demographic shift will bring about many daunting challenges, such as fragmented urban planning, a rise in pluralism and a dearth of affordable housing. Malta, as well as the rest of Europe, will need to address these issues if it is to successfully adapt to its changing social and environmental landscape.

Malta's Sustainable Development Vision for 2050 sets a clear path for the nation's future, focusing on energy-efficient housing, urban development and social inclusion. However, as it currently stands, the vision does not attach enough import to social planning and the need for infrastructure that successfully responds to both urban diversity and well-being. Malta's voluntary efforts at national and local levels to achieve the SDGs are multidimensional, with a significant focus on public-private partnerships, community engagement and governmental policies on sustainability.

While Malta and the whole of Europe contend with new global dynamics, the entire United Nations community has been getting preparations underway in view of the upcoming HLPF, which will continue exploring how best to accelerate efforts to meet the existing international commitments and determining concrete steps to be taken in response to emerging global challenges and opportunities. The action-oriented Pact for the Future, adopted at the last SDG summit in September 2024, will help guide the approach employed by Member States to implement the global challenges on the ground.

However, these ambitions are attempting flight at a time when development cooperation is under increasing pressure. Significant cuts in development aid across several EU Member States, along with the recent suspension of USAID funding globally, risk undermining efforts to localise and accelerate SDG implementation. At the same time, tensions are growing between short-term geopolitical and economic interests and the need to uphold a values-based approach that prioritises humanitarian support—especially for the most vulnerable, such as those in fragile and conflict-affected areas who are most dependent on international solidarity, such as women and children.

Navigating this tension requires a more balanced and principled approach to ensure that long-term development goals are not compromised for short-term strategic gains. Without an unrelenting commitment and resources, the consequences will be perceptible across all areas of the 2030 Agenda—from ending hunger and advancing gender equality to promoting inclusive governance and upholding democratic values.

Given the broader worldwide trends, the critical transitions we are facing—in food systems, energy access, digitalisation, education, job creation, biodiversity and climate—cannot be effectively managed from a global perspective alone.

I firmly believe that localising the SDGs through inclusive processes that engage all levels of government and all sectors of society—with special attention to youth and vulnerable groups—is not only essential to fulfilling the 2030 Agenda, but is in fact the key to building a more inclusive, just, and sustainable future for all.

Let us work together to advance the localisation of these global goals, resolutely and in partnership.

Respondents

This publication is based on a survey involving 31 respondents, comprised of associations of local and/or regional governments, from 16 EU countries and 7 non-EU countries.

Countries from which associations of local and regional governments responded in 2025:

- Austria:** Austrian Association of Cities and Towns (AACT);
- Belgium:** Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG), Association of the City and the Municipalities of the Brussels-Capital Region (Brulocalis), Union of Cities and Municipalities of Wallonia (UVCW);
- Bulgaria:** National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria (NAMRB);
- Czech Republic:** Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic (SMO ČR);
- Estonia:** Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities (AECM);
- Finland:** Association of Finnish Cities and Municipalities (AFCM) ;
- France:** Cités Unies France (CUF);
- Georgia:** National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia (NALAG);
- Germany:** Association of German Cities (DST), German County Association (DLT);
- Latvia:** Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments (LALRG);
- Luxembourg:** Association of Luxembourg Cities and Municipalities (SYVICOL);
- Malta:** Local Councils' Association (LCA);
- Moldova:** Congress of Local Authorities of Moldova (CALM);
- Netherlands:** International Cooperation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG International);
- North Macedonia:** Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS);
- Norway:** Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS);
- Portugal:** National Association of Portuguese Municipalities (ANMP);
- Serbia:** Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SKGO);
- Slovenia:** Association of Urban Municipalities of Slovenia (ZMOS-SI);
- Spain:** Barcelona Provincial Council (DIBA), Euskal Fundoa/Basque Local Authorities Cooperation Fund and eLankidetza – Basque Government Development Cooperation Agency (EUSKADI – Basque Country), Majorcan Fund for Solidarity and Cooperation (FMSC), Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP);
- Sweden:** Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR);
- Ukraine:** Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC);
- United Kingdom:** Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), Local Government Association of England and Wales (LGA).

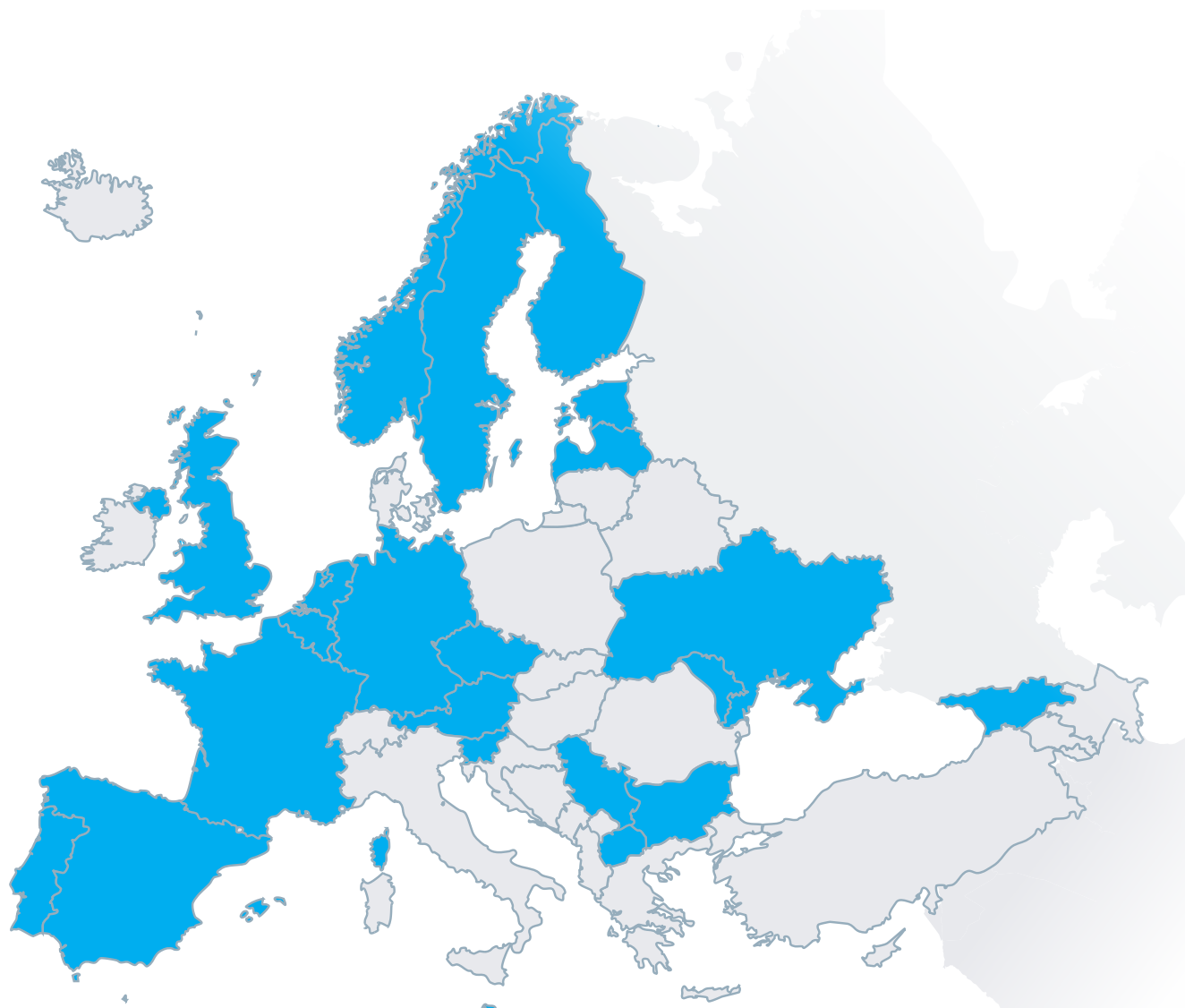


Figure 1. Countries from which associations of local and regional governments responded

- 23** European countries
- 31** responses
- 23** EU local and regional government associations
- 8** non-EU local and regional government associations



"Localising the SDGs through inclusive processes that engage all levels of government and all sectors of society is in fact the key to building a more inclusive, just, and sustainable future for all".

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Our 9 key recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1



United Nations



European Union



European Union Member States

Achieving the 2030 Agenda within the prescribed period is what hangs in the balance, but greater support for local and regional levels may prove decisive in tipping the scale. CEMR-PLATFORMA have reaffirmed their commitment to the 2030 Agenda—both within Europe and worldwide—by **fostering partnerships** that prioritise innovation, peer-to-peer collaboration, capacity-building, mentorship and a governance model rooted in partnership and decentralised cooperation.²

RECOMMENDATION 2



United Nations



European Union



European Union Member States

Effectively implementing the 2030 Agenda at subnational level necessitates local and regional governments having sufficient **autonomy, resources and means of action**. This is particularly crucial in terms of ensuring the meaningful inclusion of **youth and vulnerable groups** in decision-making processes and any other germane activities that contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

RECOMMENDATION 3



United Nations



European Union



European Union Member States

Localising equality is no longer an option but a necessity in 2025, all the more so as we all the more so as we commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing. We need to act now for a future where women's leadership and gender equality are realities, not aspirations.

RECOMMENDATION 4



European Union



European Union Member States

The subnational level needs to be granted a **stronger political voice in decision-making arenas** and frameworks by the European Union institutions and national governments. This can be done by creating a political space through the establishment of **regular, structured dialogue with subnational actors** and by ensuring the inclusion of local and regional elected representatives in national and EU delegations to high-level meetings.

² Development cooperation between subnational governments. To learn more, see "Decentralised cooperation to achieve the 2030 Agenda – Towards a new generation of multi-stakeholder partnerships", by Agustí Fernández de Losada Passols and Anna Calvete Moreno, CPMR-PLATFORMA 2018 PLATFORMA-Position-paper-on-the-MFF_-2025-final.pdf

RECOMMENDATION 5



The Summit of the Future marked a pivotal moment in September 2024—presenting both significant global challenges and opportunities—but ultimately securing the place of the subnational level and giving it a voice on this world stage. With respect to the Advisory Group on Local and Regional Governments, created at the UN Secretary General's initiative, it has played a vital contributory role, issuing recommendations for the long term and ensuring that the **subnational dimension continues to be fully recognised and valued in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda**. This recognition of their critical role should continue to be the core rationale for their systematic inclusion in this process.

RECOMMENDATION 6



Place local and regional governments in the driver seat of territorial development and **prioritise capacity development, decentralisation and multi-level governance**. To secure the long-term sustainability of EU investments through the Global Gateway, greater emphasis should be placed on strengthening local governments, decentralisation reforms and multilevel governance. Increasing technical support for LRGs will improve their access to funding, lending mechanisms and investment planning. Strengthening ties with the private sector and using decentralised cooperation as a tool will further ensure that funding is tailored to local realities. A clear mandate along with powers and responsibilities exercised by all layers of government will make it easier to work on transparency, accountability and predictability, through defined procedures and regulations. This will lead to greater sustainability of investments made by the EU.³

RECOMMENDATION 7



Recognise **LRGs as unique and effective partners³ in fragile contexts** and create dedicated programming for LRGs and their European partners to provide ongoing support to populations in urgent need. LRGs are often the only functioning public institutions delivering essential services, humanitarian aid and disaster response in fragile and conflict-affected areas. In situations where national governments may struggle to act, LRGs can ensure continuity of governance and social stability. They are key partners in strengthening community resilience, peacebuilding and crisis recovery. Through city diplomacy and local government associations, LRGs can maintain open communication channels, fostering cooperation even in highly polarised political environments.

