
Designing local strategies for sustainable development: Benchmarking analysis on international case-studies

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Designing local strategies for sustainable development: Benchmarking analysis on international case-studies

April 2020



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LEGAL NOTICE

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1. Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was officially adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015 (Resolution A/RES/70/1) as a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development, i.e. economic, social and environmental. Today its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets represent the framework for the majority of the initiatives and policies at local, national and international level that will be implemented until 2030.

The development perspective linked to the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs is clearly multidimensional and the Agenda explicitly indicates the need for an integrated, multilevel and participatory approach for the pursuit of a vision of sustainable human development.

THE GLOBAL GOALS For Sustainable Development



Compared to the previous Millennium Development Goals, the current SDGs are integrated and indivisible, have a global relevance and are universally applicable. In other words, the SDGs apply not only to developing and emerging countries, but rather to each and every country in the world alike, adapting to the specificities of each national context according to its priorities.

Furthermore, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires an innovative multi-level governance approach, going beyond the traditional scope of the Nation-State in favour of a vertical alignment (among the various levels - international, national, regional, local) and horizontal engagement (between public, private and social actors) with a view of policy coherence towards a common vision. It is therefore essential to avoid the traditional dichotomy "top-down" vs. "bottom-up" given the continuous interaction of resources, skills, knowledge and initiatives between levels and sectors.

The United Nations and several international organizations have devoted valuable efforts to create space for broad international consultations on the implementation of the Agenda. As argued by Oxfam and ARCO (2016) broad discussion continues to characterise the operational strategies for making the





new Agenda effective in different arenas of action. The following key questions are central to current debates: How can the coherence of growth and development strategies be ensured in order to achieve the SDGs? At what level – global, national, sub-national or local – should strategic plans and partnerships take place? How can the 2030 Agenda be implemented and monitored across different and distinct contexts?

It is clear today that sustainable development is determined primarily – but not uniquely – at the international and national levels. In terms of the former, i) global campaigns and advocacy against poverty, inequalities and environmental degradation, ii) global public goods and collective action, and iii) the international alignment of objectives and policy coherence are fundamental, among others. In terms of the latter, i) national recognition and protection of human rights, ii) macro-economic policies and fiscal regulation, and iii) national cohesion and access to basic social services play key roles. However, what is still too often overlooked within contemporary debates, is the role of stakeholders in ‘local spaces’ and territories in tackling multidimensional forms of poverty and inequality and pursuing sustainable development.

Since 2014 UNDP and UN Habitat, in collaboration with several international organizations of local authorities – namely, United Cities and Local Government (UCLG), United Regions Organization / Forum of Regional Governments and Global Associations of Regions (ORU-Fogar), Platforma, among other – and numerous territorial realities (including mainly Italian and Spanish regions) has been actively animating an international debate and exchange on the Localization of the Sustainable Development Goals. In general terms, this debate has substantially emphasized on the one hand the importance of adapting the Sustainable Development Goals to local areas, and on the other the fundamental role played by local and regional governments in their pursuit (UNDG, 2014; GTF, 2016; Bentz et al., 2019; Granados & Noferini, 2019; UNDP, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c).

Within this scenario, the Tuscany regional government – having been one of the most active European regions in the international debate on SDGs localization – is currently designing its Regional Strategy for Sustainable Development. Indeed, the Tuscany region is characterized by both positive performances in terms of sustainable development along with priority challenges requiring integrated actions to position the region as a leading actor for sustainable development at national and European level.

For these reasons, the Tuscany regional government funded a research project aiming at increasing the awareness of policy-makers about their key role in the promotion of sustainable development by improving their knowledge on how to design, implement and monitor tailored strategies, policies and initiatives.

In particular, the general objective of this research is to conduct a benchmarking analysis of selected local strategies for sustainable development in order to draw lessons and examples potentially able to inspire – and contribute to – the design of the regional strategy in Tuscany.

This research fits within the vibrant debate and real efforts on SDGs in Italy stimulated, among others, by the Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASviS) through several awareness-raising and advocacy activities, by the Ministry of Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea with the approval and implementation of the National Sustainable Development Strategy, as well as by several regional governments, metropolitan cities, municipalities and their associations that are designing innovative place-based strategies and policies to pursue sustainable development.

Finally, this report intends opening further opportunities for learning-by-comparing and peer-to-peer support and exchange within the international community of policymakers, practitioners, scholars and activists committed to sustainable development around the world.





2. Methodology

This research was conducted by ARCO (Action Research for CO-development) c/o PIN Scrl – University of Florence, in collaboration with the Tuscany regional government – in particular its Directorate for International Affairs – and ANCI Toscana, over the period November 2019 - April 2020.

As starting point, without any intention of exhaustiveness, a primary list of benchmarking experiences of local strategies for sustainable development useful for a “learning-by-comparing” perspective was derived by exploring the wide depository of relevant reports and documentation collected by several initiatives on SDG localization.

Åland (Finland)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and sustainability agenda for Åland
Basque Country (Spain)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda Euskadi – Basque Country 2030 • Agenda Euskadi – Basque Country 2030 – Monitoring Reports (2017-2018)
City of Buenos Aires (Argentina)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary Local Review - Building a Sustainable and Inclusive Buenos Aires (2019)
Catalonia (Spain)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 2030 agenda: transform Catalonia, improve the world • National Plan for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda
Flanders (Belgium)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision 2050 – A long-term strategy for Flanders • A 2030 objectives framework for Flanders
New York City (USA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OneNYC2050 • Voluntary Local Review (2018)
North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability Strategy for North Rhine-Westphalia
Palawan (Philippines)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Palawan Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan 2015-2020 • Palawan Sustainable Development Agenda 2016-2030
Seoul Metropolitan City (South Korea)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seoul Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 - 17 Ways to Change Seoul
Region of Valencia (Spain)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals in the Region of Valencia: The local dimension of the 2030 Agenda • A region committed to Cooperation and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
Wales (UK)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wales and the Sustainable Development Goals (2019)

Source: Authors





Moreover, a further group of practices were selected as box highlights for specific design issues:

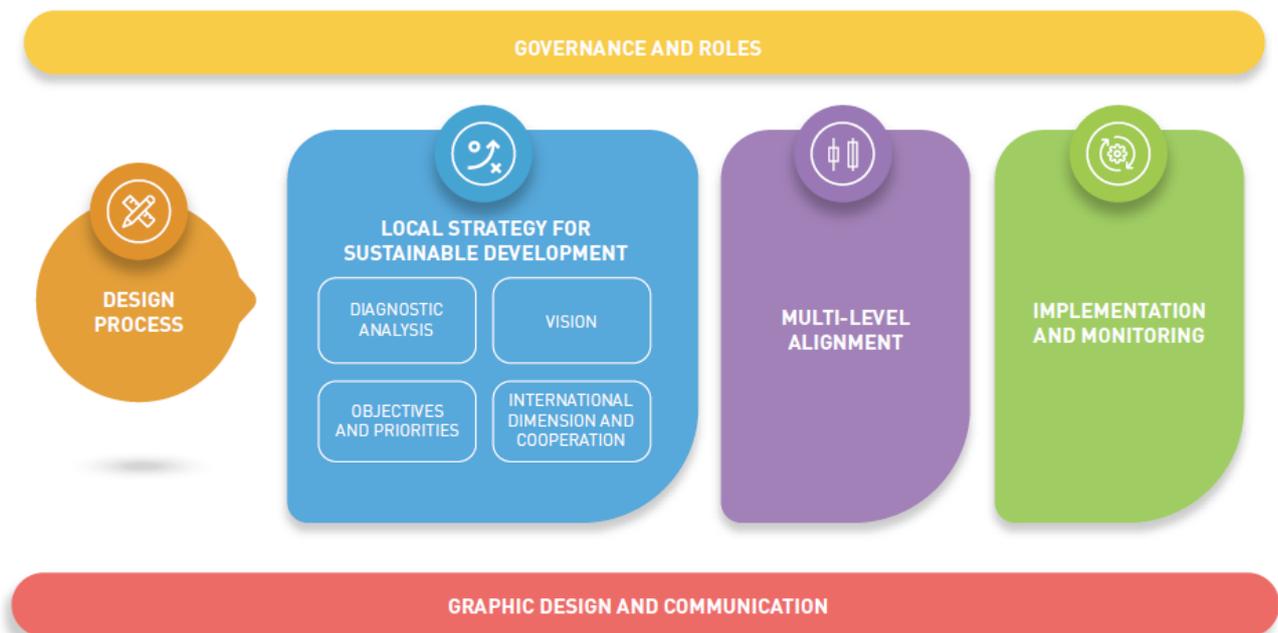
- Box 1. The online platform for participation “Decide Madrid” by Madrid City Council (Spain);
- Box 2. The diagnostic analysis conducted by the Lombardy Region (Italy);
- Box 3. The multilevel alignment in Belgium – the case of Flanders (Belgium);
- Box 4. The “Mandala” Tool developed by the National Confederation of Municipalities in Brazil.

Once completed this selection, a desk-based analysis was conducted on official documents, reports, websites and media communication concerning each strategy, in order to derive lessons on the following key issues of policy design:

- Design process, including political validity, phases, principles and participatory tools;
- Pillars of the strategies, including diagnostic analysis, vision, selection of goals and targets;
- Multilevel governance, in terms of vertical alignment with global, supranational and national strategies;
- Governance and horizontal articulation of responsibilities, roles and commitments (e.g. with local authorities, private sector organizations, civil society and academia);
- Implementation and monitoring, including enforcement and monitoring mechanisms and system of indicators;
- Graphic design and communication strategies, including structure, contents and lengths of strategies, graphic layout and communication tools.

Our interpretative framework is thus grounded in the connection among these key issues and its represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Interpretative framework for the benchmarking analysis on local strategies for sustainable development



Source: Authors

In the following pages, this report describes the findings of this benchmarking analysis for each key issue, and then it highlights both general and specific lessons learnt and recommendations to support the Tuscany regional government in the design of its Regional Strategy for Sustainable Development.





3. Benchmarking analysis

3.1 The design process

3.1.1 Process and political ownership

Political ownership in promoting sustainable development is fundamental, and, particularly, the primary role played by local institutions in the process of designing strategies for sustainable development is evident. Without the political will of subnational governments, it is impossible to start such a process, and, above all it, is impossible for the strategies to have practical consequences on future planning and policies adopted (GTF, 2016). Similarly, long-term policy support plays a major role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. At local level, governance reforms depend firstly on the commitment to the implementation of the SDGs shown by public authorities, and secondly by stakeholders and citizens (Granados & Noferini, 2019).

The timing with which the competent institutions have started to deal with the process of defining the strategy linked to Agenda 2030 and SDGs is different. Similarly, in analysing our case-studies, important differences emerged regarding the duration of the process and the steps that were necessary. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015 triggered the development of local strategies in almost all the cases analysed.

In some cases, however, local governments started to work on issues related to sustainable development already before 2015. For instance:

- The **Seoul Metropolitan Council** already in 2013 had created a Sustainable Development Commission that in the two-year period 2013-2015 worked on a *Master Plan for Sustainable Development*, evaluating the sustainability of the metropolitan city based on 30 Sustainable Development Indicators identified internally. The second Sustainable Development Commission (2015-17) instead focused on the implementation of the Master Plan, trying to include the theme of sustainability in the plans and policies of the Seoul Metropolitan Government. The process ended in November 2017 with the publication of the *Seoul Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 - 17 Ways to Change Seoul* strategy.
- The **Palawan** (Philippines) published in 2014 the *Palawan Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan (PSDSAP 2015-2020)* promoted by the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD). The aim was to preserve key areas from an environmental point of view and create a sustainability-sensitive economy. The same PCSD in 2016 published the *Palawan Sustainable Development Agenda (Palawan Agenda 2016-2030)*, in which the principles promoted by the previous document are interconnected with the United Nations 2030 Agenda.
- **Wales** also started their consultation process in 2014. In 2019 the UK Government has submitted a Voluntary National Review report to the United Nations, and the Welsh Government published a *Wales Supplementary Report* to provide consolidated and additional content on the different approach taken by Wales to sustainable development.





