

Training Academy on the localisation of SDGs:
How to use the RFSC tool to make the Agenda 2030 a reality

BACKGROUND

European cities increasingly use the 2030 Agenda as a framework to build policies regarding sustainable urban development. In response to this increasing interest, the Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities (RFSC) proposes a training academy to support cities interested in the localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

1.1. The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals

On 25 September 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted a new agenda for achieving global sustainable development by 2030, the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). The 2030 Agenda sets 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which cover different dimensions of sustainability and provide 169 related targets with a total of 232 individual indicators to assess progress in meeting the goals. The 17 SDGs are very comprehensive in their scope and are also strongly interconnected (meaning that progress in one area generates positive spill overs in other domains) and require both coherence in policy design and implementation, as well as multi-stakeholder engagement to reach standards, for shared responsibilities across multiple actors. The implementation of SDGs should therefore be considered in a systemic way and rely on a whole-of-society approach for citizens to fully reap the expected benefits.



Implementing the 2030 Agenda is a global multi-stakeholder process, and all levels of government are responsible for achieving the SDGs. Local and regional governments played an important role in influencing the definition of the SDGs, successfully campaigning for a stand-alone goal on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements (SDG 11) and for international recognition of the pivotal role of local and regional government in sustainable development. SDG 11 marks a major step forward in the recognition of the transformative power of urbanisation for development and of the role of city leaders in driving global change from the bottom up.

The Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments (which brings together the major international networks of local governments including CEMR and PLATFORMA) is partnering with UNDP ART Initiative and UN-HABITAT and contributing to the related Toolbox on the localisation of the SDGs comprising a knowledge platform, a roadmap, case studies, practical tools, and other resources. The OECD has developed a Programme on “A Territorial Approach to the SDGs” counting nine pilot cities and regions. Launched at the 2020 World Urban Forum, the report A Territorial Approach to the SDGs analyses how cities and regions are increasingly using the SDGs to design, shape and implement their development strategies, policies, and plans; innovate and experiment; promote synergies, manage trade-offs; and engage public, private and non-profit stakeholders – in particular the private sector and the civil society – in the policy-making process.

In 2016, one year after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the importance of the urban context was highlighted in the policy debate. In late 2016 the United Nations adopted a specific agenda for cities, the New Urban Agenda (NUA). In parallel to the process of negotiation for the NUA, EU Member States reached a consensus on the adaptation of the NUA to the European context through the Pact of Amsterdam, establishing the “Urban Agenda for the EU”. This sets priorities and areas of action for European cities to improve the consideration of the urban dimension in all policies, multi-level dialogues, and partnerships.

The various non-exhaustive reports provide a useful policy context on SDG localisation. This training academy aims to complement the work that contributes to supporting cities in effectively localizing the SDGs in the European context. This training academy shall have a focus on integrated and participatory approach, capacity-building, peer-to-peer exchange, experience sharing, and co-creation at the local level.

1.2. The localisation of the 2030 Agenda

The 2030 Agenda emphasizes the need for an inclusive and localised approach to the SDGs. Localisation is described as the process of defining, implementing and monitoring strategies at the local level for achieving global, national and subnational sustainable development goals and targets.

"Localisation" of SDGs refers both to how local and regional governments and other local governance actors can critically contribute to the overall achievement of the SDGs through action from the bottom up and to how the SDGs can provide a framework for local development policies.

In spite of the efforts that cities, regions and their associations have made to raise and foster ownership for the localisation of the SDGs, subnational governments are at different stages throughout the localisation process.

That is why this training academy seeks to support interested cities in “localising” the SDGs. This means: tailoring them to place-based contexts, understanding how they translate in their territorial specificities and realities, measuring the distance from the national average and peer cities and providing tailored guidance to mainstream the SDG lens into territorial planning, strategy setting and policy-making.

