Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs at the Local and Urban Level: Practical Experiences and Governance Needs

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Introduction

This Discussion Paper for the 15th ESDN Workshop will focus on the main theme of the Workshop, which is the "Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs at the Local and Urban Level: Practical Experiences and Governance Needs". The local or urban level is often described as the level that is able to affect the greatest amount of change when it comes to sustainable development, as it is the level that is closest to citizens, businesses, and other stakeholders, and is argued to be able to understand their needs better than other, more encompassing levels, such as the regional or national level.

Since this Workshop has a European focus, it is important to contextualize the need for understanding the importance of the local and urban level within European cities and municipalities, as the number of people in the European Union that live in urban areas is high. According to the World Bank, nearly 75% of the population of the European Union lives in urban areas as of 2016. Urban areas, therefore, play a significant role in Europe's ability to not only meet SDG 11 (Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable), but also each of the remaining 16 SDGs. The effective implementation of the SDGs at the urban level, as well as the municipal level, is very important. However, the urban and municipal levels cannot be solely responsible for the entire implementation process, because, as the 2030 Agenda states, it is a joint effort between the national level, the local level, business, stakeholders, and citizens.

It is the interplay between the national, municipal and urban levels that will become important in the implementation of the SDGs, because if the local and urban levels do not receive the necessary stimuli and incentives from the national or European Union level to implement the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, such as expertise, finances, laws, overarching and all-encompassing strategies, then it becomes harder for some municipalities and cities to move forward on implementation measures.

The chapters of this Discussion Paper will take mimic the format of the Workshop and be based on the individual session titles. Not all presentation that will be given in the actual Workshop will be covered in the Discussion Paper, but rather a few examples will be taken from each Session, apart from Session 3's Panel Discussion, which will have all networks represented in this Paper.

The first chapter of the Discussion Paper (Session 1) will look into what the local and urban levels have done in the past with respect to sustainable development in an effort to assess whether these past experiences dealing with sustainable development provide a framework and structure that could help the local/urban level in their SDG implementation efforts. The chapter will look into Local Agenda 21 and 'Smart Cities' to see how these experiences in sustainable development can be used in relation to the SDGs and their implementation. The examples that will be featured in this Paper are Hannover, as a representative of Local Agenda 21, and Malmö, as representation of a 'Smart City'.

Although the local and urban level are important in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, some cities and municipalities need more support than others when it comes to sustainable development and the integration of the SDGs not only in sustainable development strategies and planning, but also in their capacities to be able to deal with this

overarching agenda. Chapter two, therefore, will look into Session 3's Panel Discussion between the support networks that are working closely with the local and urban level in the implementation of the SDGs, focusing on how they are able to aid them in implementation.

Chapter three corresponds to Session 4 of the Workshop, which provides practical examples of cities and municipalities that are actively implementing the SDGs, looking into how they were able to implement them and the challenges and successes they have had.

Session 1: How does the local and urban level utilize past experiences in SD in the implementation of the SDGs?

In an effort to be able to better gauge how previous sustainable development efforts and programs can be used to incorporate and integrate the SDGs, this chapter will focus on specific initiatives that are targeted at sustainable development, such as Local Agenda 21 (LA21) and 'Smart Cities' to determine how the local and urban levels are using these programs, and the experiences gained from having used them, to integrate and implement the SDGs.

Local Agenda 21

One of the results of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit was a document called Agenda 21. This document contained a chapter entitled "Local Authorities' initiatives in support of Agenda 21" (Chapter 28), which gave birth to the global Local Agenda 21 (LA21) movement. Within this chapter of Agenda 21, it states that each local authority should enter into a dialogue with its citizens, local organizations and private enterprises and adopt "a local Agenda 21". Through consultation and consensus-building, local authorities would learn from citizens and from local, civic, community, business and industrial organizations and acquire the information needed for formulating the best strategies. The process of consultation would increase household awareness of sustainable development issues. Local authority programmes, policies, laws and regulations to achieve Agenda 21 objectives would be assessed and modified, based on local programmes adopted. Strategies could also be used in supporting proposals for local, national, regional and international funding.[1]