As regards the reference bodies for the strategy definition process, two main lines of action can be distinguished:

- Creation of an ad hoc institutions – or use a pre-existing one – delegated to sustainable development issues and definition of the strategy and related activities. For example: Advisory Council for the Sustainable Development (CADS) of **Catalonia**, linked to the Department of Transparency and Foreign and Institutional Relations and Affairs; Inter-Ministerial Conference for Sustainable Development (IMCSD) in **Belgium**. Each of the delegated institutions has a different composition, also depending on the territorial level of action: the Catalan CADS is a strategic consultative body of the Government on issues related to sustainability, created in 1998 and composed of a president and 15 advisors, people of recognized prestige in the academic, institutional and economic fields, supported by a technical staff made up of sustainability experts; the Catalan Inter-departmental Commission, with which CADS works, is composed by the secretary generals of all departments (13 ministries of the Catalan government); the Belgian IMCSD is made up of ministries responsible for sustainable development and international cooperation at federal, regional and community level, and is responsible for coordinating the dialogue on the 2030 Agenda between the various authorities;
- Delegation by the local government to an internal institution, with ownership of the government itself which varies according to the case. The internal bodies involved are, for example: Foreign Relations and Coordination Directorate (**Basque Country**); the General Secretariat and International Relations (SGyRI), responsible for the Agenda, and the Undersecretariat of Strategic Management and Institutional Quality, which coordinates the process of adapting the Agenda, of the Government of the City of **Buenos Aires** (GCBA); General Directorate of Cooperation and Solidarity of the **Region of Valencia**.

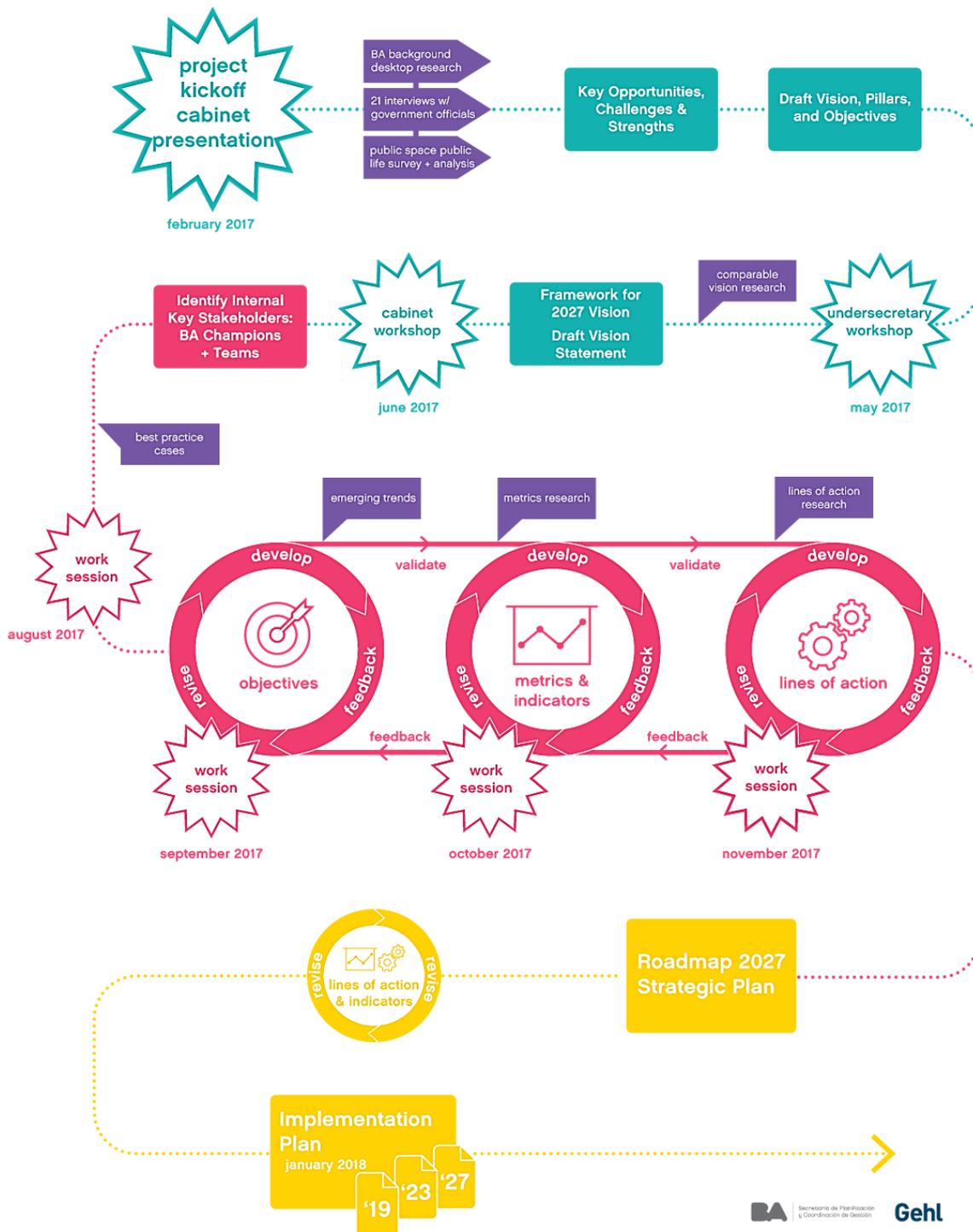
In some cases, the above-mentioned institutions do not have the power nor the legal mandate to impose themselves and they usually face difficulty in getting their recommendations considered and accepted by local governments (Granados & Noferini, 2019)

Alternatively, the **City of Buenos Aires** in 2017 engaged Gehl, an external institution, to create a transformational roadmap for the city over the next ten years (see figure below), in partnership with the Secretary of Planning, Evaluation and Control of Expenditure (SECPECG). The goal is to create a long-range strategic plan for the city, and to make the municipal government more people-focused, collaborative, and evidence driven in the process. Cross-departmental teams led the development of each pillar, which helped achieve the city's goal of collaborating across departments. This process engaged hundreds of city staff across city departments and led to an amount of interdepartmental collaboration and knowledge sharing. Gehl led a series of workshops to develop each content area.





Figure 2: Ciudad de Buenos Aires (GCBA) - A people-first approach to the strategic planning process



Source: *Creating Buenos Aires' first ever citywide strategic plan*, Gehl

The official approval of the strategies is the final step of the design process, which shows the political ownership by local institutions involved. As reported in the following table, the approval of the strategies analysed is usually given by local governments, through a presidential or prime minister's signature, or by local parliaments or councils, through the adoption of resolutions or laws. Coordination between the executive and the legislative branches is useful to avoid the SDGs





to be an exclusive government-driven exercise, committing instead local political actors to non-partisan and long-term development strategies (Granados & Noferini, 2019).

Place	Official Approval
Basque Country	Strong ownership by the Basque Government on the process, approval by the Consejo de Gobierno Vasco on April 10, 2018.
Catalonia	Strong ownership by the Catalan Government, approval of the strategy <i>Plan Nacional para la Agenda 2030 en Catalunya</i> by the Government on October 8, 2019.
Wales	Commitment by the First Minister for Wales and the wider Cabinet, that resulted in agreement in the National Assembly for Wales of the <i>Well-being of Future Generations Act</i> and its seven well-being goals for Wales (law approved in 2015).
Palawan	The Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) adopted the <i>Palawan Sustainable Development Agenda (Palawan Agenda 2030)</i> through Resolution No.16-566 on 18 November 2016.
Buenos Aires	Institutionalization of Agenda 2030 signed on August 9, 2016, by the Cooperation Agreement between the National Council for the Cooperation of Social Policies (CNCPS) and the Government Headquarters of the City.
Region of Valencia	Valencian Government Law 18/2017, December 14.
Åland	The members of parliament and government, in 2014, adopted a collective goal of reach total sustainable development in Åland by 2051.

Source: Authors

3.1.2 Participatory mechanisms

A particularly relevant aspect in designing strategies and transitions towards sustainable development is linked to participatory mechanisms, i.e. the level of involvement of citizens, civil society, academia and the business world during the various stages (Clark & al., 2019). The localization of SDGs may take advantage of the proximity between subnational governments and local stakeholders and simultaneously it may enhance their engagement and commitment for sustainable development (Granados & Noferini, 2019).

Not all the paths that led to the drafting of local strategies can be considered participatory, and it has not always been easy to find information related to this issue, despite its relevance.

The possibility to express rights at local level can be a learning experience for many individuals who, relying on successful experiences, are empowered to become active citizens in all aspects of their life and even in more complex contexts (i.e. the national context). Furthermore, mobilisation around specific local issues, which are perceived as closer to everyday life, can become an opportunity for citizens to join efforts and work together in formal and informal groups.





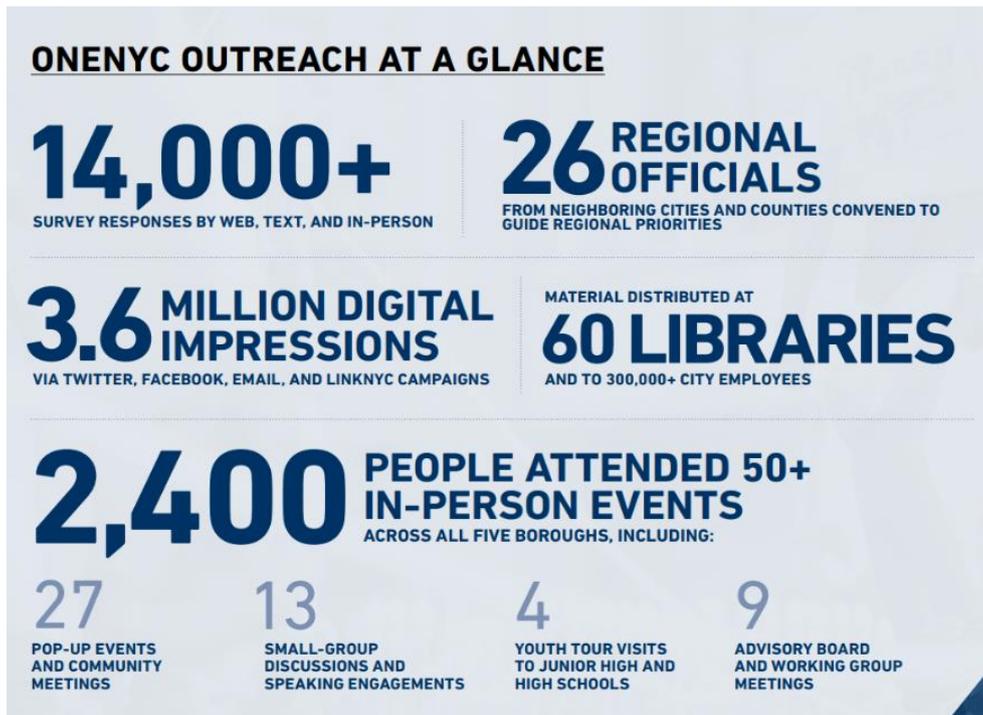
The following illustrative examples emerged concerning citizens' participation and participatory tools from the analysis of the case-studies:

- Workshop on the **Palawan Research and Sustainable Development Agenda** attended by technicians from local governments, policymakers, academic and advanced training institutions, representatives from the private sector and from commerce and industries. The action plan was formulated thanks to the joint effort of the different stakeholders. The involvement of governmental and non-governmental agencies, indigenous organizations and local communities, as well as sector groups, was also important, as they were able to have their say on the definition of the agenda and on the subjects of particular interest to them.
- In **Wales**, there have been several steps through which the Government has sought to involve citizenship as broadly as possible. Between 2014 and 2015, the 'Wales We Want National Conversation' involved 44 public bodies in promoting sustainable development and making it the central theme in the principles of each organization. To bring the issue of sustainable development closer to the local level, local governments have been supported by key players. The 'Wales We Want Conversation' involved around 7,000 people across Wales and tested different ways of engaging citizens (beyond media coverage). It was an opportunity for many to give their opinion on the development process and to influence the public debate on the long-term challenges that Wales will face. In January 2019, the government, with the support of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales - a guardian of future generations which has the objective to help public bodies and those who make policy in Wales to think about the long-term impact their decisions have - promoted two events for stakeholder engagement. Public and private sector, academia and civil society representatives were involved with the aim of understanding how Wales can contribute to the 2030 Agenda with its own development goals and how it can increase efforts to achieve sustainable development. Finally, in the Spring of 2019, the Government promoted 'Our Futures Wales', to offer communities the opportunity to participate in the drafting of the *Future Generation Reports* and bring what they consider a priority at the centre of the agenda. 'Our Futures Wales' offered organizations, groups and representatives from all sectors of Wales the opportunity to discuss important issues, with the aim of promoting a collective manifesto before local and national elections.
- The creation of the 'Forum for Social Development' in **Åland** (Finland) in February 2016 kicked off the process for creating the regional strategy. All citizens were invited to participate in workshops to decide which vision should be at the centre of the strategy, and 96 people made proposals. Subsequently, a panel of experts consisting of 59 people was asked to formulate proposals that would allow the realization of the previously elaborated vision taking into consideration the SDGs. Based on these proposals, a draft strategy was developed and discussed in numerous working groups, including meetings open to all citizens of the Åland Islands. A new draft was therefore developed considering the results emerged from the working groups and was assessed in June 2016 by the Development and Sustainability Council, which adopted the vision and the seven strategic development objectives.
- In **New York City** more than 16,000 citizens shaped the vision and the priorities that make up *OneNYC 2050*. Residents from every neighbourhood attended community forums, took public survey, with the aim of analysing what works – and what doesn't – in New York and what they want for the city of the future. The following figure shows how the New York strategy process involved citizens.