1.3. The Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities (RFSC)

The Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities (RFSC), promoted by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) with the support of the French Ministry for Ecological transition and Territorial Cohesion, is an open online tool that aims to help European local and regional governments

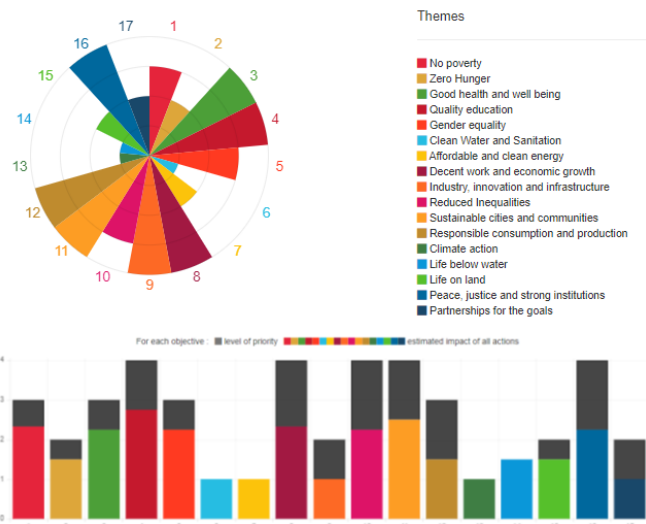
that are involved in or are willing to start a process of integrated and sustainable urban development when designing, implementing and monitoring strategies and projects at the city level.

The added value and contribution of the RFSC to deliver the principles of integrated sustainable urban development, which include the localisation of the 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs, has been recognised in the Pact of Amsterdam as well as in the Committee of the Regions Opinion on European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund and in the European Parliament legislative resolution of 27 March 2019 on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund.

The tool offers the possibility of assessing the alignment and performance of local strategies and plans using different sustainability frameworks is also provided, including the 17 SDGs, constituting an added value of the tool. With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, a new and updated version of the RFSC was launched in 2016 offering a specific framework to help local authorities in the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. Key issues of sustainable urban development strategies are explicitly addressed, e.g. citizen involvement, capacity-building and monitoring and evaluation.

When using the RFSC tool, local authorities and other partners involved are guided through a step-by-step process helping them to:

- Translate the SDGs to local context;
- Identify priorities among the SDGs and visualise them using a spider-web diagram that shows the thematic focus of local strategies and plans;
- Map local actions contributing to each SDG and assess which SDGs are best addressed or conversely what to strengthen to achieve a holistic approach and what can be done to pursue an integrated approach;
- Implement a SDG monitoring system based on a portfolio of local indicators



The toolkit can be applied to urban strategies, plans or projects at various scales, nevertheless it works better for small and medium size city strategies by offering a simple, structured and informative self-evaluation tool highly valuable not only in the design of integrated strategies as well as to support processes of peer to peer review and communication purposes.

1.4. Training academy

At the halfway point towards the Agenda 2030 and the goals set up in it, local and regional authorities not only should assess how they are implementing the 17 SDGs in their local urban strategies but also think about what shall happen after 2030. The various crisis that have emerged in the European Union and around the globe have pushed cities to become more resilient and be creative on how to include the SDGs in their local policies.

Throughout different means, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and PLATFORMA have been working to help local and regional authorities to design, implement and monitor

SDGs in their local strategies. On an annual basis, PLATFORMA is publishing a study on the localisation of SDGs, alongside support to local authorities in the writing of their Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs), feeding Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).

Furthermore, for 22 months CEMR has been working in close collaboration with URBACT as part of the Global Goals for Cities (GG4C) pilot network to support nineteen cities in the process of localising the UN 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in their respective local contexts. The GG4C has supported partner cities to plan for integrated and participative sustainable urban development. This pilot network responded to a growing interest and need among European cities in implementing the 2030 Agenda. All 19 cities developed their own Integrated Actions Plans, focussing on prioritised areas of the SDGs framework and localisation process.

The RFSC tool was used in the network to carry out a SDG Priorities and Gaps analysis in cities' urban strategies. The result of the self-assessment was a first view on how the current priorities match (or not) existing actions. This allowed them to assess how SDGs were implemented and how synergies and interlinkages could be created. Based on the positive outcome of the project, the RFSC is providing training for cities on the localisation of SDGs to a selection of eight to ten cities.