RECOMMENDATION 8



Strengthen **institutional mechanisms for gender equality** to support structural change. CEMR has long advocated for the integration of intersectionality⁴ in local and regional governance to ensure that policies address multiple forms of discrimination. The European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life⁵ remains an essential tool for municipalities committed to gender mainstreaming. Outside of Europe, **decentralised cooperation** opens up opportunities to advance gender equality through international partnerships.

RECOMMENDATION 9



National governments and the EU need to accelerate the localisation and territorialisation of the SDGs. To do so, **the systematic inclusion and active participation of local and regional governments** is essential. LRGs continue to feel inadequately utilised in the SDG implementation process. Voluntary National Reviews should incorporate the perspectives of subnational government associations since the process cannot be considered complete without LRG involvement in the monitoring and reporting of SDG progress.

³ PLATFORMA position paper adopted in April on the EU MFF: (<http://bit.ly/2S0zgPy>)

⁴ https://ccre-cemr.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/CEMR_Intersectionality_EN.pdf

⁵ <https://charter-equality.eu/the-charter/la-presidence-en.html>



1. Introduction

Local and regional governments continue to make headway localising the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁶, adopted in 2015, along with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The present CEMR-PLATFORMA⁷ study reporting on this progress will be presented at this year's HLPF, whose 2025 theme is *Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind*.

This report (along with an Annex⁸ of over 150 examples) is based on a survey jointly conducted by CEMR, PLATFORMA⁹ and UCLG¹⁰ in February 2025. Its purpose was to collect the most recent information on how, and to what extent, local and regional government associations (LRGAs) and networks have been involved in localising the SDGs, both in Europe and with their global peers. Since 2016, these studies have been produced every year and are then presented at the UN High-Level Political Forum.¹¹

The HLPF is the central global platform for review and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2025 edition will be conducting an in-depth review of five goals: SDG 3, SDG 5, SDG 8, SDG 14 and SDG 17¹². Our survey this year of European LRGAs therefore included questions looking at inspiring practices connected to the five SDGs under review as well as the nature of any cooperation between our members and their national governments to produce Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).

Of the 37 countries¹³ presenting a VNR at the 2025 HLPF on their implementation of the 2030 Agenda, 6 are CEMR members. This year's UN General Assembly in September promises to be especially relevant as the Advisory Group on Local and Regional Governments' will be presenting to Member States its recommendations based on the Pact for the Future, the document presenting the main outcomes from the 2024 Summit of the Future¹⁴, on how to better address global challenges.

⁶ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>

⁷ CEMR-PLATFORMA's HLPF reports from previous years are available online at: <https://platforma-dev.eu/our-publications/>

⁸ <https://platforma-dev.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/SDG-REPORT-2025-annex.pdf>

⁹ <https://platforma-dev.eu/our-publications/>

¹⁰ UCLG coordinated with all its regional sections to produce a parallel global report on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Along with its previous reports, it will be available at <https://gold.uclg.org/report/localizing-sdgs-boost-monitoring-reporting>.

¹¹ CEMR-PLATFORMA's HLPF reports from previous years are available online at: <https://platforma-dev.eu/our-publications/>.

¹² SDG 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages; SDG 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; SDG 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all; SDG 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development; SDG 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

¹³ Angola, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bhutan, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Finland, Gambia (Republic of the), Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Lesotho, Malaysia, Malta, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Lucia, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Suriname and Thailand.

¹⁴ <https://www.un.org/en/summit-of-the-future>



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2. Why local and regional governments matter?

1. Local relevance and ownership

Policies designed at the national or global level often overlook the unique social, cultural, environmental and economic characteristics of local areas. Decentralising decision-making helps tailor solutions to real needs on the ground.

2. Greater efficiency and accountability

Local governments are usually best placed to track progress, engage with communities and adjust strategies dynamically. Their proximity induces increased accountability and responsiveness.

3. Community engagement and innovation

When people are given a say in shaping policy, they are more likely to support and sustain real change. Local actors often engender innovative, context-sensitive solutions that are sometimes simply beyond the cognizance of national or international bodies.

4. Cross-sectoral coordination

Many SDG targets—like those relating to water, education, health and sustainable cities—require coordination across sectors that naturally develops more organically at local levels.

5. Statistical reality

Given that 65% of SDG targets cannot be met without local and regional actors, it goes without saying that achieving the 17 SDGs is dependent upon LRG involvement; it is therefore not merely a nice-to-have element, it is mission-critical.



3. Dialogue with Member States on 2025 Voluntary National Reports

The SDGs serve as a comprehensive global roadmap for sustainable development. In many municipalities, this vision is already materialising, as evidenced by a growing number of sustainability strategies, reports and voluntary commitments. However, municipalities face many specific challenges, such as limited financial and human resources, increasing demands due to legal obligations, the need to systematically integrate sustainability goals into sector-specific strategies, as well as complex budgeting and planning processes.

In recent years, the UN has shown through various HLPF initiatives that it recognises the critical role of local action in achieving global sustainability. One such example is the LRG Days, which provide a platform to showcase local sustainability efforts and promote knowledge exchange between municipalities and local governments worldwide.

As part of the follow-up and review framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States are encouraged to carry out regular, comprehensive progress reviews at both the national and subnational levels. These reviews are individually directed and pursued by each country. The outcomes serve as a supplementary contribution to the other regular reviews conducted by the HLPF. The HLPF country reviews are voluntary and state-led, open to the participation of both developed and developing nations, and are expected to be inclusive, involving a broad range of stakeholders.

The purpose of a Voluntary National Review is to promote the sharing of experiences, including achievements, obstacles and key takeaways as a means to help accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. VNRs also aim to strengthen governmental institutions and policies and to foster collaboration and support through multi-stakeholder partnerships. In addition to this work at state level, the Voluntary Local Reviews conducted at subnational level have been recognised as an essential valuable supplement to VNRs.

This year, several CEMR members were directly involved in the work preparing the VNR with their national governments. We are therefore highlighting these examples from Bulgaria, Finland, Germany and Malta, particularly key LRG challenges and opportunities encountered during this process of contributing to their countries' VNRs.

Bulgaria



- Voluntary National Review Bulgaria 2020¹⁵
- Voluntary National Review Bulgaria 2025¹⁶

The country's first VNR in 2020 was entirely prepared by the national authorities without their asking any input from the municipalities, although the text did contain references to the work of the National Association of Local and Regional Governments (NAMRB) and to some good municipal practices and achievements.

In 2023, NAMRB was included as a partner organisation in the national mechanism coordinating the monitoring and reporting on the implementation of SDG 6 and SDG 11. Included among the institutional aims was the compilation and approval of a national list of indicators for monitoring the SDGs' implementation progress.

No specific legal obligation exists in Bulgaria for municipalities to develop, implement or report on specific strategies, plans or programs for the implementation of SDGs. Moreover, municipalities are not utilised as a direct source of information, which means that none of their disaggregated information or data is collected for consideration in the national indicators monitoring and reporting on SDG progress.

In the autumn of 2024, the Secretary General of the Council of Ministers (the mechanism coordinator) asked NAMRB to take part in the drafting of the country's second VNR and to propose a chapter devoted to SDG implementation and progress at local level, including a selection of good local practices, challenges and achievements relating to the SDGs that fall under municipal competences.

On account of the limited time (one month) given to produce the report and the lack of official information sources, NAMRB was not able to properly conduct a comprehensive survey or procedures to gather information from municipalities. It was therefore decided to prepare a brief overview on the SDGs and their place in local development strategies and plans and to highlight good practices relating to SDGs 3, 7, 11 and 13, as they had already collected this information for other purposes.

Despite the lack of representativeness of the data and text, the national authorities included the whole chapter without revisions, including its recommendations:

A formal procedure needs to be established

With support from the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works and the National Statistics Institute, in order to improve the reporting of LRGs' contribution to SDG implementation and to ensure the obtention of real and comparable data, including: 1) a clear description of municipal participation and expected contribution; 2) a selection of priority indicators determining which information would be collected from municipalities via unified questionnaires.

Achieving the SDGs calls for political commitment and leadership at all levels of government

Municipalities require appropriate autonomy of action, adequate means and resources to implement the 2030 Agenda in their communities. In practice, this also means real decentralisation and implementation of transformation measures at the level where they can have the greatest impact and benefit for society.

Municipalities need suitable mechanisms and tools to raise awareness about the SDGs

This would help to increase local community mobilisation and engagement for implementing the indicators and ultimately the global goals.

¹⁵ <https://hlpf.un.org/countries/bulgaria/voluntary-national-review-2020>

¹⁶ <https://hlpf.un.org/countries/bulgaria/voluntary-national-review-2025>

Finland



- Voluntary National Review Finland 2016¹⁷
- Voluntary National Review Finland 2020¹⁸
- Voluntary National Review Finland 2025¹⁹

The drafting process of the Finnish VNR in 2025 was notable for the degree of significant and direct cooperation and co-creation that transpired between different levels of governance. Specifically, the collaboration involved the local level, the Association of Finnish Cities and Municipalities (AFCM) and the national level, thereby promising a comprehensive and inclusive approach to the reporting on sustainable development. All this is consistent with Finland's established tradition of consultation and dialogue, as seen during previous national reporting processes. The 2025 VNR's focus is on a systems-level approach and the future, themes that are also highlighted in the five Finnish Voluntary Local Reviews being submitted alongside the national report.

Collaborative efforts: since the inception of the reporting process, the Prime Minister's Office and the Secretary General of Sustainable Development in Finland have maintained an ongoing dialogue with the Association of Finnish Cities and Municipalities (AFCM). This continuous communication has facilitated the integration of local perspectives into the national review, highlighting the importance of municipal contributions to sustainable development. AFCM has played a key role in drafting texts for the report, including the chapters on enabling environments and the localisation of SDGs.

Municipal workshop contributions: in October 2024, Finnish cities and municipalities played a pivotal role in a municipal workshop focusing on the outlook of sustainable development. Organised by AFCM and the Prime Minister's Office, this workshop provided valuable insights and data, which will be analysed and incorporated into the VNR report. The analysis aims to highlight current challenges and successes as well as the enabling and disabling factors for future sustainable development at the local level in Finland. The active participation of Finnish cities and municipalities attests to their commitment to sustainable practices and their influence on national policies.

Integration of Nordic VSR data: the 2025 Finnish VNR will also examine and analyse the Nordic Voluntary Subnational Review (VSR) from 2023, particularly the data collected from Finnish municipalities. This analysis will enrich the VNR report by providing a broader regional context and highlighting the collaborative efforts within the Nordic region, while also including Finnish local data in the national reporting.

SDG46 Network and VLR reports: one chapter in the VNR report is focused on highlighting the cooperation existing among the six largest cities, known as the SDG46 network. This network exemplifies Finnish cities' collective efforts towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Additionally, Voluntary Local Reviews submitted in 2025 by Helsinki, Espoo, Tampere, Vantaa and Turku will be referenced and linked directly to the VNR, further evidence of the interconnectedness of local and national sustainable development initiatives.

¹⁷ <https://hlpf.un.org/countries/finland/voluntary-national-review-2016>

¹⁸ <https://hlpf.un.org/countries/finland/voluntary-national-review-2020>

¹⁹ <https://hlpf.un.org/countries/finland/voluntary-national-review-2025>

Germany



- Voluntary National Review Germany 2016²⁰
- Voluntary National Review Germany 2021²¹
- Voluntary National Review Germany 2025²²

In recent years, the HLPF has involved local governments more closely in its reporting and partnerships between UN organisations and municipal networks such as the Club of 2030 Municipalities have been strengthened to both promote knowledge transfer in the multi-level governance system and to improve cooperation.