Figure 3: OneNYC 2050, a participatory strategy



Source: OneNYC 2050

Promoting citizens' participation can be costly and time-consuming, as adopting inclusion tools could lead to challenges in the elaboration of the local strategy: participatory governance processes required much time to discuss the vast range of goals related to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. The process can result slower due to organizational difficulties, as the SDGs are not always considered a priority for civil society organizations. Many stakeholders do have expertise on their sectors but could lack the knowledge and expertise needed to identify multiple linkages between goals and targets in a balanced and integrated manner.





Box 1. Decide Madrid

Decide Madrid (DM) is the e-participation platform of the Madrid City Council which aims at encouraging the participation of citizens in the management of the city, involving them in the generation of innovative and viable ideas and proposals in order to improve their quality of life. DM allows citizens, associations, NGOs and companies to be involved in the policy cycle in Madrid municipality. Madrid City Council designed and launched the Decide Madrid platform in 2015. DM allows citizens to make proposals, vote in citizen consultations, propose participatory budget projects, decide on municipal regulations and open debates to exchange opinions with others.

DM received the 2018 United Nations Public Service Award in the Category “Making institutions inclusive and ensuring participation in decision-making”. The formal proprietor of the platform and the software used (“Consul”, open source software) is the City Council itself, and the General Directorate of Citizen Participation of the City Council is in charge of its management.

Decide Madrid aims to ensure transparency of government proceedings in the city of Madrid and to widen public participation in Council decision-making and spending processes.

The website, powered by open source software Consul, allows Madrid's citizens to engage with the local government in four ways:

- Participatory budgeting - citizens can make spending proposals for projects in the city up to a budget of €100 million
- Proposals - citizens can shape government actions by directly proposing and supporting ideas for new legislation
- Consultations - Madrid City Council gives citizens the opportunity to provide opinions about and vote on council proceedings
- Debate - a platform for deliberation which doesn't lead to direct decision making but gives the City access to public opinion

Participatory budgeting attracted 45,522 people to get involved in its first year, and Decide Madrid now has 400,000 registered users in 2018.

DM has facilitated changes in the organizational culture of the city council and concerning the traditional ways of citizen participation. Until 2018, more than 1,000 actions have been decided by citizens, the level of participation has reached more than 200,000 citizens in some activities and citizens decide around 2% of the municipal budget.

The final implementation by the City Council depends on the feasibility of the input received and the will of the city council. Citizens are provided with information to facilitate their participation, but some of them complain that they lacked information about the outcome of their contributions. The creation, implementation and the operational costs associated with DM are funded by the city council's budget, and the use is free for citizens.

DM is an example of the importance of government and public servants' commitment to, and their knowledge about, citizen participation in order to ensure the success of e-participation initiatives. All government areas and administrative units of the city council contribute to DM by proposing topics and evaluating the proposals. Sometimes, citizen's proposals change the planning, priorities and ways of working of the city council.

Sources:

<http://consulproject.org/en/>

<https://www.involve.org.uk/resources/case-studies/decide-madrid>





3.2 Pillars of the strategies

3.2.1 Diagnostic analysis

The presence of a diagnostic analysis in the strategies (or in specific reports that act as a corollary) is very useful as it allows to draw a clear picture of the situation at the time of the analysis, as well as providing an initial baseline of the indicators taken into consideration. In several cases, the strategic document itself does not contain a diagnostic analysis, but this is contained in the annual monitoring reports.

The **Catalan** Government has developed a document with the diagnostic of the situation concerning each Goal at the international, European and Catalan level, with the Catalan diagnostics that analyses the targets established by Agenda 2030 for each SDG. Finally, the main challenges that Catalonia will possibly face for each SDG and their respective targets are outlined. This document contains a chapter for each of the first 16 SDGs (number 17 is excluded from our analysis as it is purely instrumental in nature).

As for the **Region of Valencia**, the Generalitat has published a document, *Hoja de ruta para ciudades y pueblos de la Comunitat Valenciana* (Roadmap for cities and towns of the Valencian Community), which contains an analysis of the situation for each SDG both internationally and locally. The particular innovation brought by this diagnostic is given by the fact that each objective is analysed by a different institution engaged at local and international level on the reference themes (for example for Objective 1 the selected entities are Save the Children and the Spanish NGO Acción contra el Hambre, Action Against Hunger). After a presentation of the institution and its principles, each SDG is defined with their respective targets, the current situation at international and local level, and finally some proposals for practical actions to be developed on the topic. The Valencian Generalitat also developed a baseline data framework for each indicator identified by SDGs and reference targets. The framework is a useful tool for compactness, even if there is no comparison with data at national and European level and the trend of the data.

The **New York** strategy reports data, graphs and maps for each of the six challenges identified as priority, showing data trends from 2005 to 2017 and forecast. In particular, OneNYC2050 makes extensive use of georeferenced data and information represented in several maps, highlighting differences among areas of the city of New York in relation to relevant topics, such as segregation, educational attainment and housing.





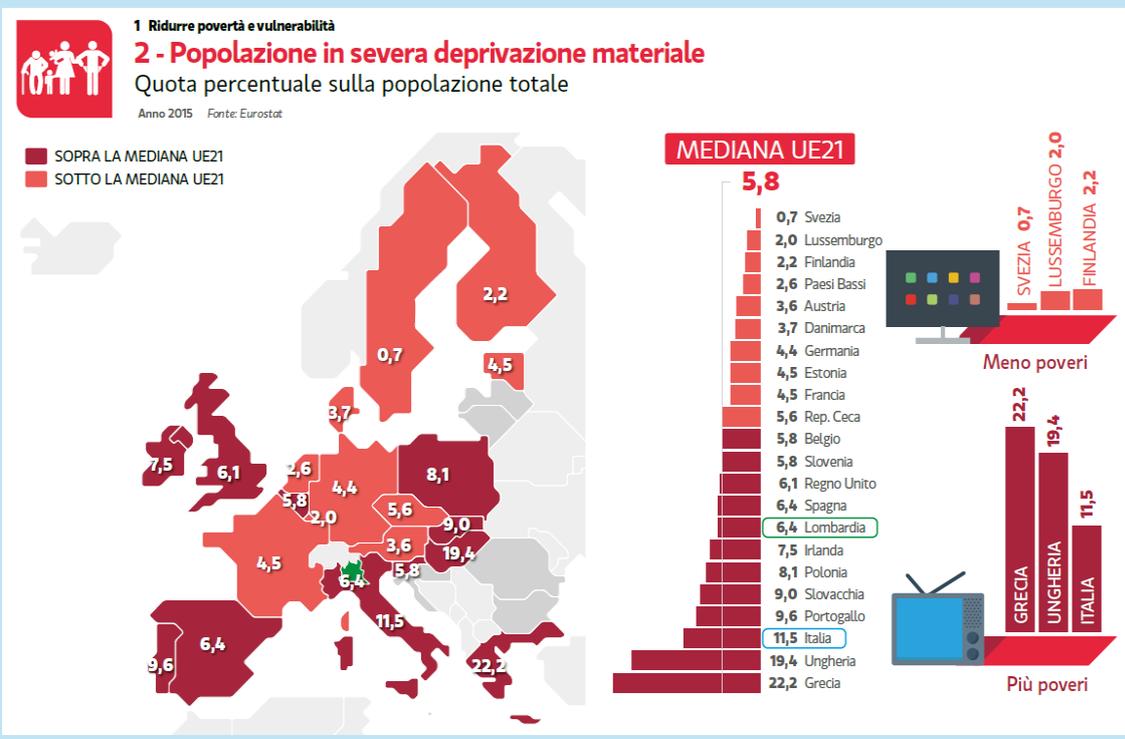
Box 2. Diagnostic analysis for the Lombardy Region

The *Lombardy Report 2017 (Rapporto Lombardia)* is an analysis tool elaborated by PoliS Lombardia to support policy makers for the regional implementation of the 2030 Agenda, that looks at Lombardy through the lens of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

The report showcases relevant regional policies and compares the achievement of the SDGs in Lombardy with 21 OECD countries from the European Union based on data from the UN, Eurostat, and Italian Institute of Statistics (ISTAT). For each SDG, two synthetic indicators are identified and presented through infographics that "position" Lombardy compared to other countries. The benchmarking analysis aims at highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of Lombardy compared to the restricted panel of statistical indicators defined, shared and available internationally. The Report then presents the contents and targets of the SDGs, their declination on Lombardy and the related indicators, with a comparison from a temporal and spatial point of view. The most relevant regional and national policies are then presented with respect to the targets of interest for Lombardy and, in the last paragraph, the prospects and possible developments are outlined.

The second edition, the *Lombardy Report 2018*, updated the previous report and assessed Lombardy's performance in a one-year time period: the region achieved significant progress in SDGs 4 (quality education), 5 (gender equality), 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), and 17 (partnerships), while there was a decline in performance in SDGs 1 (no poverty), 8 (decent work and economic growth), and 10 (reduced inequalities), while the other goals remained stable. Furthermore, the Lombardy Report 2018 updates the positioning of the Region with respect to the other countries and summaries the progress of the Region in relation to each SDG.

Figure 4: Analysis of severe material deprivation rate, indicator selected by Lombardy for SDG 1



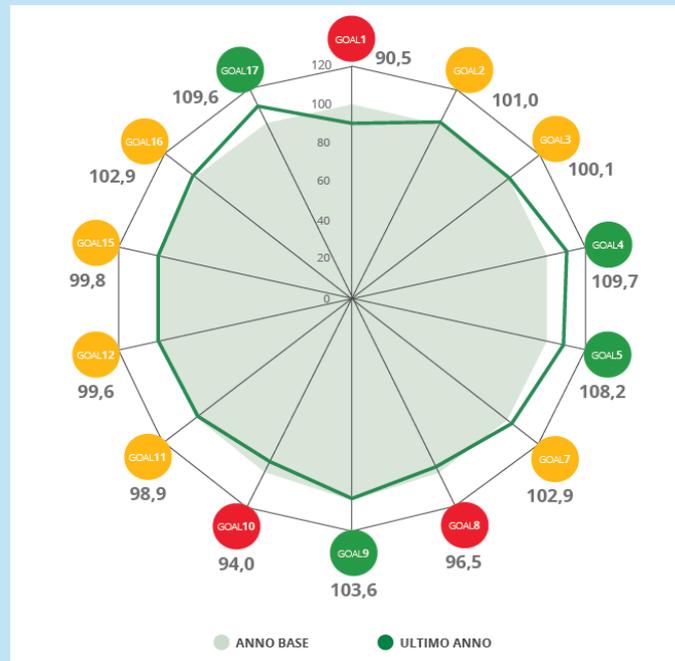
Source: Lombardy Report 2017

The radar chart below provides a synthetic interpretation of Lombardy's performance in 2018 compared to 2017.