LA21, therefore, took this main concept and developed it into a participatory, multi-stakeholder process to achieve the goals of Agenda 21 at the local level through the preparation and implementation of a long-term strategic plan that addresses local sustainable development concerns. These processes include: multi-sectoral engagement in the planning process through a local stakeholder group, which serves as the coordination and policy body for moving toward long-term sustainable development; consultation with community partners, such as community groups, non-governmental organizations, businesses, churches, government agencies, professional groups and unions in order to create a shared vision and to identify proposals for action; participatory assessment of local social, environmental and economic needs; participatory target setting through negotiations among key stakeholders or community partners in order to achieve the vision and goals set out in a community action plan; monitoring and reporting procedures, such as local indicators, to track progress and to allow participants to hold each other accountable to a community action plan.[2] One example of a city utilizing LA21 is Hannover, Germany, which will be featured in this Paper, as well as in the Workshop.

As the importance of the urban level was already established in the introduction, it will be beneficial to look into what cities have been doing with respect to their sustainable development, such as becoming 'Smart Cities', as it may be informative in discerning how

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[1] Agenda 21, Chapter 28, sub-point 28.3, 1992.
[2] ICLEI. *Local Governments' Response to Agenda 21: Summary Report of Local Agenda 21 Survey with* Regional Focus. International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) Canada. May 2002.

these cities may deal with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. As cities tend to be microcosms of the national level, dealing with the implementation and integration of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs at this level provides a potentially smaller scale test-bed that could be scaled up to different levels if proven successful at the urban level or sub-urban level. As cities that fall within the 'Smart City' concept tend to have been leading and setting the pace for sustainable development, they will become even more important for the holistic and interconnectedness that the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs represent. For this reason, the Workshop decided to focus on 'Smart Cities' and chose Malmö as a case study example, as well as a representative from the city to give a keynote presentation.

Hannover, Germany

Hannover is an interesting practical example, because while it has decided to embrace and integrate the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, it has a long history of support for Local Agenda 21. Hannover's affiliation with LA21 goes back to 1995 when the City Council decided to join this program. This decision was further strengthened when the city signed the Aalborg Charter in 2006. In order to work out the logistics of implementing a Local Agenda 21, the city of Hannover established the Agenda 21 Office in 1996. In order to receive feedback from city actors regarding LA21, there were city-wide dialogue processes, such as workshops, that occurred with citizens and other actors to decide upon goals and measures that they wanted to see for the city. These were then presented as suggestions to the City Council. From these dialogue processes many projects were established that exist not only with the cooperation of the city administration, but also exist outside of it. Some projects have been included in Action Programs for City Development from 2001 to 2005. Some projects have even fostered further discussions to take place,[3] which shows that Hannover was successful in establishing a Local Agenda 21 that was able to garner participation from many different actors, who were able to work together to not only create their idea of an effective LA21, but also engage with it, the city administration and each other to create events, projects and discussions about sustainability related issues.

The establishment of LA21 in Hannover would most likely not have been possible without the Agenda 21 Office, which was renamed to the Agenda 21 and Sustainability Office, as it is able to bring many different societal actors and stakeholders, deal with the environmental issues, social issues, political issues, and economic issues, etc. together, so that they are able to develop informational and educational materials, design and implement projects and campaigns, as well as support discussions relating to sustainable development.[4] Establishing a coordinating body seems to be very important when it comes to affecting city-wide change regarding sustainable development. The Agenda 21 and Sustainability Office is responsible for: 1) Local sustainability strategies; 2) Sustainability indicators and reporting; 3) Fair Trade; 4) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: awareness raising about the SDGs; 5) Procurement that follows social standards and does not use child labor; 6) Sustainable lifestyles; 7) Global environmental and resource conservation; 8) Education for sustainable

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[3] https://www.hannover.de/Leben-in-der-Region-Hannover/Umwelt-Nachhaltigkeit/Nachhaltigkeit/Agenda-21-Nachhal-tigkeit/Agenda-21/Lokale-Agenda-21/Agenda-Prozess

[4] https://www.hannover.de/Leben-in-der-Region-Hannover/Umwelt-Nachhaltigkeit/Nachhaltigkeit/Agenda-21-Nachhal-tigkeit/Nachhaltige-Kommune/Agenda-21-und-Nachhaltigkeitsb%C3%BCro

development/environmental education for schools and nursery schools and global learning; 9) Coordination of "Children Forest Hannover" (*Kinderwald* Hannover) as a place of learning outside of school; 10) Community partnerships with countries from the global South; 11) Sustainable economics; and 12) Sustainable event planning.[5]

When looking at the current situation in Hannover, the city seems to have decided to transition away from, and actually replace Agenda 21 with the 2030 Agenda, as Hannover has already recognized and acknowledged that it is, in some way or another, directly affected by all the SDGs. The region of Hannover, therefore, wants to honor the SDGs and ensure that people are able to live well, but in a way that conserves resources and allows the region to remain sustainable.