Municipalities play a key role in implementing the 2030 Agenda. Districts, cities, and municipalities are the ones that ensure that financial, natural, and organisational resources are used sustainably in the measures implemented on the ground. Sustainability is a cross-cutting issue and affects all municipal fields of action. Municipalities localise the 2030 Agenda through municipal sustainability strategies and bolster the goals with measures and plans for implementation. In 2025, the German government will once again report on the progress made nationwide in implementing the 2030 Agenda as part of its third VNR. For the first time, the local level will be given substantial consideration: 2 of the approximately 30 pages of the report are explicitly dedicated to developments and challenges in cities, districts and municipalities.

To actively support this process and to shine a light on the perspectives of local governments, the cities of Bonn, Hamburg, Mannheim and Stuttgart have taken the initiative of putting together a Voluntary Local Review (VLR). The aim of this accompanying report is to comprehensively present the diverse spectrum of sustainability activities in German local governments, while also providing a distillation for the two-page summary in the VNR, and to give the local level a strong, concerted voice within the national discourse on sustainability.

The VLR is being prepared by the German Institute of Urban Affairs (Difu) in cooperation with umbrella municipal organisations and the Service Agency Communities in One World (SKEW). Forming the core of the report are the contributions of 15 German municipalities that have already published their own VLR. These profiles provide a concise overview of the progress, challenges and innovative approaches being pursued in the different cities and districts.

The German Association of Cities has signed the model resolution 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which shapes sustainability at the local level²³. Over 250 municipalities nationwide have already developed SDG inventories and sustainability strategies or set up digital SDG monitoring. In addition, more than 800 partnerships have been established between Germany and the Global South. The number of municipal sustainability reports is also growing steadily. Around 100 municipalities have already published comprehensive sustainability reports. The Sustainable Municipality Reporting Framework (BNK) has proven to be a suitable tool, used so far by around 30 municipalities. The current BNK version, developed by the Council for Sustainable Development in cooperation with the Difu, the Bertelsmann Foundation and the SKEW, was published in October 2024 and is supported by the umbrella municipal organisation, the Municipal Joint Office for Administrative Management.

As well as presenting innovative approaches and successes in the field of municipal sustainability, the VLR also touches on the risks that cities, districts and municipalities face. In addition, even though the will to establish impact-oriented sustainability management across the board exists, municipal stakeholders are still burdened by a lack of financial, human and conceptual support, which is being exacerbated amidst the rise in political and social uncertainties. Such challenges can only be overcome through even more intensive cooperation between the federal, state and local governments.

²⁰ <https://hlpf.un.org/countries/germany/voluntary-national-review-2016>

²¹ <https://hlpf.un.org/countries/germany/voluntary-national-review-2021>

²² <https://hlpf.un.org/countries/germany/voluntary-national-review-2025>

²³ Global partnerships: There are more than 800 partnerships between German municipalities and municipalities in the Global South, including more than 100 climate and sustainability partnerships. Since 2016, 14 SDG partnership conferences have been held under this framework, which resulted in stakeholders from 24 German municipalities and 59 partner municipalities agreeing to jointly develop their work on the 2030 Agenda. SDG indicators have also increasingly been the focus of partnership work.

Malta



- Voluntary National Review Malta 2018²⁴
- Voluntary National Review Malta 2025²⁵

Malta's voluntary national and local involvement in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals is multifaceted, with a significant focus on public-private partnerships, community engagement and government policies that integrate sustainable practices. National strategy and policy alignment: Malta has demonstrated its strong commitment to the SDGs through its national policies, especially the National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS), which aligns with the EU's broader sustainability framework. The government also works to implement the SDGs in policy areas such as climate change, energy, biodiversity and social inclusion.

Local government engagement: at the local level, municipalities and local councils in Malta play a vital role in making the SDGs a reality. Local governments work to create sustainable communities, in keeping with SDG 11 in particular (sustainable cities and communities). Efforts include implementing local projects that prioritise environmental protection, waste management and enhancing quality of life for citizens.

Volunteer and civil society participation: Malta benefits from the active involvement of civil society, non-governmental organisations and volunteer groups. These organisations work to raise awareness, advocate for policy changes and implement grassroots projects aligned with SDGs. Educational and public awareness initiatives: through both national and local programmes, Malta has also been cultivating awareness of sustainable practices and the importance of the SDGs. Schools, universities and community programmes often include sustainability education as part of their curriculum and outreach efforts.

Sustainable tourism and cultural heritage: Malta places great emphasis on preserving its natural and cultural heritage while also promoting sustainable tourism practices, ensuring that growth in the tourism sector aligns with sustainability. Collaboration with EU initiatives: as an EU Member State, Malta participates in EU-driven initiatives to promote sustainable development. The EU's Green Deal and recovery plans have incorporated national contributions from Malta, especially in the areas of clean energy, circular economy and green innovation.

Malta's voluntary involvement in achieving SDGs is a collaborative effort that spans national policies, local initiatives (regions and local councils) and grassroots involvement. It reflects a comprehensive approach to sustainable development, integrating environmental, social and economic dimensions across all levels of society. Local councils, community organisations and educational institutions contribute significantly to Malta's progress on the SDGs, which underscores the importance of collective action for a sustainable future.

²⁴ <https://hlpf.un.org/countries/malta/voluntary-national-review-2018>

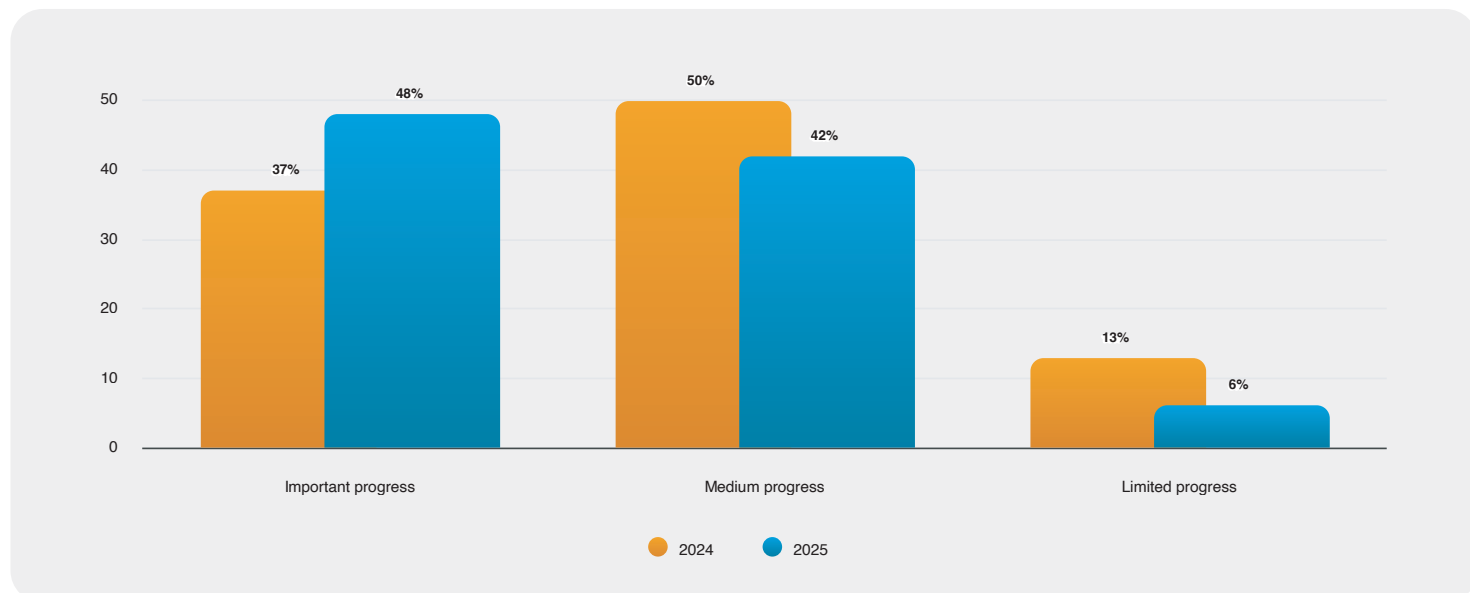
²⁵ <https://hlpf.un.org/countries/malta/voluntary-national-review-2025>



4. Improvement in awareness-raising

The role of LRGAs in raising awareness of the SDGs is essential. Their proximity to both citizens and local governments makes them uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between global goals and local action. Looking at the comparison of 2024 and 2025 results below helps us to understand how LRGA awareness-raising activities contribute to SDG progress and why it is important that their impact be recognised.

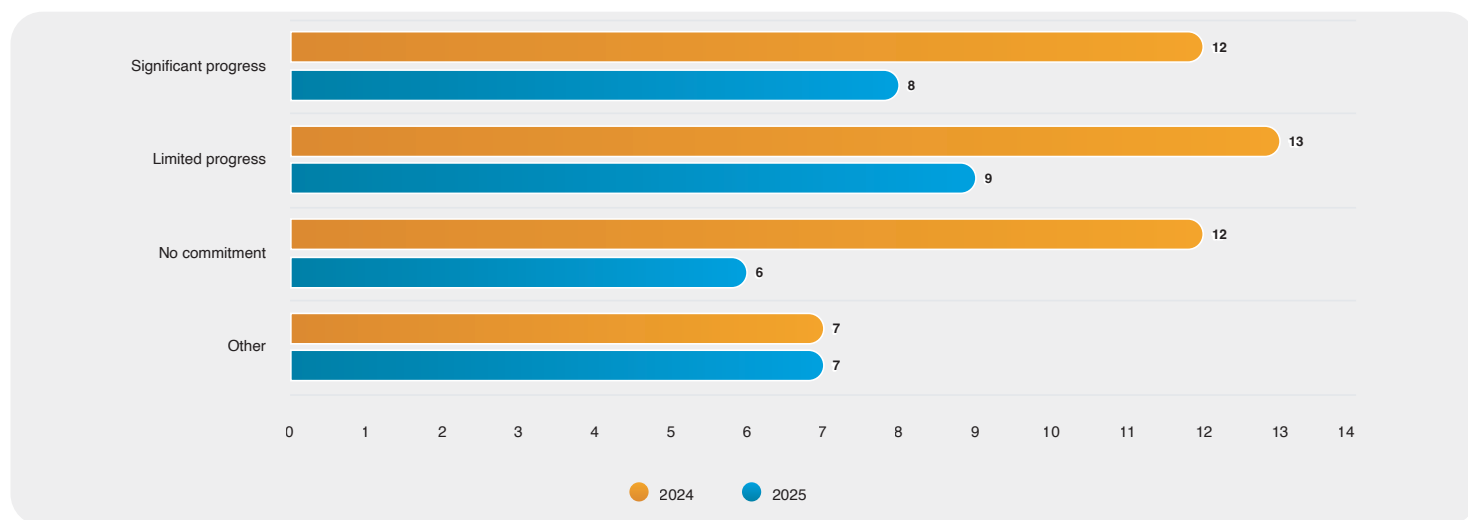
Figure 1. Progress in broadening knowledge of the SDGs within the organisation



A slight increase is noticeable in the number of LRGAs that believed there had been significant progress (48% to 37% last year). This is an encouraging result considering that, overall, we are still lagging when it comes to SDG implementation and that every action counts.