Figure 5: Radar chart, Lombardy's position and performance



Source: Lombardy Report 2018

This process developed further in the 2019 Lombardy Report, which aims to provide a useful tool for the regional planning of Lombardy, thanks to the comparative mapping of the Lombard territories (i.e. provinces) and the analysis and comment chapters for each SDG.

Sources:

- Lombardy report 2017
- Lombardy report 2018
- Lombardy report 2019

3.2.2 Vision

Having a clear and long-term vision for sustainable development is crucial to set well-defined priorities and provide societal commitment and consistency to sustainable development strategies. In this regard, the specificities of the area of interest have a great relevance and must be actively considered when outlining the sustainable development vision (OECD, 2009; Biggeri & Ferrannini, 2014).

Sometimes it is best, for communicative purposes, to outline the vision through what in business studies is called a "vision statement". The vision statement is a sentence describing the future objectives of the organization; applied to local strategies for sustainable development, it is the specific part of the strategy that outlines in a concise and inspiring way the direction towards which the strategy aims to move.





In order to be as effective and as communicative as possible, a good vision statement must fulfill the following criteria: conciseness, clarity, defined time horizon, future-oriented, stability, be challenging, be abstract, be inspirational (Kantabutra & Avery, 2010).

All the case studies examined in this report have a clear and defined vision, but only few of them express it explicitly in a vision statement. Among the case studies, the vision statements of the **Palawan Sustainable Development Agenda**, of the *Development and Sustainability Agenda for Åland*, the *2030 objectives framework for Flanders*, *OneNYC2050* and the *Agenda Euskadi Basque Country 2030* reported below, are aligned with most of the criteria:

Document	Vision statement
A 2030 objectives framework for Flanders	“Vision 2050 sees Flanders as an inclusive, open, resilient and internationally connected region that creates prosperity and well-being for its citizens in a smart, innovative and sustainable manner.”
Development and Sustainability Agenda for Åland	“Everyone can flourish in a viable society on the Islands of Peace.”
Palawan Sustainable Development Agenda	“A Good and Dignified Life Enjoyed by Palawan, through the Pursuit of an Ecologically-Balanced and Biodiversity-Centered Economic Development Supported by Green Jobs and Sustainable Energy”
OneNYC2050	“Together we will build a strong and fair city.”
Agenda Euskadi Basque Country 2030	“Our goal for 2030 is to make our region, and our planet, a fairer, safer, healthier, more equal and, ultimately, more sustainable place for everyone.”

Source: Authors

The vision of the *2030 objectives framework for Flanders* contains a specific time reference, i.e. 2050, which is common to the *OneNYC2050*. It is interesting to notice how 2030 and 2050 are the two time reference points commonly used for the visions; the former explicitly referring to the *Agenda 2030* and the latter taking as the reference point the time in which a new born today will be in the workforce and start a family in the future.

The vision statement of the **Palawan Sustainable Development Agenda** does not contain any precise time horizon, but it is meticulous in defining the objectives and putting the focus on environmental sustainability, particularly relevant in the context of an island with an immense natural capital endowment, making the island specificity the core of the vision statement.

In the context of localizing SDGs at the territorial level, an additional criterion needs to be added: participation. Many of the vision statements in the case studies have been chosen through a participatory process, as in the case of the *Development and Sustainability Agenda for Åland*, in which each word of the vision statement has been the object of collective decision. Furthermore, in the Åland Islands case, and probably thanks to the strong ownership deriving from this participatory process, the vision statement is the pivot around which the whole strategy revolves around.





3.2.3 Objectives and priorities

The choice of priorities is a crucial step that subnational governments must undertake in the process of designing local strategies to shape their local development visions, goals and policies (GTF, 2016). The priorities must be sensitive to the demands, needs and contextual social, economic and political characteristics of the territory (Granados & Noferini, 2019). Prioritising allows to identify key regional and local development issues for the context and to link them to the SDGs, which should be considered as a framework to better address local and regional challenges and opportunities (OECD, 2020).

There are several ways in which priorities are chosen by local and regional governments in the strategies analysed:

- A. Adapt the international SDG framework to the local context.

Seoul Metropolitan Council

Same goals, with different names and claims best suited to the local context, targets chosen and structured ad hoc (see the second goal of the Seoul strategy below).

Goal 2. Food/agriculture

Improve the distribution structure between urban and rural areas and support urban agriculture for food security and nutritional balance of the citizens

- 2.1. *Ensure safe, nutritious and balanced food for all citizens.*
- 2.2. *End all forms of malnutrition and do utmost to manage the nutritional status of the biologically vulnerable class such as children under five, adolescent girls, expectant mothers, nursing mothers and the elderly.*
- 2.3. *Establish a desirable distribution structure with the local agri-fishery producers and support urban agriculture not only to encourage small-scale food production but also to cope with poverty and mental health.*

- B. Connect the selected local priorities and targets to the SDGs or connect the selected local indicators directly to SDGs.

Wales

The seven Wales well-being goals both translate the SDGs into the Welsh context and articulate our nation's contribution to the SDGs. Climate change was considered the most critical issue facing future generations, alongside giving children the best start in life, the role of communities, global environmental limits, diversity and inequality, democracy and culture.

1. A prosperous Wales
2. A resilient Wales
3. A healthier Wales
4. A more equal Wales
5. A Wales of cohesive communities





6. A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
7. A globally responsible Wales

In addition, Wales created a correspondence table between the 46 National Well-being Indicators for Wales and the SDGs.

Åland

Strategic Development Goals 2030

1. Happy people whose inherent resources increase (linked to SDGs 3 and 4)
2. Everyone feels trust and has real possibilities to participate in society (linked to SDGs 1,2,5,8,10,16)
3. All water is of good quality
4. Ecosystems in balance and biological diversity
5. Attractive for residents, visitors and businesses
6. Significantly higher proportion of energy from renewable sources, plus increased energy efficiency
7. Sustainable and mindful patterns of consumption and production

C. Combine the SDGs with other goals considered priorities for the subnational level.

Palawan

“The 10 PSDSAP Sectoral Goals (Palawan Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan) and the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) were the references used in crafting the 13 Palawan Sustainable Development Goals (Palawan SD Agenda)”

- i. Environmental/ ecological stability and continuous formation of natural capital;*
 1. Life on Land (UN)
 2. Life Below Water (UN)
 3. Combat Climate Change (UN)
- ii. Economic wealth created and equitably distributed;*
 4. Sustainable Urban and Rural Communities (UN)
 5. Innovation, Energy and Resource efficiency, enterprise and infrastructure (UN)
 6. Economic growth and sustainable tourism (PSDSAP)
- iii. Social and cultural capital protected, developed, and enhanced;*
 7. Indigenous People (PSDSAP)
 8. Zero Hunger (UN)
 9. Equality and prosperity for all (UN)
 10. Quality Education for all (UN)
 11. Good Health and well-being (UN)
- iv. Rights-based governance in place to facilitate sustainable development.*
 12. Peace, Justice and good governance (UN)
 13. Sustainable financing and partnership (PSDSAP)





- D. Develop priorities based on sustainable development issues at local level, with a subsequent connection with the SDG framework.

Flanders

To implement its *Vision 2050*, the Government of Flanders selected seven transition priorities:

1. circular economy transition
2. smart living
3. industry 4.0
4. lifelong learning transition
5. caring and living together transition
6. mobility transition
7. energy transition.

Flemish 2030 objectives framework not only transposes the 2030 ASD for Flanders by basing the objectives on the SDGs and their underlying targets, but also it links explicitly the framework to *Vision 2050*.

48 objectives (*Flemish 2030 Objectives*), each one with one or more indicators, divided between:

- inclusive society
- new economy
- environmental boundaries of the planet
- open and agile government in partnership.

North-Rhine Westphalia

Based on the strategy paper from June 2014 and the feedback received in response to this first version of the sustainability strategy, the State Government has identified the following 19 fields of action that adequately cover the three traditional dimensions of sustainability reflecting their cross-cutting nature and are summarized in the following 7 focal areas, in order to facilitate implementation between the different departments:

- Focal area # 1 – Climate Protection Plan
- Focal area # 2 – Green Economy Strategy
- Focal area # 3 – Biodiversity strategy
- Focal area # 4 – Sustainable financial policy
- Focal area # 5 – Sustainable development of urban areas and neighbourhoods and local mobility
- Focal area # 6 – Demographic change and neighbourhood suited for the elderly
- Focal area # 7 – State initiative Together in NRW ... for a life without poverty and marginalization





New York

6 main challenges:

1. Rising Unaffordability
2. Economic Insecurity
3. Wealth and Health Disparities
4. A Climate Emergency
5. Failing Infrastructure and Shifting Needs
6. Threats to Democracy

The strategy is built on 8 key insights that reflect the city's history and strengths and challenges of the present and the future.

The path forward *OneNYC 2050* consists of 8 goals and 30 initiatives that comprise a strategy to prepare New York City for the future. Each goal represents an aspiration for the city and offers initiatives for actual and future leaders, and a model for our global peers.

3.2.4 International dimension and cooperation

Agenda 2030 is based on an integrated approach, in which each sustainable development goal is to be pursued worldwide: all countries share a common, universal development agenda for 2030. For this reason, the role of global partnership for sustainable development is fundamental (SDG#17): the global agenda can be achieved only if countries, regions and cities work together, acknowledging their interconnection, complementarity and the need for global partnerships going beyond the traditional donor-recipient dynamic (Steiner, 2017; Fernández de Losada Passols & Calvete Moreno, 2018; OECD, 2018; OECD, 2019).

Despite the stress of the 2030 Agenda on global partnerships, the case-studies exhibit great variability in the regard of international cooperation, ranging from strategies not mentioning it at all, such as *OneNYC2050* and *Sustainability Strategy for North Rhine-Westphalia*, to countries in which it is not only mentioned, but associated with a specific commitment: the *Agenda Euskadi for Basque Country* commits to devolve 5% of the revenue from taxes on water provision on projects related to hygiene and sanitation in developing countries; *The National Plan for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Catalonia* provides a specific target about the share of the budget devolved to international cooperation on education and *A 2030 objectives framework for Flanders* contains a specific reference to their contribution to the development cooperation national framework. It must be noted that the Spanish strategies analyzed are the ones with the stronger international vocation.

In some strategies instead, international cooperation is mentioned but with no specific budget reference or commitment, such as in the *Seoul Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 - 17 Ways to Change Seoul* strategy.





3.3 Multi-level alignment

Dealing with the SDGs localization and discussing sub-national strategies for sustainable development does not imply – in any way – lessening the fundamental role of national governance. Nor does it involve conceiving local communities as self-sufficient or isolated from the national and international system. Instead, localizing the SDGs stress the importance of building on complementarities across mechanisms at different levels of governance, and recognise that it depends on policies, norms and coordination rules also at both national and international levels (Noferini, 2010; Biggeri & Ferrannini, 2014; UNDG, 2014; GTF, 2016; Oxfam and ARCO, 2016; Granados & Noferini, 2019; OECD, 2020). In other words, it involves multi-level governance mechanisms aligning international, supranational, national and local efforts and pursuing policy coherence among them to effectively set an enabling environment for sustainable development at all levels (UN, 2015; Smoke & Nixon, 2016; Gupta & Nilsson, 2017).

Besides the evident and unsurprising clear connection that all our case-studies highlight in relation to the global Agenda 2030 and several other international agendas / agreements, the following examples are worth to be mentioned concerning each governance level.