The 'Smart City'

For ICLEI, Smart Cities are the ones that look at the big picture, using resource efficiency and technological progress as well as taking overall urban governance into account to achieve a wider vision of sustainable cities and communities. This balanced approach ensures that the adoption of smart solutions in cities is people-focused, benefits urban citizens and ultimately leads to a safe, inclusive and sustainable future.[6]

'Smart Cities' do this by transforming data and technology into tools to analyze, monitor and optimize urban systems as they strive towards environmental, economic and social sustainability. However, cities also need to critically evaluate the impact of technology solutions and ensure that the interests of their citizens are at the core of ongoing Smart City discussions. The rapid development of technology is digitalizing urban systems, altering physical (e.g. energy, water, waste, transportation) and social (e.g. social and economic inclusion, governance, citizen participation) infrastructures. This brings new opportunities but also consistent challenges to overcome: cyber security, job loss and privacy are only some of the critical areas where purely technology-driven approaches show their limits.

Eurocities also contributes to the concept of the 'Smart City' by characterizing the concept as "being used to describe modern urban competitiveness and highlight the growing importance of social and environmental capital in profiling the attractiveness of a city."[7] A city's performance, therefore, can no longer solely rely upon its hard infrastructure, or what Eurocities describes as 'physical capital', but on the availability and the quality of communication and social resources: "A smart city must be a good place to live, offering the best possible quality of life with the lowest possible use of resources. A smart city is also an inclusive place, using technology and innovative solutions to improve social inclusion and combat poverty and deprivation."[8] Eurocities works towards and supports the development of cities that are healthy, use energy-efficient and renewable sources of energy, as well as lead the way in the usage of advanced ICT. In figure 1, below, Eurocities lists the typical characteristics that are typical of 'Smart Cities', in which these myriad of different sectors need

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[5] https://www.hannover.de/Leben-in-der-Region-Hannover/Umwelt-Nachhaltigkeit/Nachhaltigkeit/Agenda-21-Nachhaltigkeit/Nachhaltige-Kommune/Agenda-21-und-Nachhaltigkeitsb%C3%BCro
[6] http://www.iclei.org/activities/agendas/smart-city.html
[7] http://www.eurocities.eu/eurocities/issues/smart-cities-issue
[8] http://www.eurocities.eu/eurocities/issues/smart-cities-issue

to be linked together to provide the city with the best and most efficient services. ICT can help in the interlinking of the different sectors.