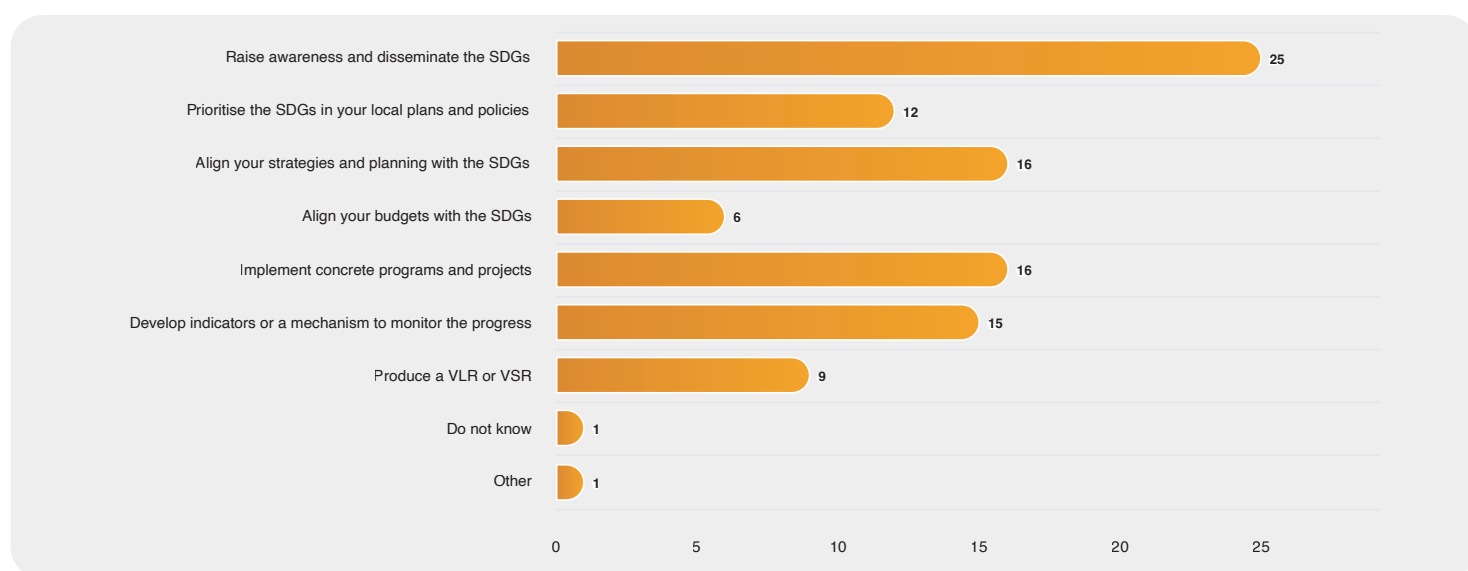
In terms of progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda, only 19% of the associations reported having no SDG commitments this year—an improvement over last year's 26%—constituting a positive trend, as it means more associations now have strategies or plans in place for 2025. Also encouragingly, 26% reported having made considerable progress, with strategies or action plans that had reached an advanced stage, a figure consistent with last year's. Additionally, 29% had adopted a strategy or action plan, although implementation was still at an early stage, a slight increase from 28% in 2024. Overall, these findings reflect a continued commitment to advancing the SDGs.

Figure 2. Strategic commitment to implementation of the 2030 Agenda (number of respondents)



Oftentimes, in Serbia for instance, even though there is no supplementary plan or strategy exclusively dedicated to the implementation of SDGs, there is a comprehensive strategic document, which provides for the mainstreaming of SDGs. This means that all planning must necessarily account for how it will help contribute to SDGs. Serbia is currently working on a new strategy for the 2026–2030 period.

Figure 3. Concrete steps towards localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals



In recent years, associations have also been taking active steps to promote the 2030 Agenda's objectives and have engaged in tangible actions to localise the SDGs. Their involvement covers a wide range of initiatives, as shown by the variety of association initiatives described on the next page.

Box 1. Ways in which the associations' strategies or plans to implement 2030 Agenda have progressed

Austria: The **Austrian Association of Cities and Towns (AACT)**, since 2022, has been providing members with a dedicated exchange and knowledge platform on municipal sustainability,²⁶ which is managed and moderated by its partner, the KDZ (Centre for Public Administration Research). The platform facilitates the exchange of information not only on SDGs but on any sustainability issue, catering specifically to local governments. It supports networking and offers tools and funding possibilities.

Belgium: The **Union of Cities and Municipalities of Wallonia (UVCW)** has organised conferences and published content to raise awareness among local elected officials of the importance of incorporating the SDGs into their local strategies. They are seeing an impact from these initiatives, as they have increasingly been contacted with queries and requests for advice on implementing the SDGs at the local level.

Belgium: The **Association of the City and the Municipalities of the Brussels-Capital Region (Brulocalis)** organised a national conference on the SDGs in collaboration with the Walloon and Flemish associations of towns and municipalities.

Czech Republic: The **Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic (SMO ČR)** has held webinars focused on affordable housing (SDG 11), renewable energy and energy efficiency (SDG 7), as well as the Covenant of Mayors and Sustainable Energy Access and Climate Action Plan and has also organised an Energy and Waste Management Conference (SDG 11). All these activities were aimed at deepening the knowledge of municipalities and exchange of experience among local authorities. The association also took part in the SAFETY4TMF and LOCALIENCE projects, which focused on adaptation to climate change and resilience to disasters (SDG 7).

Georgia: The **National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia (NALAG)** has been active in projects with key territorial stakeholders to create lasting impacts all across Georgia: 1) *Empowering Local Government, Youth, and Civil Society in Child-Focused SDG Localization* aims to strengthen the capacity of local governments, youth and civil society; 2) *Women's Increased Leadership for Democracy in Georgia* mobilises all 64 municipalities to promote women's participation in decision-making.

Germany: The **Association of German Cities (DST)** published a VSR, that is intended to be an integral part of the VNR being submitted to the HLPF. The contributors were all municipal associations or members. By analysing data on the German portal on SDGs²⁷ DST was able to characterise its findings as progress, status quo or regress. DST and Difu organised the municipal contribution.

Latvia: The **Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments (LALRG)** organised a *Sustainable Municipalities' Week 2024* for the first time last September. It took its inspiration from the *Sustainable Municipality Week* organised every year by the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG). Event activities were adapted to Latvian municipalities and orientated towards children and youth ("dream cards" for young people to fill out with their aspirations for their municipality for 2030).

Malta: The **Tramuntana Region** has been active in the project *Slow Streets*.²⁸ Although the desire to bring about greater well-being for all residents is what lies at the heart of the project, the local community remains its beating pulse. Its objective is to make streets more welcoming and accessible to people of all ages; for example, by limiting through traffic on certain residential streets to allow them to be used more as shared spaces.

Spain: The **Basque Local Authorities Cooperation Fund/Basque Government Development Cooperation Agency** promotes multi-agent and multi-level collaboration frameworks with Basque, European and international socio-economic actors. The EUSKADI autonomous community has also aligned and strengthened collaboration frameworks with the UN 2030 Local Secretariat in Bilbao and the OECD, as well as with other EU actors and agencies.

United Kingdom: The Environment and Economic Board of the **Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)** has recognised since 2023 that achievement of the SDGs by 2030 will depend on local action. The association pursues international cooperation between local authorities and their national associations working towards the 2030 Agenda and SDGs as it supports their priority for a just transition to net-zero no later than 2045. In 2019, COSLA contributed to the UK VNR with a VLR.

²⁶ digitaler.staedtebund.gv.at/net_sdg

²⁷ SDGs portal in Germany in English <https://sdg-portal.de/de/> and Italian version here: <https://sdg-portal.it/it>

²⁸ www.lca.org.mt/projects/slow-streets



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5. Involvement of the subnational level in the reporting process

Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Finland, Malta and Israel will be presenting VNRs this year. All six are veterans of the process, having reported to the HLPF previously. Local and regional government associations from Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany and Malta were among the respondents to our survey and, as seen above, provided details on their involvement in the VNR preparation.

Regarding the extent of their participation in producing VNRs, it can mostly be seen as an improvement with only 6% of the respondents reporting the same level of involvement as in 2024. Notably, 13% indicated they were heavily involved, an increase over nil last year. Additionally, none of the respondents reported any change in the quality of participation (whether progress or setback), compared to 2% last year who noted such changes.

In countries reporting to the HLPF, national LRGAs were invited by their central governments to contribute to the preparation of their country's VNRs, albeit to varying degrees and using different modalities. This variation reflects the diverse national contexts, governance structures and levels of decentralisation in question. In some cases, LRGs were actively involved through consultations, workshops and written input. In others, their participation remained limited or symbolic—underscoring the need for more institutionalised and meaningful mechanisms for multi-level governance in the SDG implementation process.

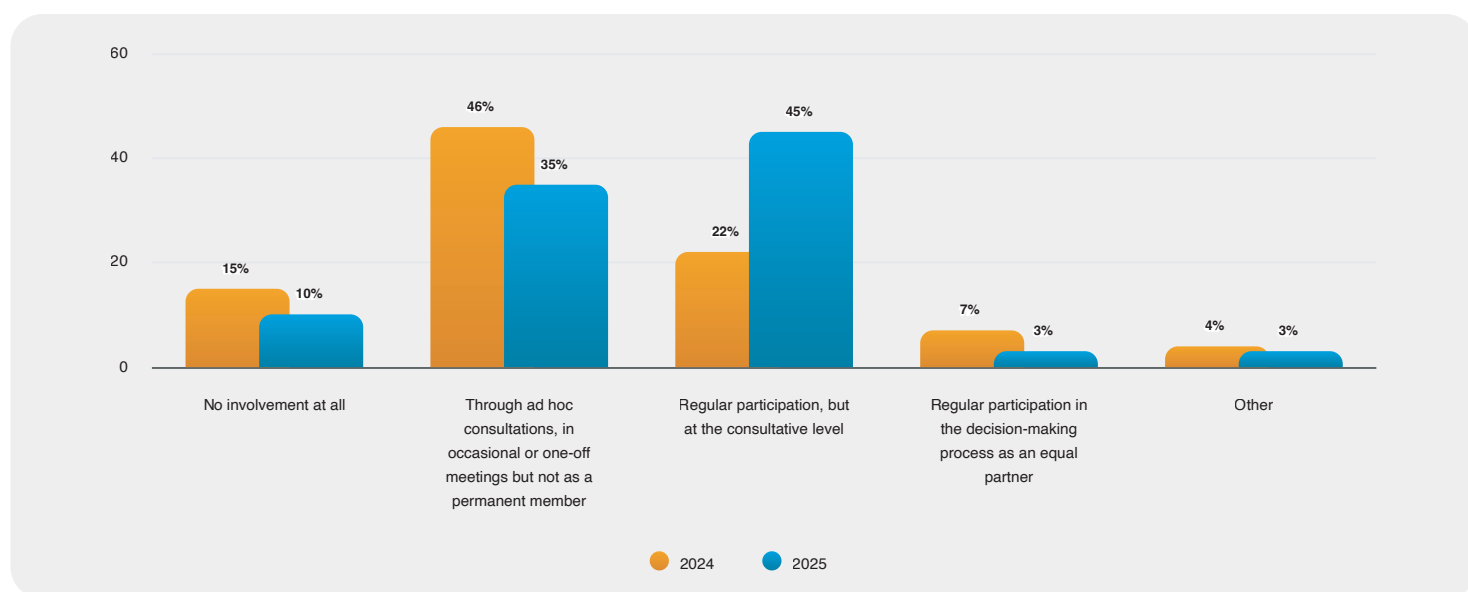
There has been a slight increase in the degree of involvement of subnational actors in interactions with national governments:

- 25% played an active role (up from 9% last year) and were afforded the opportunity to submit their own contributions, i.e. reporting on LRGs' efforts toward achieving the SDGs.
- Another 25% had a highly active role (compared to none last year), participating directly in the national reporting unit and contributing to the drafting process.
- 13% were limited to responding only to surveys or questionnaires, a decrease nevertheless from last year's 18%.
- However, another 13% reported contributions of a very restrictive nature (compared to 9% in 2024), involving occasional meetings with little opportunity to influence the actual VNR, and no contributions were categorised as "moderate" (i.e., participation in bilateral meetings with the unit responsible for reporting).