On the alignment with supranational strategies for sustainable development, most strategies designed in European regions remark that the evolution of how the SDGs will be implemented in the EU will be closely monitored (e.g. **Flanders Focus 2030**) and/or highlight synergies with EU funds and policies. Among others, The *National Plan for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Catalonia* and the *Agenda Euskadi - Basque Country 2030* stand out: the former because not only it is based on a short diagnosis of each SDG at European level, but also several commitments are explicitly connected to EU targets or regulation; the latter due to the systematic connection between the tailored indicators selected for the Basque government and those included in the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, stressing that as the EU indicators framework develops, so the *Agenda Euskadi - Basque Country 2030* indicator dashboard will adapt to those modifications.

On the alignment with national strategies for sustainable development, it is worthy highlighting that those regions that have been so far most pro-active in the process of designing their local strategy and positioning with respect to the SDGs often experience – or are committed to in the future – a relevant level of autonomy and decentralization. This recognition seems to impact upon the limited or missing reference to national strategies in several case-studies (e.g. **Wales, Basque Country, Catalonia**) while keeping a direct linkage with the supranational and global scenario.

Anyway, the *Sustainability Strategy for North Rhine-Westphalia* stands out as it explicitly argues that its strategy aims at contributing to the sustainability efforts devoted by the Federal Government and “it acts in agreement with the four guiding principles of the National Sustainable Development Strategy, i.e. intergenerational justice, quality of life, social cohesion and international responsibility”.

In a similar vein, the *Palawan Sustainable Development Agenda* argues to sustain the national thrust of “inclusive growth” and jobs generation and to be informed and consistent to several existing frameworks, plans and agreements at national level. Nevertheless, it also stresses it moved well before the national government in adapting a Sustainable Development Plan consistent with the SDGs. In this regard, a different process is highlighted by the **Buenos Aires** City Government, which points to the leading role played by the National Council for the Coordination of Social Policies in fostering and supporting the SDG national adaptation and





localization process and in the dissemination and awareness of the Agenda, both within the government as well as with residents.

On the alignment with municipal strategies – and thus more generally on the role of lower government and administrative levels – just few strategies among our case-studies dig deeper in the distribution of responsibilities and public functions towards sustainable development.

In this regard, the case of the **Region of Valencia** is surely illustrative. In 2016 the Alliance of Cities for Sustainable Development was officially launched by Regional Council and the Valencian Federation of Municipalities and Provinces, with the purpose of informing and raising awareness about the SDG in the municipalities. Among other activities, this initiative led to the publication *The 2030 Agenda Roadmap for cities and towns of the Valencian Community* aimed at raising awareness, training employees and public employees and policy makers of local governments, with the objective of providing both a conceptual background and methodological tools in relation to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

More generally and without such a structured approach, the *Development and Sustainability Agenda for Åland* emphasises that all municipalities are expected to take active part in the realization of the agenda and to act as examples by thoroughly applying the principles of sustainability to their own working practices. Similarly, the *Palawan Sustainable Development Agenda* claims the importance of being harmonized or horizontally integrated into the Provincial Comprehensive Land Use Plans – CLUPs (and other provincial/regional plans) and vertically integrated into Municipal/City CLUP and other local sectoral plans.





Box 3. National, federal, regional and municipal alignment in Belgium

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Belgium relies first and foremost on the different strategies in relation to sustainable development which were adopted by the respective levels of power.

For instance, looking at the Flemish case, the multi-level alignment is structured as follow:

- At the national level: the *Long-term Vision for Sustainable Development* (approved in 2013) with 55 long term objectives towards 2050, and the first *National Sustainable Development Strategy* (approved in 2017) umbrella for the main governmental actors at both federal and federated levels to combine their efforts to achieve the SDGs in a Belgian context.
- At the federal level: The federal SD strategy is a 'report-plan-do-check-act-cycle' governed by law, i.e. a program of measures the Federal Government has to implement in view of its international and European engagements relating to sustainable development, as well as to the objectives contained in the *Long-Term Vision for Sustainable Development*.
- Flanders: *Vision 2050 - A long-term strategy for Flanders*, which constitutes the third Flemish strategy for sustainable development and explicitly endorses the SDGs and their integrated perspective on sustainability, i.e. economic, socio-cultural and environmental.
- The role of – and collaboration between – the Flemish administration and the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG), the Association of Flemish Provinces (VVP) and the Flemish Cities Knowledge Centre to translate the SDGs at the local level by offering promotional materials and tools and by disseminating practical examples at the municipal level (e.g. in 2017, VVSG started a pilot project with a test group of 20 local governments to explore how the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SDGs can be integrated into the municipal policy and the local multi-annual plans)
- The illustrative case of the City of Ghent, which became one of the ambassadors to help announce and to pursue the SDGs in the Flanders and in Belgium by: launching a communication campaign through five challenges (i.e. the 'SDG Voices campaign') to encourage and mobilize citizens to implement the SDGs in their daily lives; highlighting 17 bottom-up sustainability initiatives named as "Ghent heroes of the SDGs; and emphasising policies by the City and OCMW Ghent contributing to the SDGs (e.g. *Ghent's Sustainable Light plan*, *Ghent's Climate plan*, *Ghent's Food strategy*, *Ghent's mobility plan*, among others).

Sources:

National Sustainable Development Strategy – Belgium

<https://stad.gent/en/international-policy/sustainable-development-goals>

VVSG, *Inspiration Guide: Integrating the SDGs into your Multi-Annual Policy Plan*





3.4 Governance and roles

3.4.1 Governance system

The governance and institutional architecture devoted to the implementation of the local strategies for sustainable development is surely a priority issue for all the regions, provinces and cities committed to the SDGs localization. Indeed, a clear assignment of governance responsibilities – in political and operational terms – along with a structured interaction between local authorities, institutions, citizens, associations and enterprises within local societies – are essential ingredients to influence strategic planning and resource management for social, environmental and economic change towards sustainable development (UNDG, 2014; GTF, 2016).

All our case-studies mention – to a different extent – the governance model and mechanisms underlying their strategies. Among them, it is worth discussing the most illustrative cases, spanning from standard models to innovative mechanisms.

To begin with, **Åland** have a clear institutional architecture for the realization of the agenda, assigning political responsibility to the Åland Parliament and operational responsibility as proactive catalyst and coordinator to the Government, i.e. “A team-builder that gathers the energy of the public sector and, in the long term, of all Åland society”. It is important to note that the process of drafting the regional government’s budget should take into account the Agenda. Moreover, the Development and Sustainability Council – composed by 8 to 14 leading people from various sectors appointed by the government (whose Premier is both member and chair) – is responsible for ensuring the vitality and long-term existence of the ‘bärkraft.ax network’ (i.e. the multi-stakeholder hub for the coordination of the work to realize the Agenda) and for regularly monitoring Åland society’s work with the *Development and Sustainability Agenda*.

In the case of **North-Rhine Westphalia**, the decision-making power on the implementation and further development of the Sustainability Strategy is given to the State Cabinet, while the coordination is given to the Inter-Ministerial Working Group on the Sustainability Strategy, which works in close collaboration with all relevant ministries under the presidency of the Ministry for Climate Protection, Environment, Agriculture, Nature and Consumer Protection. Finally, the implementation and funding of the items included in the strategy fall within the scope of responsibility of the ministers and departments concerned.

The Government of **Catalonia** is a very interesting case as it deploys a more structured and specific governance system and institutional architecture for its *National Sustainable Development Goals Plan* that currently integrates all departments of the Generalitat of Catalonia. In order to ensure transversality and the creation of coordinated and effective work dynamics, according to the *Agreement* issued in February 2017 the governance system is composed by:

1. an Interdepartmental Commission composed by the secretary generals of all the 13 departments plus the holder of the Directorate General responsible for interdepartmental coordination, with the political responsibility of coordinating the elaboration of the strategy to ensure consistency and monitor compliance with the 17 SDGs in the Agenda, approving the final strategy proposal to be delivered to the Government, developing the strategy for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
2. a Technical commission, embedded within the interdepartmental commission and structured in 17 working groups, each focusing on a specific SDG, in charge preparing the National Plan;





3. the Advisory Council for Sustainable Development (CADS) – already existing since 1998 to advise, with overarching and forward-thinking vision, the Government of Catalonia on issues relating to sustainability – providing technical and material assistance to the two commissions, in order to support them in exercising their responsibilities, ensuring consistency between the SDGs and assisting the departments in developing the work to be performed.

In the case of **Flanders**, an innovative governance model inspired by transition management principles has been developed to guide the implementation of *Vision 2050*. Taking into account past experiences and being inspired by the principles of system innovation, long-term perspective, multi-stakeholder participation and experimental approaches, governance structure includes a transition space for each priority and a cross-thematic transition platform coordinated by the Chairman's Board of the Flemish administration. First of all, for each transition a transition space is set up to foster partnerships, learning and experiments. For each transition space, not only two responsible ministers are identified, but above all a transition manager within the Flemish public administration is appointed to act as operational leader of the transition and help determine the specific approach and structure of the transition process. Moreover, a counterpart from external stakeholders is identified to make the essential connection to society and increase multi-actor governance with shared ownership. All the transition managers are supported by Public Governance department and the Chancellery, which i) involves academia, experts inside and outside the government, and innovation coaches, ii) provides an annual report on the progress of the transitions, iii) monitors the long-term vision, relationship between the transitions, and remedial actions for recurring problems and opportunities and iv) coordinates a designated transition platform to share experiences and expertise.

Finally, the *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015* deploys another different governance model to change the course of Wales onto a more sustainable path and improve the quality of life for both current and future generations. On the one side, the First Minister and the wider Cabinet are in charge of embedding the Act across Welsh Government and the National Assembly – having endorsed the Act through its work and recommendations – must inform areas such as the budget process and integrated impact assessments. On the other side, Wales established the world's first statutory independent Future Generations Commissioner for Wales to be the independent guardian for the interests of future generations and to support public bodies subject to the Act to work towards achieving the well-being goals. Moreover, the Auditor General for Wales has a legal power carry out examinations of the public bodies to assess the extent to which a body has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principles.

3.4.2 Multi-actor responsibilities

Besides the overarching governance of the sustainable development strategies and the role of public authorities, central attention has to be devoted to multi-actor responsibilities as emphasised by the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* itself and the global debate on its implementation (Clark & al., 2019).

In other words, it is fundamental to discuss to what extent the implementation framework of these strategies is participatory, meaning that all social, economic and cultural agents are active and





responsible for achieving goals and targets, and more generally join forces together to realise the vision underlying each strategy.

In this regard, several case-studies analysed in this report are illustrative, spanning from those who generally highlight that organisations, groups and individuals across all sectors had the opportunity to debate the issues, support and inform a collective manifesto and should be involved and engaged in accelerating efforts (e.g. **Wales**) to those specifying more precisely the role and responsibilities of all the lead and supporting organizations for each objective (e.g. **Palawan**).

In particular, it is worth mentioning the following examples:

- In **Catalonia**, private enterprises and civil society organization were not only involved in defining the *National Agreement on the 2030 Agenda*, which led to the *National Plan*, but also automatically included in the Alliance Catalonia 2030, which is the broadest cross-sectoral coalition of actors – just officially launched in February 2020 – to share efforts and foster joint initiatives to pursue the SDGs at local level.
- In **Åland**, all businesses and associations are expected to take active part in the realization of the agenda – i.e. the former by using their creativity and innovative energy to create profitable business models and by applying the principles of sustainability to their own working practices; the latter by providing solutions to societal challenges and by enabling collective efforts for the gradual transition to a sustainable and viable development.
- In **North Rhine-Westphalia**, it is emphasised that the ideas and implementation potentials of players from the civil society, business, science, churches, trade unions and media are fundamental to successfully implement on-the-ground activities related to sustainability. For this reason, these players have been involved both in the elaboration phase of the strategy and in its implementation – a stronger institutionalization of this engagement is under discussion – based on the prerequisites of participation, transparency and easy accessibility for a successful exchange between stakeholders.
- In the **Region of Valencia**, the role and engagement of each sector has been detailed: the productive sector is considered decisive for the creation of public-private alliances (also together with NGOs), as well as in relation to corporate social responsibility; civil society organizations are considered as key actors in the process of promoting alignment with the SDGs, and have also systematically collaborated to Cities Alliance; Valencian Public Universities are actively engaging in conducting research, advancing knowledge and training students and citizens in the scope of the 2030 Agenda.
- Finally, in **Seoul** one specific target (S-SDG 8.3) is dedicated to the role of the private sector, with particular attention to social enterprises: social economic zones and integrated support systems for social economy at the district level are suggested as policy tools, highlighting their role the reduction of inequality (SDG#10) as well as economic growth and creation of jobs (SDG#8).