OBJECTIVE OF THE TRAINING

This training will provide support to the selected cities regarding the planning, implementation and monitoring of their sustainable urban development strategies. With the support of the RFSC tool, cities will assess how their local strategies are integrating the SDGs and what could be improved to ensure good interlinkages between SDGs and local actions.

Throughout three modules, this training academy will aim at translating the SDGs at the local level. Hopefully, this training academy will also encourage participating cities to replicate it with other colleagues or stakeholders, to ensure that the goals set up in the 2030 Agenda will be met on time.

From this training, participating cities will have a place to exchange on their experiences and issues. They will also benefit from the support given during all the activities, especially the analysis of their local strategies. Throughout different communication channels, they will get promotion for the work they are conducting. Additionally, the main result of the training will be a report showcasing the work led by cities, which will then be distributed during major events.

FUNCTIONING OF THE TRAINING

During the first meeting, the purpose of the training academy shall be explained and the first module will be held on this occasion as well. Then the exercise shall be divided into two online sessions for each module – implementation and monitoring. The duration of each session shall be between 1h and 1h30. The training academy will then end with a last meeting to assess the achievements.

The timeline below is subject to change depending on the availability of participants:

- 16.05.2023 – Session 1- Translating Global Goals to the local context
- 29.06.2023 – Session 2- Local policies and actions to achieve the SDGs
- 03.10.2023 – Session 3- Monitoring the progress of the SDGs
- 05.12.2023 – Session 4- Presenting the local SDG strategy

Kick-off & Session 1 – Translating Global Goals to the local context

Kick-off

- Introduction of the training
- Presentation of CEMR / PLATFORMA activities about the localisation of the SDGs
- Presentation of the RFSC tool
- Presentation of the URBACT pilot project Global Goals for Cities
 - How the tool was used by cities to localise SDGs in their local urban strategies
 - Testimony from one of the city
- How this training will provide support to cities in the localisation of SDGs
- How this will feed their long-term local strategies

Session 1 - Translating Global Goals to the local context

- Presentation of the first activity
 - How to use the tool to draw a first analysis of the local strategy
- Focus on SDG11 (theme of HLPF 2023)
- Discuss different strategies and actions (comparison of local strategies, best practices, etc)
 - How to include SDGs in local strategies when a crisis arises?
 - How to make SDGs relevant for local and regional authorities?
- Time for Q&A

Session 2 – Local policies and actions to achieve the SDGs

- Presentation of the results from the first activity
- Roundtable
 - How do actions help reach the overall objective while contributing to other goals?
 - What can be the issues encountered with the implementation phase and how can they be fixed?
 - How can cities exchange good practices and replications from other colleagues in their local strategy?
 - Where to find sources of funding for SDGs implementation?
- Presentation of the second activity
- Time for Q&A

Session 3 – Monitoring the progress of the SDGs

- Presentation of the results from the second activity
- Analysis of the work done
 - from estimated impact to real effects
 - Challenges encountered in the monitoring phase
 - Based on the analysis, how can local strategies be improved?

Session 4 – Presenting the local SDG strategy

- Analysis of the results, exchange of good practices
- How to build on the exercise to replicate
 - At different scales
 - With other stakeholders
- Feedback

ANNEX 1 – EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FORM

BASIC INFORMATION			
CITY		COUNTRY	
FIRST NAME		LAST NAME	
TITLE			
EMAIL		TELEPHONE	

ABOUT THE CITY
Brief description of the city
Basic city data
a. Population size
b. Surface area (km ²)
c. Main source of prosperity (e.g. industry, trade, tourism, creative industry, etc.)
d. City URL/webpage
STATEMENT OF INTEREST AND EXPERIENCE
a. Why is the city interested in the training academy? Explain the motivation and expectations for the city to participate
b. What is the city's experience working on the SDGs (highlights of the city's experience in EU and SDG projects)? Please describe.
c. Was there a strategy developed as regards the implementation of SDGs?

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