With respect to the institutional mechanisms set up by national governments to coordinate implementation of the 2030 Agenda, LRGA involvement has taken on various forms. In most countries, national governments have either created new institutional structures (such as high-level commissions, inter-ministerial or inter-agency committees) or strengthened existing ones to improve coordination and follow-up of SDG implementation. Examples of such mechanisms include national councils for sustainable development or national planning institutions. Many of these mechanisms employ a multi-stakeholder approach to ensure broader participation.

Compared to 2024's findings, our recent 2025 report indicates that national governments have shifted towards more regular participatory mechanisms, while the use of ad hoc consultations has decreased. This marks a significant improvement, particularly as last year's findings were characterised by a higher reliance on ad hoc consultations with lower levels of consistent participation.

Figure 4. Involvement of LRGs/LRGAs in national coordination mechanisms for SDGs

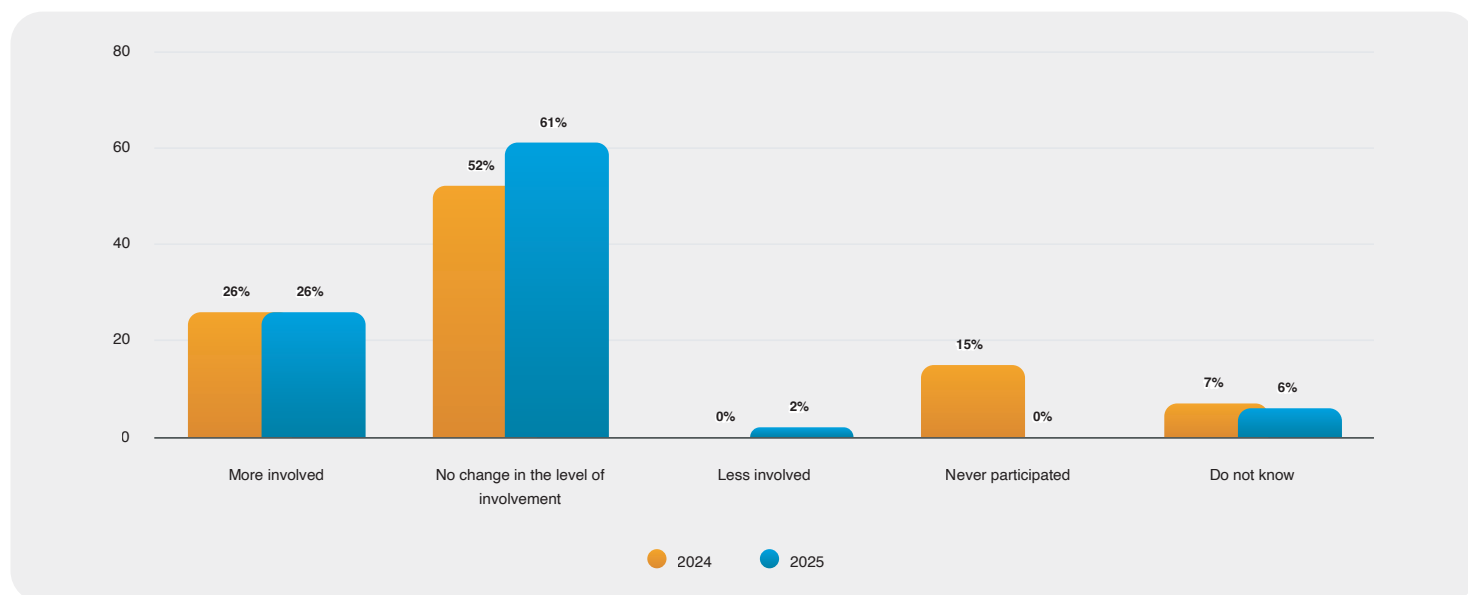


In terms of changes to LRGA involvement in national coordination mechanisms for SDG implementation and follow-up, the responses received mirror a variety of trends. A majority—61% of respondents—noted no significant developments or stated that their level of involvement remained unchanged in recent years. This marks an increase from 52% in 2024, suggesting a growing sense of stagnation. At the same time, 26% reported increased involvement, a figure that is consistent with last year's findings.

Significantly, none of the respondents reported that they had never participated in national coordination mechanisms—down from 15% in the previous study. This suggests that while LRGAs are not excluded, the nature of their participation is not necessarily evolving or strengthening.

Overall, these results suggest that LRGAs nonetheless feel involved in the SDG implementation process. However, without more direct and regular participation of both LRGAs and LRGs, progress is likely to remain limited—especially considering that approximately 65% of the SDG targets require implementation at the local and regional levels.

Figure 5. Evolution of the involvement of LRGs in national coordination mechanisms



Box 2. Different forms of coordination mechanisms for implementation of the SDGs

Belgium: The **Union of Cities and Municipalities of Wallonia (UVCW)** took the decision in 2022 to establish a steering committee bringing together key stakeholders who could support local authorities in implementing sustainability policies. Today, it includes the regional public service, representatives of government ministries, the Union of Cities and Municipalities of Wallonia and the non-profit organisation Espace Environnement.

Bulgaria: The **National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria (NAMRB)** has been involved in the organisation at national level of the coordination, monitoring and reporting of SDG implementation. They have worked as a partner organisation in two working groups focused on SDG 6 and SDG 11. It should be noted that although a national list of indicators for SDG monitoring and reporting on progress was adopted, municipalities are not considered a direct source of information, and no disaggregated information and data is collected from them.

Germany: The **Association of German Cities (DST)**, together with its members, took part in stakeholder processes and were invited to prepare a municipal contribution for the German VNR. The 18 municipalities that produced a VLR also set up a network.

North Macedonia: For its previous HLPF submission, the **Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS)** collaborated with its members, the **Association of Communes of Romania (ACOR)**, the **Romanian Municipalities Association (AMR)** and UCLG, providing technical support for the drafting of the VSR presented by Romania in 2023. In 2021, NALAS had contributed via the national members, the **Association of Kosovo Municipalities (AKM)** and the **Association of the Units of Local Self-Government in Macedonia (ZELS)**, providing support for activities sharing input with national entities. This fell under a joint action undertaken with the **German Development Cooperation (GIZ)** as part of the project *Regional Learning for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in South-East Europe*.

Serbia: The **Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SKGO)** has taken steps since 2021 to engage with less developed LRGs. Educational tools and good approaches have been exchanged, e.g., functioning of the platform SDGs for all²⁹; coordination with the Statistical Office regarding nationally compatible indicators for SDGs³⁰; follow-up on the work of the Public Policy Secretariat on mapping the national planning framework with respect to SDGs³¹.

²⁹ sdgs4all.rs/en/about-the-platform

³⁰ sdg.indikatori.rs/en-US

³¹ rsjp.gov.rs/sr/dokumenti-kategorija/analize

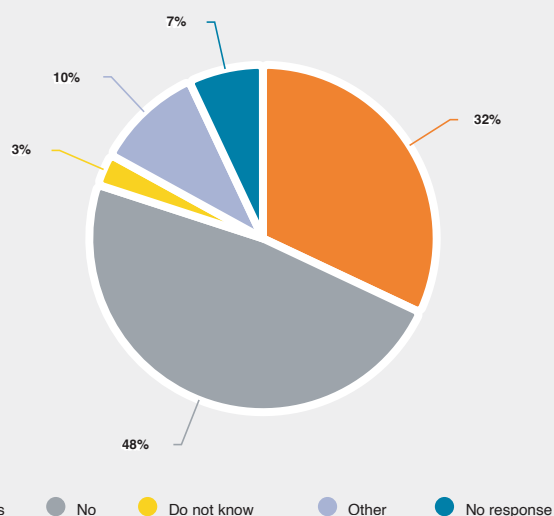
Spain: The **Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP)** has been coordinating the involvement of stakeholders through its participation in the Sectoral Conference for the 2030 Agenda³². As a result of the launch of the Local Government Network for the 2030 Agenda, progress has been made through horizontal coordination among local governments.

Sweden: The **Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR)** has published a Nordic VSR with the support of the Nordic Council of Ministers. SALAR has been commissioned by its members to support gender mainstreaming in municipalities and regions, a strategy that achieves gender equality goals by ensuring that a gender equality perspective is taken into consideration in all activities and in systems for management and governance. The current government emphasises that the 2030 Agenda and the three dimensions of sustainability must be integrated into ordinary processes.

Indicators to monitor progress

To develop effective future strategies and plans, it is essential that all actions undertaken by LRGs be systematically monitored to assess their progress. This requires the creation of appropriate indicators and mechanisms to measure advancement, at the territorial level, toward the SDGs, including their specific objectives and targets.

Figure 6. Development of indicators or monitoring mechanisms in respondent organisation



Many LRGAs and their members have already developed such assessment tools– a rising tendency compared to last year's findings and a positive development. However, it is important to note that just under half of the respondents have not established any such tools yet, which is indicative of the significant gaps in monitoring capacity that still exist.

The examples below present systems that have been established to track indicators aligned with the SDGs. These include cases that prioritised specific indicators, as well as examples of innovative approaches introduced to improve monitoring and assessment.

³² mpt.gob.es/portal/prensa/agenda/eventos/2021/07/20210707_3.html

Box 3. Monitoring mechanisms to track progress in achieving the SDGs

Belgium: The **Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities** (VVSG) has been working on SDG monitoring since 2018, with 200 SDG indicators for each relevant SDG sub-target. These were taken from centrally available datasets (e.g. municipal monitor of the Flemish government and the data platform Provinces in Numbers). Under the VSR framework, VVSG and local governments have continued building up the SDG monitor's dataset, which was also used as the starting point for the VSR analysis.

Germany: The **Association of German Cities** (DST), has set up a project on SDG Indicators for municipalities³³. Its objective is the identification of indicators for SDG implementation at the municipal level in Germany as well as select indicators for the SDG sub-targets and partial targets that are also relevant to this level. Data is available for all towns and municipalities with a population of more than 5000 and for all counties.

Malta: The **Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities** (SKGO) has implemented a system of regular consultation and monitoring with local councils in view of enhancing communication, transparency and the effectiveness of local governance.

North Macedonia: The **Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe** (NALAS) uses what can be termed a partial monitoring system (it uses circular economy/water management data as reference points, taken from the NALAS Observatory³⁴ and the Regional Capacity Development Network (RCDN) for Water Sanitation Services³⁵). The RCDN links up local government units, water utilities and their associations from South-East Europe so that they can jointly work on developing capacities in the water and sanitation service sector. The monitoring system also relies on conventional exchange and dialogue with members of the Task Force on Solid Waste and Water Management (including all NALAS members) and the RCDN Programme Working Group (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Albania, Serbia). Relevant data on water and waste management is available from the NALAS Observatory, which provides access to timely, accurate, reliable and comparable indicators and information on local governance, as well as from the RCDN for Water and Sanitation Services.

Portugal: The **National Association of Portuguese Municipalities** (ANMP) has undertaken a joint R&D project with Statistics Norway that works on developing measurement models supporting local and regional monitoring. Together with the local and regional SDG network, it has identified a set of indicators relevant to LRGs for monitoring their SDG progress. Some are national indicators while others are from the EU indicator set.