3.5 Implementation and monitoring

3.5.1 Implementation and enforcement mechanisms

Making specific commitments in relation to initiatives and actions aimed at contributing to the Goals in a sustainable development strategy is a powerful enforcement mechanism: explicitly outlining the actions that will be put in place to foster sustainable development makes the public institution implementing the strategy accountable for the actions it commits to.

Some of the case-studies clearly outline the main initiatives planned to achieve the selected targets of each objective. The different ways in which this is presented in the strategies is shown by the examples reported below:

- The **Catalan** strategy contains 920 programmatic commitments, 810 focused on Catalonia and 110 managed from Catalonia with a worldwide impact. The programmatic commitments (“*compromisos*” in Catalan) are divided according to their department of competence and SDG, as shown in the figure below. As can be observed in the figure, on the left, for each commitment it is indicated the time horizon for its realization and the user can search a specific commitment or filter them according to the SDG; on the right it is shown the quantity of commitments for each governmental department, colour-coded according to the related SDG. The complete list of commitments taken by the Catalan government can be consulted at the following link: http://cads.gencat.cat/ca/Agenda_2030/compromisos-govern-agenda-2030/.

Figure 7: Programmatic commitments of the Catalan National Strategy for Sustainable Development



Source: http://cads.gencat.cat/ca/Agenda_2030/compromisos-govern-agenda-2030/.

- **The Basque Country's** strategy is also very precise in defining the commitments of the Euskadi government: the 17 sustainable development goals are linked to the 15 countries objective, divided into 5 spheres of importance. Each year, the actions implemented are divided, as shown in the figure below, among the five spheres of importance. For each sphere are then specified targets, planning instruments and legislative initiative.

Figure 8: The alignment of the Basque Government Programme with the United Nations 2030

AGENDA NACIONES UNIDAS 2030		PROGRAMA 2017-2020 GOBIERNO VASCO						
		EUSKO JAURLARITZA					GOBIERNO VASCO	
OBJETIVOS DESARROLLO SOSTENIBLE (ODS)	ESFERAS DE IMPORTANCIA	OBJETIVOS DE PAÍS	COMPROMISOS	INICIATIVAS	INDICADORES	PLANES ESTRATÉGICOS	PLANES SECTORIALES	LEYES
17	5	15	175	650	100	15	54	28
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fin de la pobreza • Fin del hambre/ alimentación • Vida Sana • Educación Inclusiva • Igualdad de género 	 PERSONAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducir 20% tasa de pobreza • Aumento de la esperanza de vida • Aumentar la natalidad • Abandono escolar <8% • 75% de la población <25 años vascohablante • Entre los primeros 4 países en igualdad de género 	65	225	33	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan Estratégico de Servicios Sociales • Plan de Salud • V Plan de Formación Profesional • IV Plan Universitario • VII Plan de Igualdad • Agenda Estratégica del Euskera 	18	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agua y saneamiento • Consumo y producción sostenibles • Cambio climático • Recursos marinos • Ecosistemas 	 PLANETA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducir 20% emisiones CO2 	10	35	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IV Programa Marco Medioambiental 	11	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crecimiento económico y empleo • Infraestructuras e Innovación • Energía • Reducir la desigualdad • Ciudades y asentamientos urbanos 	 PROSPERIDAD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paro <10% • 20.000 jóvenes con experiencia laboral • 125% PIB de la UE • 25% PIB Industrial • 100 proyectos estratégicos de innovación • Liderazgo en los Indices de transparencia 	64	278	51	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan Estratégico de Empleo • Plan de Industrialización Basque Industry 4.0 • Plan Vasco de Ciencia y Tecnología • Plan de Turismo, Comercio y Consumo 2017-2020 • Plan de Gobernanza e Innovación Pública 	16	13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paz y Justicia 	 PAZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desarme y disolución de ETA 	24	80	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan Convivencia y Derechos Humanos • Plan de Seguridad Pública 	6	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alianzas / Cooperación al desarrollo 	 PARTENARIADO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nuevo estatus político 	12	32	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estrategia de Internacionalización "Euskadi Basque Country" 	3	

Source: Agenda Euskadi – Basque Country 2030

- In the section on implementation tools of the strategy for **North-Rhine Westphalia**, it is provided that the government will produce sustainability assessments of laws and regulations, based on the goal of the strategy as well as consider sustainability criteria in the design of funding programmes and in managing public procurement.
- Finally, **New York City** elaborated a document, complementary to the strategy, *OneNYC2050 Action Plan-The Path Forward*, in which the initiatives, the lead agencies in charge of implementing them and two milestones to be achieved by 2020 and 2021 are meticulously reported for each strategic objective, as shown in the following figure.



Figure 9: An example of initiatives, lead agencies and milestones in OneNYC2050

Thriving Neighborhoods

TN.9 Ensure all New Yorkers have access to safe, secure, and affordable housing

Initiative / Supporting Initiative	Lead Agencies	Milestones to complete by December 31, 2020	Milestones to complete by December 31, 2021
TN.9.2 Create or preserve 300,000 affordable units by 2026 and increase the overall housing supply	HPD, OER	Create or preserve 25,000 affordable housing units	Clean up an additional 850 brownfields between 2019 and 2021
		Fund the acquisition of approximately 1,000 homes annually through Neighborhood Pillars	Create or preserve 25,000 affordable housing units
		Serve 100 low income households annually through HomeFix	Fund the acquisition of approximately 1,000 homes annually through Neighborhood Pillars
TN.9.3 Expand housing and related services to support the city's most vulnerable populations	DSS, HPD	Advance Seniors First sites & continue implementing 'Aging in Place' across preservation projects	Advance Seniors First sites & continue implementing 'Aging in Place' across preservation projects
		Expand the number of New Yorkers receiving rental assistance	Close all cluster shelter units by the end of 2021
			Continue to expand the number of New Yorkers receiving rental assistance
TN.9.4 Analyze residential segregation and promote fair housing	HPD	Implement policies and programs identified in federal report	Implement policies and programs identified in federal report
TN.9.5 Support efforts to create new housing and jobs throughout the region	DCP	Expand the division's staff capacity to support new research initiatives focused on the region's housing supply, and issue an in-depth report focusing on the geography and characteristics of the region's housing supply, as well as how that supply has changed over time	Convene regional stakeholders, planning professionals, and government partners to discuss shared challenges and potential strategies for building affordable housing and growing the supply of a range of housing types, including senior housing, and opportunities to coordinate efforts and housing production targets

Source: OneNYC2050 Action Plan-The Path Forward

3.5.2 Indicators and measurement

A clear set of indicators, in the broader context of a sound monitoring and evaluation framework, is necessary to achieve accountability and robustness in designing local strategies for sustainable development. Data collection improvement requires increasing efforts by international organizations, national and local governments and statistical offices to achieve greater continuity and comparability.

Each of the case-studies contains a specific reference to a set of indicators that is or is going to be used to measure progress in the advancement of the strategy, even though with different approaches.

There are three different approaches emerging from the analysis of the sustainable development strategies of the case studies:

- strategies selecting a small number of relevant indicators, specific to the territory, with a set of complementary indicators (namely < 100);
- strategies selecting a larger number of indicators (namely >100);
- strategies in which the choice of the set of indicators is postponed to a later stage.

A good example of the first category is the *OneNYC2050* in which, in order to track the overall progress of the city, 10 main indicators have been selected together with a set of 73 complementary indicators, divided among the 8 strategic goals of the city. This approach has the advantage of allowing to present the overall situation in a concise way and at the same time leaves room for a wider description of the improvements in each strategic goal.

The city of **Buenos Aires** and the **Region of Valencia** opted instead for a wider number of indicators, 180 and 231 respectively.





In a middle ground between the second and the third category, an interesting example is given by the *Palawan Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan 2015-2020*: 138 indicators are adapted from SDSN's (2014) working document on recommended indicators for sustainable development goals, but the final decision of the baseline and target of each indicator is left to a filtering workshop, thus combining global and local governance.

Among the strategies in which the decision of the indicators is postponed to a later phase we can find the strategies of **Seoul**, **Catalonia** and **Åland**. In those cases, only some guidelines on how to choose the indicators are provided, leaving the actual choice to a later stage of the strategy implementation.

A second categorization can be made in relation to the choice of the indicators for the monitoring and reporting of the localization strategies, focusing on the link with UN and EU indicators. A good example of the relationship between the indicators selected for the strategy and other internationally agreed indicators is provided by the *Euskadi 2030* strategy for **Basque Country**, that explicitly describes that link, as shown in the following figure.

Figure 10: An example of the link with UN and EU indicators in the Euskadi 2030 strategy

UN Indicators:	EU Indicators:	Basque Government
Goal 1		
End poverty in all its forms everywhere		
1.2.2 Proportion of men, women and children living in poverty	1.11. People at risk of poverty or social exclusion	Economic poverty index (Arope)
1.2.1 Proportion of the world's population living below the national poverty threshold	-	Material poverty index (Arope)
10.1.1 Per capita growth rates in the expenditure or income of the households of the poorest 40% of the population and the total population	1.14. People living in households with very low-intensity employment	Family units with low-intensity employment (Arope)

Source: *Euskadi 2030*

Each indicator selected by the Basque government is associated, where possible, to the corresponding EU indicator and to the corresponding UN indicator. The indicators are then divided according to the corresponding SDG.

A slightly different approach can be isolated in the strategy of **North-Rhine Westphalia**. In this case, each indicator is linked to its sustainability postulate. They are then divided according to the field of action they contribute to and to the SDG affected by the group of indicators under exam. This approach is illustrated in figure 11, below.





Figure 11: An example of indicators, North-Rhine Westphalia

Field of action	Affected international development goal (SDG)		
Sustainability postulates	Indicators	Goals	Remarks
Climate protection/ energy transition	SDGs 13 + 7		
Reduction of greenhouse gases	Greenhouse gas emissions (1)	Reduction by at least 25 % by 2020 and by at least 80 % by 2050 (compared to 1990). For 2030, the State Government uses the scenario calculations as part of the Climate Protection Plan, according to which the emissions will decrease by around 44% by 2030, incl. the effective contribution of the European emissions trading scheme ⁷ , as a basis for assessment.	Acc. to Climate Protection Act NRW, Climate Protection Plan NRW
Promotion of renewable energies	Electricity from renewable sources of energy as a proportion of the energy consumption (3b)	By 2025, more than 30% of the electricity should be produced through renewable sources of energy. By 2050, this figure should be increased to 80% in the context of ambitious promotion goals on a federal level.	Acc. to Climate Protection Act NRW

Source: Sustainability Strategy for North Rhine-Westphalia

Another interesting example is provided by **Wales'** strategy, that graphically links the national well-being indicators to the SDGs. The way the national well-being indicators are linked to SDGs they impact is illustrated in the following figure:

Figure 12: An example of national well-being indicators for Wales and their link with SDGs



Source: Wales and the Sustainable Development Goals (2019)