Figure 1: Eurocities' 'Smart City' Characteristics
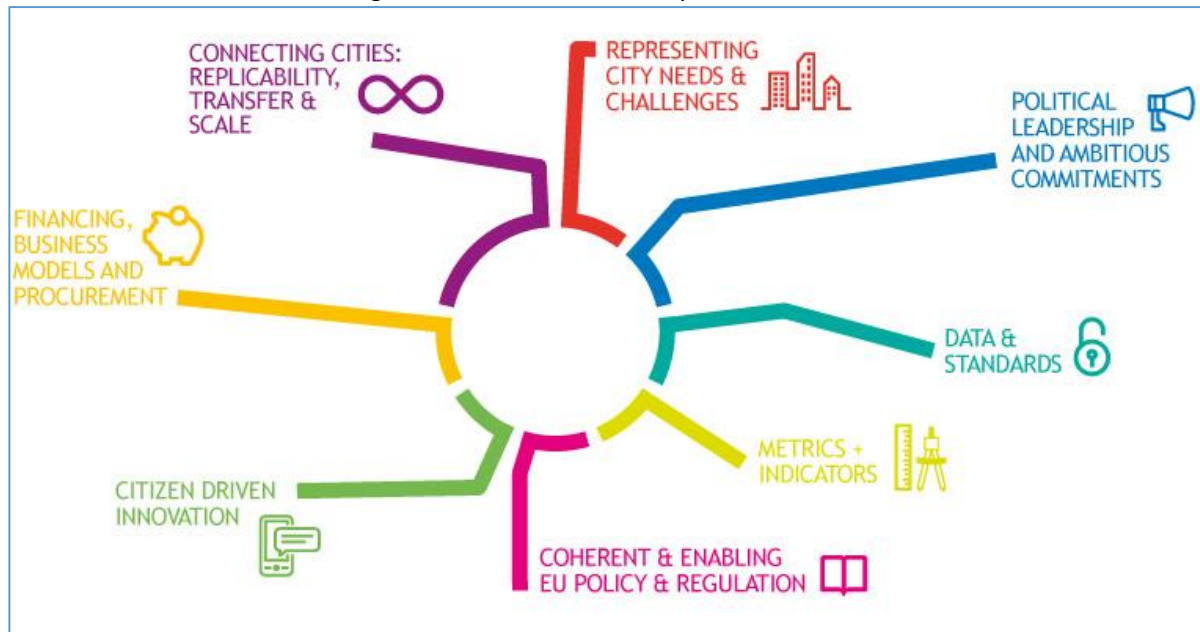
Source: Eurocities' Webstie: http://www.eurocities.eu/eurocities/issues/smart-cities-issue

Malmö, Sweden

Malmö is often credited as being one of the frontrunners when it comes to cities that are pursuing sustainable development in Europe. Many of the ways in which Malmö goes about sustainable urban development can be attributed to advances in technology, or putting technology to use in finding better solutions to social and environmental issues, thereby reflecting very closely the concept of the 'Smart City'. In May 2014, the Malmö City Council adopted the "Översiktsplan För Malmö" or "Comprehensive Plan for Malmö", which is only available in English in the form of a summary, and outlines how the city will develop.

According to the foreword of the Plan[9], the City of Malmö has experienced a successful transformation from industrial city in crisis to a modern, environmentally aware and forward-looking city. This new comprehensive plan is a strategy for a new era, looking towards Malmö in the 2030s.

The comprehensive plan is a representation of the City of Malmö's long-term vision for development and shows how planning can contribute to its implementation. Although the future is always shrouded in uncertainty, Malmö wants to develop in areas that are more predictable and where it can better plan and steer the course of events, such as in the area of technology and development that relies upon different types of technologies.

Economic, social and environmental sustainability are key objectives for the continued development of Malmö. The strategy to maintain Malmö's inward expansion was developed, because dense urban areas are more resource efficient and therefore have reduced

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[9]http://malmo.se/download/18.1256e63814a61a1b34c1b34/1491298772439/OP_english_summary_hemsida.pdf. p. 2.

environmental impact in comparison with low-density development. A compact city provides a strong foundation for a safe and vibrant urban environment and will do much to increase the appeal of Malmö.

The different ways in which Malmö tries to achieve the goals set out in its Comprehensive Plan are manifold: the City of Malmö has published a top-10 list of its accomplishments towards sustainable development, "Sustainable Malmö Top Ten".

Session 3: Panel Discussion – Impulses and support from existing local and urban networks in the implementation of the SDGs

This chapter provides and overview of the support mechanisms and activities that existing local and urban networks provide to their members for their efforts to implement the SDGs. The networks that were selected for this Paper were chosen because they represent the more established networks, such as ICLEI, as well as more locally based networks that will be present at the Workshop.

Networks can provide a significant support to the local and urban level when it comes to the 2030 Agenda and SDG implementation. In the following paragraph, it will become clearer how networks can be a viable tool in order to communicate the SDGs, launch campaigns for the SDGs, and create platforms to share lessons learned and best practices in those cities that might need an impulse or more support for implementing the SDGs.

ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability

The Local Governments for Sustainability network, **ICLEI**, is a leading global network that consists of 1,500 cities, towns and regions that commit to building a sustainable future. It is also a movement driving positive change on a global scale through programmes and campaigns on local sustainability, and a resource centre offering information, tools, networking, training and consulting services.