Spain: The **Majorcan Fund for Solidarity and Cooperation** (FMSC) has put together a comprehensive manual of indicators designed to evaluate and guide cooperation projects, thus ensuring alignment with the SDGs³⁶. This tool supports consistent monitoring and evaluation across initiatives, thereby promoting transparency and impact measurement. To help guide users, it features a dashboard of indicators listed by topic and a cross-cutting indicator for the fulcrum of good governance³⁷.

Spain: The **Barcelona Provincial Council** (DIBA) has been active in the VISOR2030 project, which develops indicators to measure progress on sustainable development. It is a virtual platform that contains a system of municipal-based SDG indicators on the social, economic and environmental realities of municipalities in the province of Barcelona. The 2.0 version of VISOR2030, presented in 2025, has a greater number of indicators and improves their quality.

United Kingdom: The **Convention of Scottish Local Authorities** (COSLA) follows the National Framework in Scotland, which aims to create a more successful country and increase the well-being of people living in Scotland. It sets out National Outcomes which describe the Scotland it aims to create. It also uses National Indicators (economic, social and environmental) to measure national well-being.

³³ <https://sdg-portal.de/de/>

³⁴ nalas-observatory.eu

³⁵ rcdnsee.net

³⁶ fonsmalllorqui.org/ca/convocatoria/cooperacio

³⁷ admin.fonsmalllorqui.org/uploads/media_manager/archives/guia-indicadores-castell-23_XQU8.pdf



6. Inspiring SDG practices under review at the HLPF 2025

This section will present examples that highlight inspiring practices undertaken by member Local and Regional Government Associations (LRGAs) with respect to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under review at the 2025 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), with a particular emphasis on their territorial and urban dimensions:



SDG 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.



SDG 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.



SDG 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.



SDG 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.



SDG 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

SDG 3 Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Ensuring good health and well-being (SDG 3) is vital for people regardless of where they live in the world. Europe's own vulnerabilities in this regard were revealed during the COVID-19 pandemic and it is facing specific challenges of ageing and depopulation, a phenomenon that is particularly accentuated in rural areas.

In Europe, measures aimed at fulfilling SDG 3 can focus on ensuring inclusive health systems; improving reproductive, maternal and child health; ending major communicable disease epidemics; addressing mental disorders; lowering behavioural and environmental health risk factors and safeguarding the resilience of the healthcare system.

Healthcare is an essential public service and often tends to be the prerogative of central governments, given their role in ensuring that health services are delivered efficiently and equitably across territories. Nonetheless, local and regional governments do possess competences relevant to public health. The CEMR TERRI report *Territorial Governance, Powers in Europe* focused on local health care systems in its 2021 edition. This analysis showed that local and regional governments do exercise significant powers and responsibilities in terms of both the planning and implementation of diverse healthcare-related functions. In addition to LGRs' health-related duties, they are also in charge of providing social protection services, general health promotion and prevention service, nursing care, care for the elderly as well as care homes; they also manage the planning and implementation of school health services as well as primary care and youth health care.

Territorial cohesion remains a key priority in Europe, particularly the reduction of economic, social and territorial inequalities both between and within countries. However, the journey towards achievement of the SDGs may take different paths depending on the specific characteristics of each territory, including rural, remote, peri-urban and urban areas.

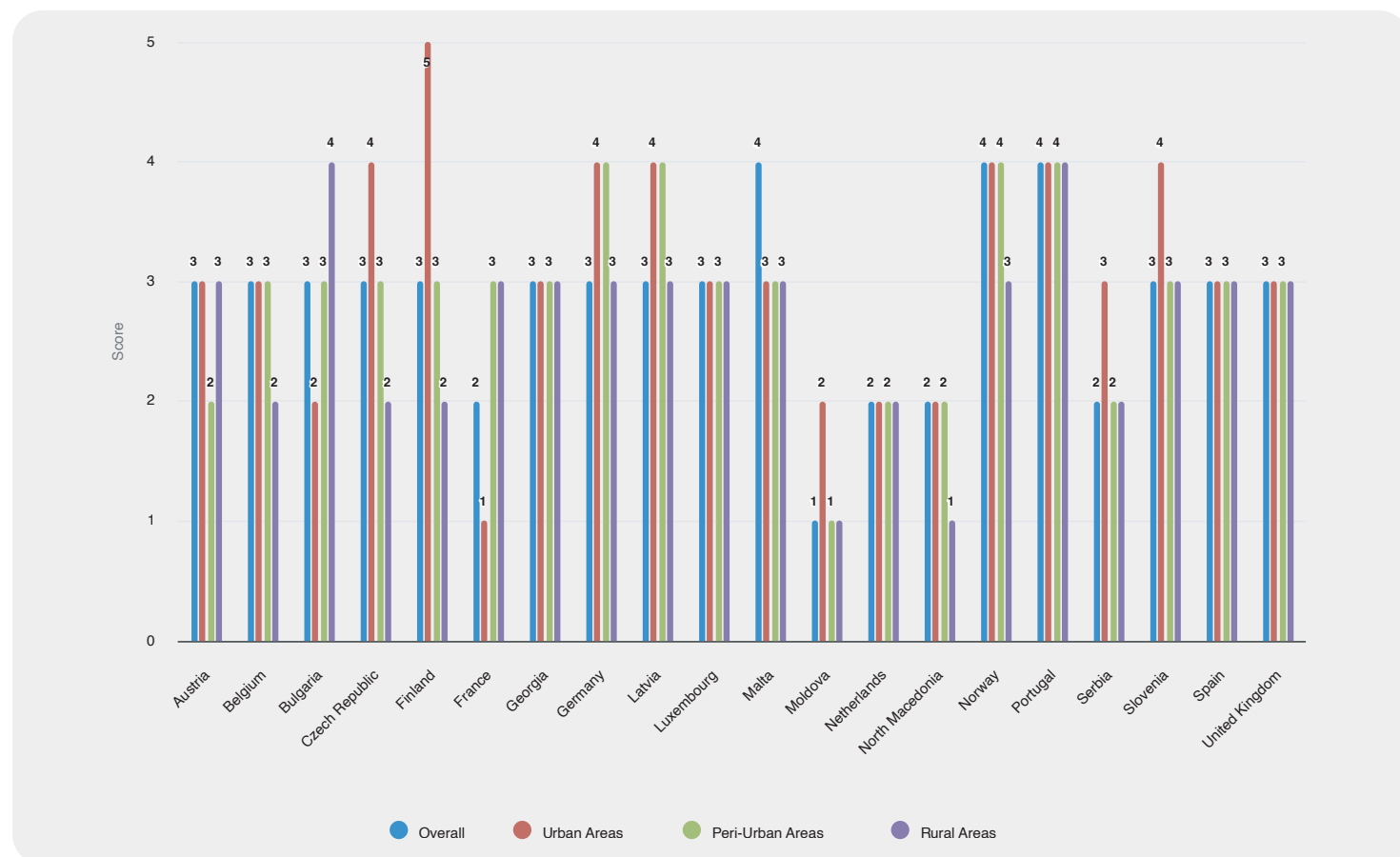
The figure below shows the level of progress towards achieving SDG 3, 'Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages', across the respondent countries, differentiated by type of territory. The scale ranges from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates significantly slow progress and 5 indicates significantly rapid progress.

Overall, most European countries present encouraging results in promoting health and well-being, suggesting that considerable efforts have been made to advance SDG 3.

However, when looking more closely at the findings by type of territory, important differences emerge. Urban areas tend to achieve consistently higher scores compared to peri-urban and rural areas in particular. This highlights the reality that people living outside major cities may still encounter barriers to accessing the same level of healthcare services, infrastructure and prospects. Countries like Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands manage to limit these gaps to a minimum; elsewhere however, rural and peri-urban communities clearly fall behind.

Improving national averages is not enough if inequalities between regions persist. Truly ensuring health and well-being for all means tackling these gaps and ensuring that rural and less connected areas are properly included in national health and development efforts.

Figure 7. Country-level progress on SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), differentiated by type of territory



Box 4. Actions taken by LRG associations pertaining to SDG 3

Austria: The **Austrian Association of Cities and Towns (AACT)** supports the *Digital Transformation of Local Governments in South-East Europe* project, which is also supported by the KDZ (Centre for Public Administration Research) under the programme *Building Administrative Capacity in the Danube Region and the Western Balkans*. The project is funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and is implemented by NALAS as a regional partner. Included among the project's outputs is the successful implementation of the pilot project *Innovative Remote Digital Elderly Care* (Delchevo, North Macedonia), which constitutes a bridge between urban and rural areas and fosters inclusion for vulnerable populations³⁸.

Belgium: The **Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG)** has been monitoring multiple "caring neighbourhoods" that exist in Flanders and Brussels. Their basic aims are to create space for connections between citizens in the neighbourhood, to lower barriers between formal and informal care and to stimulate cooperation between sectors. One example is the *Kop of Kessel-Lo* in the city of Leuven, where a wide range of health and welfare organisations as well as sports clubs and youth clubs can be found.

Portugal: The **National Association of Portuguese Municipalities (ANMP)** has been negotiating with the Portuguese government on institutional arrangements and decentralisation processes that touch on many areas aligned with the SDGs, acting on the belief that decentralisation, with its embrace of the principle of subsidiarity, will help to achieve SDG localisation more quickly and efficiently. This includes, among others, the devolution of competences linked to health (SDG 3, SDG 17) and social policies (SDG 5, SDG 17).

38 www.youtube.com/watch?v=IkMSv6BjMnA&t=13s

Serbia: The **Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities** (SKGO) has been active in its country's EU-funded project *EU for the health system of Serbia* implemented by the Ministry of Health, together with the WHO and the UNDP. Recent actions included SKGO's publishing of a call for support seeking 100 cities and municipalities to contribute to the elaboration of preparedness and response plans³⁹. Further support will be provided later in the year in accordance with the adapted WHO methodology.

Spain: The **Barcelona Provincial Council** (DIBA) is involved in the *Vies Blaves Barcelona*⁴⁰ project which aims to provide universal access to safe, green, inclusive and sustainable public spaces. It operates in the area around the three rivers: Llobregat, Anoia and Cardene. The project was presented in 2024 and a framework ordinance⁴¹ has been drawn up for the town councils that join the project. An awareness campaign is being prepared for the summer of 2025.

Sweden: The **Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions** (SALAR) has been following the Government's Action Plan for the 2030 Agenda for 2018-2020 which includes producing indicators for the 2030 Agenda that could help support the work being carried out in municipalities and regions. The Council for the Promotion of Municipal Analyses was commissioned to lead this work, which involved Statistics Sweden, the 2030 Agenda Delegation and several municipalities and regions. The resulting indicators were presented in March 2019 and revised in 2023. The selection of SDG indicators for municipalities and regions consists of around 50 indicators.

United Kingdom: The transfer of public health functions from the UK's National Health Service to local authorities in 2013 was a major change and a catalyst for local government involvement in public health. The **Local Governments Association** (LGA) has been working alongside their committed partners in the belief that inclusive partnerships and engagement is the key to health and wellbeing for all.

SDG 5 Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

CEMR's recent study *Women in Politics: Local and European Trends 2024*⁴² revealed that 41% of women in politics experience psychological violence with attacks on their personal lives, appearance or status. Online violence is an increasingly common threat, with elected women reporting having experienced doxxing, cyberstalking and online hate speech, which oftentimes then escalates into offline violence. This is particularly concerning for young women, as 67% of those under 24 who have faced violence report experiences of cyberviolence. These attacks often have the corollary effect of undermining women's voices, driving them out of politics and preventing future generations from stepping up.