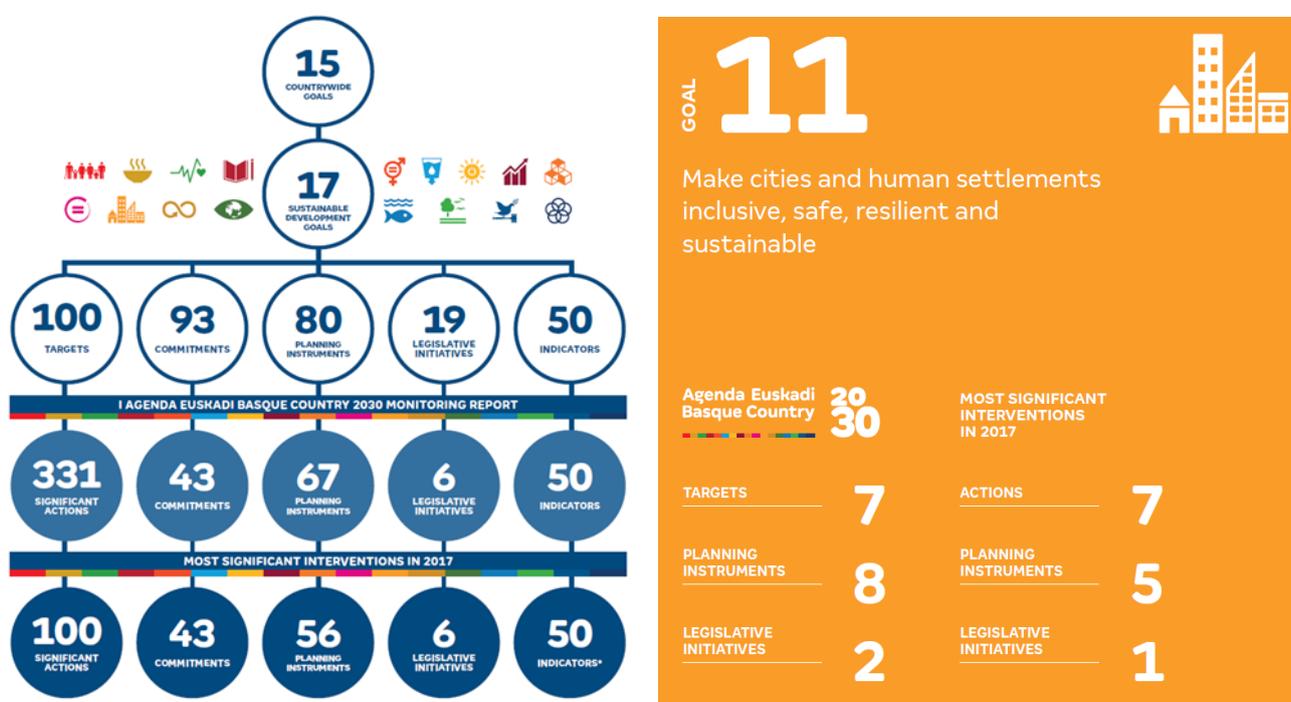


3.5.3 Monitoring and evaluation systems

Establishing a precise monitoring and evaluation scheme is a crucial element that allows assessing the impact of local governance action, learning, being accountable and potentially scaling up good practices.

Each of the localization strategies that have been reviewed in this report establishes, or forecast to, an annual report on the advancement of the indicators selected and often relates them to the actions contained in the strategy. This is the case of the *Agenda Euskadi Monitoring Report* of the **Basque Country**. In the monitoring report, first the overall progress and most significant interventions are outlined, and they are later detailed for each goal. The annual monitoring is approved by the parliament. The figure below shows on the left the most significant interventions in 2017 compared to the expected results, and on the right the results concerning Goal 11.

Figure 13: Agenda Euskadi Monitoring report, 2017



Source: Agenda Euskadi Monitoring report, 2017

The annual monitoring report is, with few exceptions in the cases analysed, redacted by the same actor that elaborates the strategy. This means that in some cases it is the local government, or a governmental agency, while in some other cases it is an advisory council created with the purpose of monitoring the localization of SDGs and the implementation of the sustainability strategy.

Some other examples of monitoring mechanisms are reported below.

- **The Region of Valencia** developed a document, *Mapa de seguimiento de la consecución de los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible en la Comunitat Valenciana*, in which for every indicator the latest data and the source is reported by the Generalitat e la Direcció General de Cooperació y Solidaridad.





- A *Future Trends Report* for **Wales** is published every 5 years to understand challenges and needs of the region. In the report, any action by the United Nations in relation to the sustainable development goals must be taken into account. Furthermore, according to Section 79(6) of the Government of Wales Act 2006, Welsh Ministers must publish a report of the implementation of the proposals set out in the statutory *Sustainable Development Scheme* in the preceding financial year.
- **Flemish** implementation of the Focus 2030 strategy will be monitored in two different ways: on one hand, a traditional monitoring will be carried out through a set of indicators to provide an indicative status of the objectives; on the other hand, at the beginning of every new term of office, an explicit link with the strategy will have to be made for each policy field. The annual monitoring report will be carried out by the Public Governance department in collaboration with a committee of experts on sustainable development.

Often the annual report is accompanied by other monitoring documents, as in **North Rhine Westphalia**: the *Sustainability strategy for North Rhine Westphalia* provides that every two years a *Sustainability indicator report* must be redacted by IT.NRW (a governmental agency of statistics and IT services) and integrated with another report, the *Progress report*, that is elaborated by the government once per parliamentary term, approximately every two years.

New York City periodically keeps track of the *OneNYC2050 Action Plan-The Path Forward*, with a *Progress Report* that updates on the initiatives outlined in the strategy regarding their funding status and whether they did or did not complete their milestone for the year at hand. The graphical representation resembles that of the *OneNYC2050 Action Plan-The Path Forward* (as shown in figure 14 below) adding graphical consistency to the enforcing and monitoring aspects.

Figure 14: Progress Report for OneNYC 2050

Vibrant Democracy

VD.1 Empower all New Yorkers to participate in our democracy

Initiative / Supporting Initiative	Lead Agencies	Initiative / Funding Status	Progress Since April 2018	Milestones to complete by December 31, 2018	2018 Milestone Status	Milestones to complete by December 31, 2020
VD.1.4.1.1D Extending civic engagement by promoting volunteer opportunities, building volunteer capacity in nonprofits and City agencies, and engaging a diverse cross section of city residents as volunteers and service year members to address the city's greatest needs, including linking volunteers with emergency preparedness and response (4.1.1D)	NYC Service	Completed	NYC Service selected an additional five regions to continue the Neighborhood Volunteer Collaborative pilot in Fall, with four of five boroughs participating in the end (Manhattan was postponed). All FY19 Service Year members have been trained in the Commodity Distribution Point (CDP) plan and are ready for activation during emergencies. The annual Volunteers Count report was published in April 2018, documenting 560,692 volunteers from 457 organizations, as well as 444,130 students engaged in service. This was a 15% increase in the number of volunteers reported the previous year. In addition, the Mayoral Service Recognition program honored 4,691 residents for volunteering 100+ hours (with 168 serving 1,000+ hours) in 2017, and 38 companies were honored for engaging 20 percent or more of their employees in volunteerism.	Collect volunteer numbers from CBOs and City agencies, and publish 2017 Volunteers Count Report Conduct a cycle of the neighborhood initiative in all five boroughs (one cycle per borough) – a human-centered design session, a daylong volunteer capacity-building session, a citywide volunteer summit, and a neighborhood volunteer promotion canvass Conduct post-implementation surveys/ focus groups to measure this initiative's effectiveness on increasing volunteerism in all five pilot neighborhoods	Completed Completed Reconsidered	

Source: Progress Report OneNYC





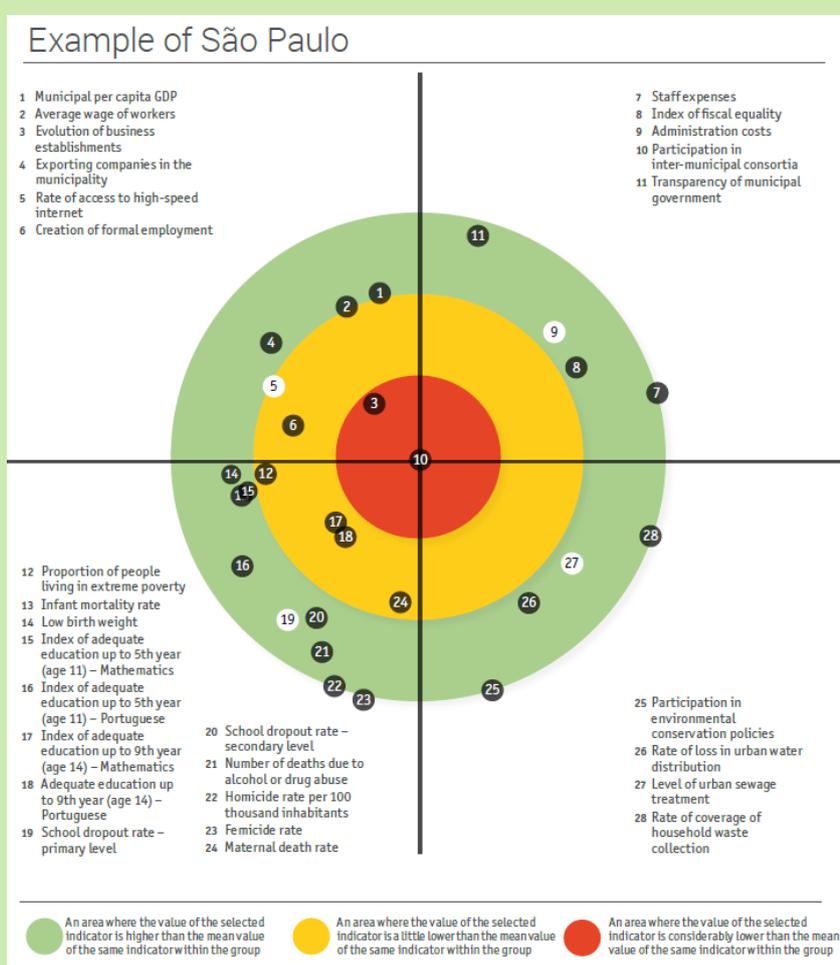
Box 4. The Brazilian Mandala Tool

In Brazil, the Brazilian National Confederation of Municipalities (CNM) developed the Mandala of Municipal Performance, a tool to support municipalities in monitoring their own results in the implementation of the 17 SDGs. The objective is for municipal governments of all sizes to have their own monitoring tool based on data openly available to all.

The indicators of performance, linked to the SDGs, are classified into four categories: 1) Institutions; 2) Economic sustainability; 3) Social inclusion; and 4) Environmental sustainability.

The Mandala tool has generated an information chart for each municipality based on the 28 indicators. This information is presented in a radar chart where values are represented by the colours red, yellow and green, as shown in the image.

Figure 14: Mandala, Sao Paulo



Source: *Monitoring the global agenda in municipalities: the Mandala tool*

The Mandala tool, even if extremely communicative for the purpose of visualizing the situation of each indicator for place in a specific period of time, has some shortcomings in terms of comparability: it doesn't allow to visualize trends and compare different locations.

Source:
Monitoring the global agenda in municipalities: the Mandala tool





3.6 Graphic design and communication

The analysed strategies greatly differ in terms of communication and graphical aspects. They range from a very concise structure and graphical layout, to very accurate graphical choices and a vast communication campaign. In this regard, it should be highlighted that an effective information and communication strategy, including appropriate graphic design and layout, is also relevant for accountability and transparency towards all local stakeholders and citizens.

At a first glance, the tables of contents of the strategies can be divided between those who have dedicated section for each SDG, as in the case of **Basque Country**, and those who instead assign a chapter to each of the priorities set out in the strategy, as in the case of *OneNYC2050*.

In fact, the **Basque Country's** strategy is constituted mostly by 16 single pages in which information for every SDG is condensed. This is done in a very easy-to-read and eye-catching way as shown in the figure below.

Figure 15: Basque Country graphic design



Source: Agenda Euskadi – Basque Country 2030

On the other hand, *OneNYC2050* presents 9 chapters (also downloadable as singular booklets) each focusing on one of the strategic objectives set in the strategy. In each chapter there is a detailed description of the current situation of the city regarding the objective at hand, with a great number of maps and infographics, the vision and what is planned to tackle the issues related to the





objective. At the beginning of every chapter there's a specific reference to the SDGs related to the objective.

The length of the strategy also differs, ranging from very concise strategies to longer ones. What emerges is almost a trade-off between thoroughness and communicative effectiveness. In a long and graphically spare document, important information can be overlooked. At the same time, in a shorter but more graphical document room for more in depth description may be missing. Some of the strategies also contain the diagnostic analysis, with different level of depth, while some other condense additional relevant information in the annexes, often in a schematic way.

Some of the strategies (or the office appointed to their implementation), have their own website and some of them also have numerous social media accounts, posting content periodically. Just to mention few illustrative examples:

- **Palawan** Council for sustainable development has its own website (<https://pcsd.gov.ph/igov/>) and its Facebook account. On the website, news related to sustainability in the Palawan Islands are periodically shared as well as the downloadable version of the annual monitoring report, the call for the Annual International Conference on Biosphere and Sustainability, the results and pictures of the conference and a monthly update on PCSD issues. The graphical aspect of the strategy is not very developed, but it has improved greatly in the successive monitoring reports.
- The **Åland** strategy's is visually very pleasant and shows great attention to the graphical aspects. An online platform has been launched together with the strategy (<https://www.barkraft.ax/>) as well as a Facebook and Instagram account. On the online platform, the user can find news related to the SDGs implementation in Åland, related events and the downloadable version of the strategy (in English and Finnish) and of the annual monitoring report (first in Finnish and later in English).

From the graphical design point of view, it is worth mentioning one of the communication tools of the **Catalan** strategy: an infographic containing all the relevant information related to the *National Plan for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Catalonia*, available on the government website and describing, in a very concise way, the characteristics, the process and the commitments of the strategy.





Figure 16: Catalonia infographic to resume the National Plan

catalangovernment.eu

2'
In two minutes

National Plan for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Catalonia

#284
September 2019
XII legislature



The National Plan contains **920 commitments** by all Catalan ministries to contribute to achieving the **17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** set by the United Nations for **2030**



transformative

sets targets with a measurable impact to generate real change



integrated

involves the 13 ministries of the Catalan government



cohesive

facilitates alignment of public policy across ministries



a living document

reviewed annually to keep it up-to-date until 2030

The Plan has two dimensions: national and international



of the **920** commitments

 **810** are aimed at transforming Catalonia

 **110** seek to generate a positive impact in the world

The process leading up to the adoption of Plan



The 2030 Agenda: Transforming Catalonia, Improving the World, a report published by the Advisory Council for the Sustainable Development of Catalonia (CADS) in September 2016, laid the groundwork for the Plan. The report identifies the main challenges the Catalan government faces to achieve the SDGs, with contributions from experts, academic institutions and civil society organisations

The 13 ministries of the Catalan government were involved in developing the Plan.

A Technical Committee – structured in 17 working groups, each focusing on a specific SDG – has been set up

What is the 2030 Agenda?



The 2030 Agenda is a global action plan for achieving sustainable development.

It was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 25 September 2015. The United Nations urges countries to develop ambitious national responses to translate the 2030 Agenda into concrete actions, and to form collaborative partnerships

The 2030 Agenda sets 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 economic, social and environmental targets. The 17 SDGs cover the **social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability** within the framework of five pillars: **planet, people, prosperity, peace and partnership**



Generalitat de Catalunya

Source: <https://catalangovernment.eu/catalangovernme>





4. Lessons learnt and recommendations

Combining the arguments and case-studies analysed in our benchmarking analysis with a literature review of reports by UN, OECD, EU and networks of local and regional governments on SDG localization, the following lessons learnt and recommendations for the design of local strategies for sustainable development can be highlighted.



On the process and political ownership:

- Ensuring a strong political ownership of the strategies by the relevant government levels and public authorities, to certify an effective commitment to their implementation for the pursuit of sustainable development;
- Assigning a clear and transparent responsibility to a body / institution in charge of leading the process, to be kept accountable to design a tailored and evidence-based strategy to influence policy-making and cross-sectoral initiatives in the short-, medium- and long-run;
- Creating (or assigning duties to) an advisory council and/or a technical committee composed by experts and public officials by different departments, fields sectors, to provide the leading body / institution with advanced knowledge and evidence from multiple sources;
- Adopting the strategy through an official approval (e.g. law, resolution, decree – based on the governance system of the country/place) by the regional / city government going beyond simple declarations of intent, to have a clear commitment together with enforcement and accountability mechanisms on its implementation.

On the participatory mechanisms:

- Ensuring open and inclusive spaces for dialogue, participation and public scrutiny in order to nurture social creativity, active citizenship and collective empowerment, helping actors to navigate conflictual views and to generate trust in co-creation processes
- Enabling a real participation by all societal actors to inform and influence the strategy in all its phases (since the design to implementation and monitoring) by combining a wide array of participatory methods and tools (Clark & al., 2019);
- Allowing primarily the younger generations to effectively influence the design process by the vision and priority setting, along with assuring inclusivity of voiceless and marginal groups also through the involvement of small locally embedded organizations.





On the diagnostic analysis:

- Conducting a robust diagnostic analysis on all the dimensions / 17 SDGs / 5Ps through mixed methods and guaranteeing its continuous use as baseline for future monitoring and progress reports;
- Involving a wide range of expert stakeholders (e.g. civil society organizations, public agencies, public utilities and services providers) to dig deeper in the diagnostic analysis for each the SDGs / field of action;
- Benchmarking with similar contexts/places in other countries (e.g. other regions, provinces or cities with a similar GDP per capita) to compare baseline data, trends and performances;
- Combining official statistics (allowing both static and dynamic analysis in the medium- or long-run, if possible) with data and information from new sources (e.g. big data) that may allow obtaining new evidence on the dimensions of sustainable development.

On the vision:

- Defining a societal vision with a concise, clear, future-oriented, challenging, and inspirational statement, fully integrating the three dimensions – i.e. environmental, social, economic – of the notion of sustainable development;
- Adopting a vision by a participatory process able to simultaneously be context-based and globally-oriented.

On objectives and priorities:

- Defining tailored, place-based and inspirational objectives for sustainable development, in order for the whole society to understand their relevance and value;
- Ensuring a strong linkage between the selected local priorities and objectives for sustainable development and the 17 SDGs, either ex ante or ex post, in order to embrace the 2030 Agenda as overarching policy framework;
- Prioritising key issues relevant to territorial specificities and to better address some pressing place-based issues (OECD, 2020);
- Keeping the indivisibility and integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda, avoiding to overlook some goals and considering the link, impact, synergies and trade-offs among goals (OECD, 2020);
- Taking advantage of the SDGs as a powerful tool to move forward the political agenda of the local government (OECD, 2020).





On the international dimension and cooperation:

- Including a specific section of the strategy on the external role of local actors (from the public, private and third sector) in international development cooperation and partnerships, thus making the local strategy for international cooperation fully integrated and consistent with the local strategy for sustainable development.
- Ensuring alignment and consistency with supranational and national strategies, keeping into account their objectives, priorities and targets in order to avoid dispersion of efforts in the collective pursuit for sustainable development;
- Enabling – and providing support to – lower levels (e.g. cities and towns) to translate the regional strategy into tailored strategies for their places.

GOVERNANCE AND ROLES

On the governance of the strategies:

- Designing a clear, effective and transparent governance system and institutional architecture for the implementation of the strategy, enforcing both political and executive responsibilities;
- Assigning the pivotal governance role to inter-ministerial / cross-departmental body in a whole-of-government approach, in order to fully embrace an integrated notion of environmental, social and economic sustainability;
- Adopting a flexible and future-oriented governance system, including the role of external check and balance to an independent body / commissioner;

On multi-actor responsibilities:

- Specifying the role, contribution and responsibility for each category of actor in all sectors in a whole-of-society perspective, adopting innovative mechanisms to keep them accountable.





On implementation and enforcement mechanisms:

- Going beyond setting goals, priorities and targets towards identifying specific actions / initiatives to be realized to operationally implement the strategy, assigning responsibilities to lead agencies and other involved actors with respective timeframes for action;

On indicators and measurement:

- Having a clear and coherent definition of objectives, targets and indicators, avoiding confusion and misunderstanding among these three crucial elements;
- Selecting accurate, valid, precise and robust indicators meeting the SMART criteria – i.e. Specific, Measurable, Achievable/Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound;
- Pursuing consistency with indicator framework developed at national, supranational (e.g. EU), and global level (also for the sake of potential comparisons with other places), as well as the feasibility to apply the same framework also on lower levels (i.e. from regional to cities/towns), taking into account the limited availability of data and statistics that are territorially disaggregated;
- Including new indicators that, despite not being publicly available yet, would be relevant to measure and analysis (as for the case of Tier III indicators in the official Global indicator framework for the SDGs);
- Keeping at least a minimum stable set of indicators to be continuously updated in the medium- and long-run, notwithstanding the opportunity to add any further new indicator if necessary;

On monitoring systems:

- Elaborating periodic (e.g. yearly) monitoring and progress reports, including updated indicators, implemented policies and results, and considering the opportunity to complement or translate them into Voluntary Local Reviews to be shared within the global community of actors involved in the SDG localization;
- Enabling the use of monitoring reports both for i) analysis, communication, and accountability on the progress of the strategy; ii) influencing decision-making processes on new priority-setting, policies and budgeting;
- Including in the monitoring system also actions and initiatives implemented by actors and stakeholders in other sectors, to avoid monitoring only public policies and keep the whole-of-society committed and accountable;
- Enabling participatory monitoring mechanisms to involve stakeholders and citizens also in the assessment of the collective efforts towards sustainable development.





GRAPHIC DESIGN AND COMMUNICATION

- Devoting efforts on the graphic design of the strategy and all related documents (e.g. diagnostic analysis, monitoring reports) for the sake of communication and diffusion to the general public;
- Using data and qualitative information to showcase performances and positive stories on SDGs. User-friendly open data portals can help increase the transparency of the actions towards the SDGs, where contributions by different actors can be showcased;
- Using easy-to-read diagrams and tables to connect all the elements of complex strategies (e.g. vision, dimensions, objectives, targets, indicators, initiatives/commitments, results) in order to ensure their general and comprehensive understanding;
- Adopting a structured, effective and up-to-date communication strategy to reach the whole local society on the design, content, implementation and progress of the local strategy for sustainable development;
- Translating the whole strategy in English for the sake of international exchange within the community of local and regional governments, international organizations and research centred engaged in SDG localizations.





5. Conclusions

This report has described the results of our benchmarking analysis on selected local strategies for sustainable development, in order to draw lessons and examples potentially able to inspire – and contribute to – the design, implementation and monitoring of other similar strategies at local level.

Combining the expanding literature on the topic with our analysis, it is undeniable that local governance plays a crucial role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Firstly, governance mechanisms at the local level matter, because this is where interactions among authorities, institutions and citizens – and thus the society as a whole – is most immediate and strongest, as well as where inequalities, forms of exclusions, power imbalances and vulnerabilities are most immediately experienced by people. Secondly, local governance allows establishing a sustainable development planning process that reflects effective territorial opportunities and needs, in order to enable all human beings fulfilling their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment. Thirdly, issues of environmental, social and economic sustainability can be addressed more effectively by local actors, if they are enabled to play a constructive role in policy and are committed to the protection and long-term sustainable use of local resources.

All in all, this perspective emphasises the importance of enabling local actors to lead and influence policy action and practices within a system of multilevel relations, in order to build more coherent and effective sustainable development strategies and initiatives.

On the one side, political ownership in promoting sustainable development is fundamental, and, particularly, the primary role played by local institutions in the process of designing strategies for sustainable development is evident. Without a long-term political will by local and regional governments, it is impossible to start such a process, and, above all it, is impossible for the strategies to have practical consequences on future policies and initiatives making the 2030 Agenda operational.

On the other side, citizens' participation can guarantee continuity instead of political turn over, as community and collective interests over sustainable development - in all its dimensions - is long lasting. Active citizenship is an attitude to be experienced and not simply learnt, and to this aim it is crucial to promote spaces of engagement where citizens are empowered in claiming their rights and proposing actions for change. Active citizenship programs can provide grounds for a more aware and engaged global citizenship that deal with sustainable development issues, particularly at local level, through decision-making processes relating to development objectives, strategies, resources and efforts.

For these reasons, future research should focus and dig deeper on SDGs localization process, in order to open further opportunities for learning-by-comparing and peer-to-peer support and exchange within the international community of policymakers, practitioners, scholars and activists committed to sustainable development around the world.





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