Gender equality cannot be achieved without local and regional action, as this is where policies become tangible and have a direct impact on people's daily life, which is why they need to be based on the needs and realities of everyone in the community. Localising SDG 5 means ensuring that every woman and girl benefits from gender-responsive policies, services and leadership. Intersectionality⁴³ feminist leadership at all levels is essential if we are to sustain the momentum of Beijing+30, which was set in motion 30 years ago but needs to continue beyond being spotlighted two weeks on the international stage for the 2030 Agenda to be achieved.

We also need to "reteach" our younger generations the importance of the Beijing Declaration: why it was developed and why it remains vital for their future. At the same time, generational differences in perception of what experiences await them in the future should be taken into consideration.

Furthermore, the commitments taken in Beijing need to be translated into local action: The Beijing Platform for Action sets out a roadmap, but many of its commitments still remain unfulfilled:

- Women's participation in politics and the urgent need to end violence against women
- Gender mainstreaming in local governance and decision-making

39 www.skgo.org/konkursi/detaljno/382/javni-poziv-za-podrsku-100-gradova-opstina-i-gradskih-opstina-u-izradi-planova-spremnosti-i-odgovora-na-javnozdrazavstvene-rizike-u-kriznim-i-vanrednim-situacijama

40 www.diba.cat/es/web/vies-blaves-bcn

41 bop.diba.cat/anunci/3279460/aprovacio-definitiva-de-la-modificacio-de-l-ordenanca-reguladora-de-l-us-de-les-vies-i-els-espais-publics-per-a-l-establiment-de-la-prohibicio-de-consumir-tabac-i-d-utilitzar-altres-dispositius-d-alliberament-de-nicotina-a-les-platges-de-barcelona-ajuntament-de-barcelona

42 <https://ccre-cemr.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Women-In-Politics-Study-2024-ENG.pdf>

43 https://ccre-cemr.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/CEMR-Intersectionality_EN.pdf

Below is a variety of initiatives that member municipalities have implemented to prevent and address gender-based violence, including harassment in public spaces, harassment at the workplace and online violence.

Box 5. Actions taken by LRG associations pertaining to SDG 5

Austria: The **Austrian Association of Cities and Towns (AACT)** has been following the campaign *Stop! Stand by Me!* calling on the residents of Vienna to stand by victims of insults, harassment or physical attacks. Posters listing concrete tips and informational videos aim to maximise people's capacity to take safe and courageous action without putting themselves at risk⁴⁴.

Belgium: The **Association of the City and the Municipalities of the Brussels-Capital Region (Brulocalis)** has developed an internal gender policy aimed at promoting gender equality within its organisation. It demonstrates a strong commitment to fostering equality not just through policy recommendations to municipalities, but also within its own organisational culture.

Estonia: The **Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities (AECM)** is committed to preventing workplace harassment. Several municipalities have developed guidance materials for local institutions and organisations to prevent gender-based harassment in the workplace. Other larger municipalities (Tallinn, Tartu) have organised training sessions for their employees on gender equality and harassment prevention, which has helped to create a safer work environment.

France: **Cités Unies France (CUF)** have been working with the French government to promote the French policy of feminist diplomacy. This has mainly involved decentralised cooperation, both by supporting cooperation projects aimed at achieving the goal of gender equality and by providing effective expertise in this area to elected officials and departments engaged in decentralised cooperation. It also relies on the sharing of best practices, so that CUF's skills and resources can be duly mobilised in the projects.

Malta: The **Local Councils' Association (LCA)** has put forward several proposals to the government, which should result in encouraging more women to participate in local politics if implemented correctly. The association is working closely with the government to implement this policy at local and regional levels⁴⁵.

Serbia: The **Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SKGO)** fully complies with the extensive national legislation in Serbia, such as the Law on the Budget System on Gender Equality. LRGs are likewise expected to implement equal opportunity policies that result in equal gender participation in all phases of decision-making (e.g., support packages for women entrepreneurship and for gender budgeting)⁴⁶.

Spain: The **Majorcan Fund for Solidarity and Cooperation (FMSC)** has established the *Les Elegides* programme to strengthen and enhance the visibility of women in local governments. Aptly, 56 elected women from Mallorca took part in signing the declaration of commitment of Mallorca's municipalities to support local elected women from around the world entering into politics under better conditions. This project was awarded 2nd prize at the 2025 PLATFORMAwards⁴⁷.

Sweden: The **Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR)** has adopted a nine-point employer policy gender equality programme to increase gender equality in municipalities and regions that addresses working hours, parental leave, work environment, harassment, victimisation, gender-based violence in the workplace, career choices and many other topics.

United Kingdom: The **Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)** works in partnership with the Scottish Government to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in Scotland's communities. COSLA fully recognises the need for collective leadership, cooperation of national and local strategic partners as well as specialised organisations to instigate the systemic changes needed to protect the human rights of women and girls within Scotland's communities. *Equally Safe* is the country's strategy to prevent and address all forms of violence against women.

44 www.wien.gv.at/menschen/frauen/stichwort/gewalt/zivilcourage

45 publicservices.gov.mt/en/people/Documents/People-Resourcing-Compliance/PeopleRelations/PoliciesAndGuidelines/EqualityPolicy.pdf

46 skgo.org/konkursi/detaljno/366/javni-poziv-za-dodelu-paketa-podrske-lokalnim-samoupravama-za-unapredjenje-gradjanskog-ucesca-i-transparentnosti-na-lokalnom-nivou

47 platforma-dev.eu/empowering-women-in-local-politics-the-impact-of-les-elegides-in-bolivia

SDG 8 Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Skills and jobs

There are many ongoing discussions on the importance of skills, on skills development as part of the green and digital transition and especially on matching workforce capabilities with emerging market demands. LRGs play a key role in this process despite their own perpetual difficulties involving staff and skills shortages, particularly in rural and smaller authorities, which threaten the ability to deliver essential public services to their citizens efficiently. Several initiatives on this issue are being pursued at EU level, such as the Union of Skills which aims to improve high-quality education, training and lifelong learning to improve Europe's competitiveness.

We have included below a variety of inspiring practices from CEMR member associations demonstrating different ways to support the creation of suitable jobs (particularly for youth), promote skills development, including upskilling and reskilling (for young people and current employees) during the green and digital transition to ensure alignment with the evolving job market.

Box 6. Actions taken by LRG associations pertaining to SDG 8

Belgium: In 2004, the **Association of Flemish Municipalities** (VVSG) organised a bootcamp on reintegration policy to provide support to local governments. Ten local governments worked together with experts on their reintegration policy for employees who had been out of office for an extensive period. The bootcamp focused on developing a vision in terms of reintegration, including a framework and action plan, as well as training and information sessions for supervisors.

Czech Republic: The **Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic** (SMO ČR) can rely on the country's current 2021–2027 Operational programme on Employment, which allows local governments to access financial resources for projects linked to consultancy, retraining, further education and overall support for potentially sensitive groups of employees (young adults, disabled or other disadvantaged employee groups).

Georgia: The **National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia's** (NALAG) work does not directly target SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), but many of its projects have had a significant indirect impact on the localisation of economic growth and the creation of decent work opportunities, e.g. the project *Empowering local government, youth and civil society in child-focused SDG localization in Georgia*. This project, implemented in cooperation with UNICEF and financed by the Sustainable Development Fund, focuses on raising SDG awareness and promoting their localisation.

Luxembourg: The **Association of Luxembourg Cities and Municipalities** (SYVICOL) is involved in the *Youth & Work–Future Generation* programme launched in 2023, which offers young people seeking employment or training the opportunity to collaborate with companies committed to sustainable projects. Each six-week project allows participants to develop personal and professional skills while gaining hands-on immersion in the world of work. This programme aims to facilitate young people's access to employment, apprenticeships and further training⁴⁸.

NALAS: The **Network of Associations of Local Authorities in South-East Europe** (NALAS) conducted a comparative survey on *Empowering Progress with Digital Transition in the Western Balkans and Moldova Local Governments* to highlight the progress and transformative potential of digitalisation at the local level in the Western Balkans and Moldova. The report provides an inspiring marker of progress, illustrating how diverse stakeholders can join forces to create smart cities and deliver improved citizen-centric services⁴⁹.

Norway: The **Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities** (KS) has been coordinating programmes supporting LRGs' efforts to integrate young and marginalised groups into the labour market. KS is actively involved in promoting decent work and skills development in Norway. Key initiatives include training programmes focusing on the skills and competencies of municipal employees; partnerships with educational institutions, government agencies and private sector organisations; research and advocacy on labour market trends and digital learning platforms.

48 digitalskills.lu

49 nalas.eu/digitaltransitionreport

Spain: The **Basque Local Authorities Cooperation Fund/Basque Government Development Cooperation Agency/Basque Country** has been involved in the *2024 Ignacio Ellacuría Award for Development Cooperation*. This prize has been supported and promoted by the Basque Government and was awarded to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). UNRWA Jordan has an agreement with the Basque Government to strengthen the vocational training offered to Palestinian refugees. In recent years, UNRWA has also received funding from the Basque Government to respond to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, empower Palestinian refugee women in Lebanon and cover the basic needs of refugees in Syria.

The Netherlands: The **International Cooperation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities** (VNG International) has implemented several initiatives to support the creation of decent jobs, particularly for youth, and to promote skills development as part of the green and digital transition. Two examples of inspiring practices stemming from this are: 1) Rotterdam's digital inclusion initiatives, including community-led programmes to bridge the digital divide and enhance digital skills among its residents, and 2) Amsterdam's multifaceted strategy to address labour market challenges, focusing on job creation, skills development and social inclusion.

United Kingdom: The **Local Government Association of England and Wales** (LGA) has been active in advancing the "*On Decent work*"—*LGA's Work Local 2024 proposals*, a reformed and ambitious employment and skills offer, linked to local services and meeting local needs⁵⁰. In it, LGA recommends that the Government move towards a devolved employment and skills service through three interlinked offers: youth pathways, working futures for adults and skills for all to provide a better match of skills.

Social dialogue

Social dialogue is an essential tool for shaping inclusive and effective employment policies and workplaces. Understanding its development and evolution, as well as the involvement of social partners, helps to provide valuable insights into collaborative governance practices.

The box "Examples on social dialogue" presents inspiring practices showing how social dialogue has evolved in member associations' local governments and to what extent social partners have been involved in developing and implementing employment policies.

Box 7. Actions taken by LRG associations pertaining to social dialogue

Estonia: The **Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities** (AECM) has developed more inclusive consultation mechanisms, whereby local governments regularly engage with employers' associations, trade unions and community representatives. Larger municipalities have established formal *Employment Councils* that bring the social partners together quarterly to discuss local labour market challenges and co-develop solutions. These councils have been particularly effective in addressing issues like youth unemployment and the integration of vulnerable groups into the workforce.

Finland: The **Association of Finnish Cities and Municipalities** (AFCM) has been involved in *Local Roma Working Groups*, engaging cities in an active dialogue on issues related to the employment of Roma. The employment situation of the Roma is challenging and dialogue has led to a broader understanding.

Malta: The **Local Councils' Association** (LCA) has established Children's Councils⁵¹ in every locality, aiming to promote youth participation and give children a voice in local governance. 36 Local Councils and three on a regional level have a Children's Council following the project launched in 2023 by the Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society.

⁵⁰ www.local.gov.uk/publications/work-local-our-employment-and-skills-offer-new-government-boost-inclusive-growth-2024

⁵¹ Children's Councils

Luxembourg: The **Association of Luxembourg Cities and Municipalities** (SYVICOL) has been involved in the "*Gemengepakt*," a municipal pact for intercultural coexistence laid out in a municipal law of 2023. By signing this pact, municipalities commit to a participatory process aimed at promoting access to information, the participation of all residents and workers and the fight against discrimination. This pact is being implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Family, Solidarity, Living Together and Reception of Refugees.

Norway: The **Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities** (KS) has been working towards enhancing communication and cooperation between employers, employees and their representatives in order to promote fair working conditions and resolve workplace issues collaboratively. Some of their key actions on social dialogue include facilitating negotiations, promoting best practice and conducting research, advocacy and conflict resolution.

Portugal: The **National Association of Portuguese Municipalities** (ANMP) has brought together various organisations connected to central and regional administration, academia, media and civil society in its discussions. These entities have also participated in meetings with municipalities, enriching the discussions further and fostering a joint and collaborative reflection in the search for more inclusive and effective solutions to the challenges of achieving the SDGs, for example SDG 17. ANMP's meetings, which were previously restricted to municipal representatives, gained new momentum from these enlarged debates, as they increased the number of organisations that include the SDGs on their agenda.

The Netherlands: The **International Cooperation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities** (VNG International) has been following the country's social dialogue, the collaborative process involving employers, employees and government representatives, which has been instrumental in shaping employment policies at both national and municipal levels. This tripartite approach, often referred to as the "polder model," has been pivotal in addressing labour market challenges.

United Kingdom: The **Local Government Association of England and Wales** (LGA) supports social dialogue by managing the largest sectoral collective. Collective bargaining ensures that both trade unions and employers remain engaged in the policies that apply to their workforces. The LGA's workforce team provides the employer with secretariat support for these bargaining units and helps councils to address challenges and develop their local workforce⁵².

⁵² www.local.gov.uk/our-support/workforce-and-hr-support

SDG 14 Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

SDG 14 is focused on protecting our oceans, which cover more than 70% of the Earth's surface and are vital to life on this planet. Oceans produce 50% of the planet's oxygen, absorb about 30% of carbon dioxide emissions, provide food and jobs for billions of people and support global trade, climate regulation and biodiversity. This is why LRG action is vital to safeguarding this invaluable resource, as the oceans are currently facing dire conditions due to pollution, overfishing, climate change and acidification.

Box 8. Actions taken by LRG associations pertaining to SDG 14

Finland: The **Association of Finnish Cities and Municipalities** (AFCM) coordinates the *Nature Municipalities Network* (Luontokunnat⁵³), whose actions include the protection of nature related to water bodies. They are also involved in shaping initiatives affecting this issue at the national and EU levels. However, their activities are not specifically dedicated to the protection of seas and lakes.

Georgia: The **National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia** (NALAG) has been actively implementing the *EcoYOU project*, funded by the European Union through the Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Program. It involves four organisations from Romania, Moldova and Georgia and focuses on tackling pollution in the Black Sea Basin, with an emphasis on protecting marine life and combatting sea pollution. The main goal of EcoYOU is to raise awareness about the environmental challenges facing marine ecosystems, particularly sea pollution, and to encourage eco-friendly behaviour. The project targets youth and local decision-makers.

Luxembourg: The **Association of Luxembourg Cities and Municipalities** (SYVICOL) members participate in the protection of nature and the environment under the central government's instrument *Nature Pact*. In parallel, *Sustainable Water Resource Management Municipalities* are responsible for the management of local water resources. They implement measures to protect water quality, prevent pollution of waterways and ensure the sustainable use of water resources. Actions include ensuring effective wastewater treatment, reducing pollutant discharges and raising public awareness of the importance of preserving aquatic ecosystems, as well as wetland restoration and preservation.

Norway: The **Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities** (KS) has been actively fostering cooperation among local and regional governments to encourage innovation and implementation of modern technologies that mitigate contamination from wastewater and sewage systems.

Spain: The **Barcelona Provincial Council** (DIBA) established a *Centre of Maritime Studies*⁵⁴ in 1983, which manages an educational programme⁵⁵ aimed at schoolchildren of all ages, from infant to secondary school, that is designed to teach them about the values of marine ecosystems, focusing on the Mediterranean in particular. It offers weekend activities aimed at families and people from all backgrounds, while also giving a voice to the fishermen's associations, environmental organisations, local artists, etc. Collaborative clean-ups are a highlight, taking place as part of Cleanup Day or United Nations Oceans Day. The Centre also promotes citizen science programmes, which are noted for their innovation and relevance. In addition, in collaboration with the Institute of Marine Sciences, it promotes the beaches of Sitges and the *Posidonia oceanica* seagrass meadows, an indispensable indicator of good marine health, on the Garraf coast.

Spain: The **Basque Local Authorities Cooperation Fund / Basque Government Development Cooperation Agency / Basque Country** adopted SDG 14 as a key objective to be addressed. Having civil society, sports professionals and amateurs all work together to clean up coasts and beaches has also been noteworthy.

53 luontokunnat.syke.fi

54 www.diba.cat/ca/web/cem

55 www.diba.cat/ca/web/cem/educacio

SDG 17 Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

In simple terms, SDG 17 is fundamentally about cooperation—bringing together countries, governments, businesses, civil society and people to work together for a better and more sustainable world. We have included below some examples of strategies, plans, projects, institutional arrangements and budgetary measures that our member organisations have undertaken to localise this SDG:

Box 9. Actions taken by LRG associations pertaining to SDG 17

Belgium: The **Union of Cities and Municipalities of Wallonia** (UVCW) has participated in the implementation of a system for monitoring indicators at the local level. Established by the Walloon Region, this action aims to make situational assessments, set objectives and measure the progress of SDG implementation using an Excel spreadsheet containing the data available at the municipal level⁵⁶.

Belgium: The **Association of the City and the Municipalities of the Brussels-Capital Region** (Brulocalis) has for many years been implementing a federal development cooperation programme that finances partnerships between Brussels and African municipalities and focuses on achieving certain SDGs (depending on the themes chosen in each partner country).

Estonia: The **Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities** (AECM) has been stepping up its support for specific skills through the Green Skills Development Programme, particularly through training programmes. Several local governments have partnered with vocational schools to develop specialised curricula on renewable energy installation, energy-efficient construction and sustainable waste management. These programmes include hands-on apprenticeships with local companies implementing green solutions, creating direct pathways to employment in the growing green sector.

Finland: In the face of pressing challenges and global calls for action, the **Association of Finnish Cities and Municipalities** (AFCM) teamed up with the Government of Finland and UN-Habitat in 2022 to establish a strategic partnership for SDG localisation. This partnership is a multi-level, multi-stakeholders effort, pooling together a large number of partners from Finland and the SDG Localization Global Network as well as technical expertise from UN habitat. This collaboration aims to harness the potential of their combined experience to localise the SDGs, while also supporting local and national governments around the globe, specifically in Africa. For 2025, the strategic partnership seeks to build on the outcomes of more than two years of collaborative work to generate an impact by promoting three means: technical cooperation, knowledge development and global advocacy.

France: **Cités Unies France** (CUF) have pursued the objective of localising SDG 17 by promoting and supporting French local authorities' participation in decentralised cooperation around the world. This can be seen in particular in the "country groups", working groups that bring together local authorities involved in a given country. Since its creation in 1975, CUF has recorded the successful creation of more than 50 decentralised cooperation partnerships between French local authorities around the globe and their counterparts, particularly in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and, to a lesser extent, in Latin America.

North Macedonia: The **Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe** (NALAS) has been active in the One Voice of LGAs in Albania project, which aims to amplify the voice of local government associations by strengthening multi-level governance and local democracy. One concrete outcome has been the support for the process of unification of local authorities in Albania under one national Association, ending over 15 years of fragmentation of the voice of local authorities across political lines.

Spain: The **Basque Local Authorities Cooperation Fund / Basque Government Development Cooperation Agency / Basque Country** has been working to promote the *European Multi-Agent Forum on the 2030 Agenda and Social Transition*, led by the Basque Government, with the collaboration of the Secretariat of the United Nations Local2030 Coalition office, PLATFORMA, the Joint Research Centre / European Research Centre and the EU Committee of the Regions. The European Forum on regional multi-agent initiatives was also launched to better respond to challenges, exchange good practices and work together on joint initiatives to strengthen regional multi-agent ecosystems and prepare the post-2030 era.

⁵⁶ Spreadsheet UVCW Belgium

The Netherlands: The International Cooperation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities

(VNG International) is well aware that the country is fast approaching the limits of its water and soil system due to intensive water and soil use and climate change. Consideration for this system must therefore be taken as a starting point in any spatial planning, including at the municipal level. This is *Water and Soil Stewardship (WBS)*, which will play a critical role on the road ahead to 2030. Some of its work is being carried out under the Delta Plan for Spatial Adaptation, a joint undertaking involving municipalities, water boards, provinces and the State that is resolutely working to make the Netherlands climate-proof and water-robust.

Ukraine: The **Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC)**, together with CEMR and with the support of the *U-Lead with Europe Programme*, has implemented the *Bridges of Trust* initiative aimed at setting up and managing intermunicipal partnerships between Ukrainian and European municipalities in order to further decentralisation reforms and strengthen local self-government in Ukraine and Europe.

Acronyms

CEMR	Council of European Municipalities and Regions
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
GIZ	The German Society for International Cooperation
HLPF	UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
LRGs	Local and Regional Governments
LRGAs	Local and Regional Government Associations
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
VLRs	Voluntary Local Reviews
VNRs	Voluntary National Reviews
VSRs	Voluntary Subnational Reviews
WHO	World Health Organisation



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The **Council of European Municipalities and Regions** (CEMR) is the oldest and broadest European association of local and regional governments, working persistently to build a more inclusive, fairer, and more resilient Europe by unleashing the full promise of local democracy. It is the only organisation that brings together national associations of local and regional governments from 40 European countries and represents, through them, all levels of territories—local, intermediate and regional. Since its creation in 1951, CEMR has promoted the construction of a united, peaceful, and democratic Europe founded on local self-government, respect for the principle of subsidiarity and the participation of citizens. CEMR continually endeavours to become the leading network of territorial leadership with a vision and the belief that local and regional governments are best equipped to lead their communities as they transition towards Europe 2050 and tackle multiple global challenges. CEMR is also the European section of the world organisation, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG).



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PLATFORMA is the pan-European coalition of towns and regions and their associations, active in city-to-city and region-to-region development cooperation at the national, European and global levels. All the partners are key players in international cooperation for sustainable development. PLATFORMA provides a hub of expertise for European local and regional governments' international actions and works to boost European local and regional governments' contributions to EU development cooperation policies and international frameworks. PLATFORMA is an externally funded action led by CEMR and co-funded by the Directorate General for International Partnerships of the European Commission (DG INTPA). A second framework partnership agreement was signed between CEMR and DG INTPA in 2022.

Further reading

**European Territories
Localise the SDGs –
The time for impact is
running out, CEMR-
PLATFORMA, 2024**



**European Territories
Localise the SDGs –
Only six summers left
to make the most of
the Decade of Action,
2023**



**European
Territories Localise
the SDGs - Making
this the Decade of
Action, 2022**



**European Territories
Localise the SDGs
- Continuity and
Change in Times of
Covid-19, 2021**



**The 2030 Agenda
through the eyes of
local and regional
government
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PLATFORMA, 2020**



**Localising SDGs
- How local and
regional governments
associations bring the
SDGs to life, 2019**



**Sustainable
Development Goals
- How Europe's
towns and regions
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2018**



**Resilience for
Ensuring Inclusive
Local Communities
and the SDGs,
CLGF-PLATFORMA
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**The SDGs in
Municipal Policy:
A Manual for Local
Governments, VNG-
PLATFORMA, 2021**



**Municipalities
and regions take
action on Global
Citizenship
Education,
PLATFORMA, 2021**



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