ICLEI's vision is a world of sustainable cities that confront the realities of urbanization, adapt to economic and demographic trends and prepare for the impacts of climate change and other urban challenges. Therefore, ICLEI unites local and sub-national governments in creating positive change through collective learning, exchange and capacity building. ICLEI applies an integrated approach to sustainable development that focuses on the sub-national level to become sustainable, low-carbon, ecomobile, resilient, biodiverse, resource-efficient, healthy and happy, with a green economy and smart infrastructure.

ICLEI has a **European Secretariat** which represents local governments in all relevant policy processes for sustainability in Europe. In this regard, ICLEI works together with other European networks, the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions, and many other organisations involved in formulating EU policies and strategies.

Regarding their support mechanisms and activities, ICLEI provides **training guides**, **case studies**, **regional updates on activities and information services** to **build capacity**, **share knowledge**, and support local governments in building more sustainable cities.

ICLEI mainly developed two initiatives to help local governments in addressing the sustainable urban development transition by building strategies and developing leadership capacities:

- o **Smart city**: this approach brings together what ICLEI has identified as important characteristics to move towards smart cities. These entail thinking about solutions

that could benefit the people of the city (people at the center), the local context, smart cities standardization process, strategic partnerships, city-business cooperation, and integrated thinking. ICLEI's smart cities agenda is advanced through conferences, workshops and events regularly advertised on their website.

- o **Urban Transitions Alliance**: the Urban Transitions Alliance is an initiative funded by Stiftung Mercator and managed by ICLEI. The Alliance is an opportunity for cities to become global leaders in sustainable urban development. The Alliance's purpose is to help cities identify common challenges, share knowledge, co-create solutions and foster strong working relationships with local government peers, the research community and the private sector.

Particularly relevant for the communication of the SDGs at the local level are the **ICLEI Briefing Sheets**, which provide background information on current themes and ongoing debates concerning local sustainability. At present, to highlight the linkage between the SDGs and cities, ICLEI released a total of 7 Briefing Sheets covering the following topics:

(1) From MDGs to SDGs: What are the Sustainable Development Goals?;
(2) Cities and the Sustainable Development Goals;
(3) Introducing a new Global Goal for Cities and Human Settlements;
(4) The importance of all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for cities and communities;
(5) Implementing the SDGs in cities;
(6) Measuring, Monitoring and Evaluating the SDGs;
(7) Towards the New Urban Agenda: Linking with international processes.

To support cities' engagement with the SDGs, ICLEI released several **examples and case studies** about local actions and pioneering work that can help local governments become inspired to take action. For each Goal, ICLEI provides a case from the Global North and one from the Global South. Action examples cover all 17 SDGs, while case studies focus on SDG 11, "Making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable", and related targets. An interesting case study example comes from the city of Barcelona that has been the first European city to develop and implement Solar Thermal Ordinance (STO). This made compulsory to use solar energy to supply 60% of running hot water in new buildings, renovated ones or buildings changing their use. Another good case study example is Växjö city in Sweden that has developed numerous projects to educate citizens about ways in which they can reduce CO_2 emissions themselves. Växjö's programs aim to raise awareness and encourage citizen engagement. A program example is the Teleborg school photovoltaic (PV) system and Climate Idols, which shows how citizen involvement is key to implementing successful measures to reduce CO_2 emissions. These and many other case studies related to SDG 11 can be found on ICLEI's website.

Climate-KIC

Climate-KIC is the largest European public-private innovation partnership focusing on climate change. Climate-KIC was created in 2010 by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)

together with two additional Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs). EIT's aim is to create sustainable growth and Climate-KIC is supporting this mission by addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation. The main purpose of the community is to integrate education, entrepreneurship and innovation, with the goal of transforming knowledge and ideas into economically viable products and services that can help mitigate climate change.

One of the main Climate-KIC working issues concerns Urban Transition. With respect to the Urban Transition activities, Climate-KICs foster urban transformation through collaboration between infrastructure, governance and investment. The idea behind Urban Transitions is:

- o **Integrated and Systemic Innovation:** to foster innovation that can synergise city systems and infrastructure
- o **Smart and Sustainable Development:** Urban Transitions works for sustainable development through articulating new model of values and making sense of complex data.
- o **Education, Facilitation and Capacity Building:** Urban Transitions fosters collaboration by bringing diverse and competing stakeholders together in order to share best practice and knowledge in urban transformation.

In addition, Climate-KICs provide some recommendations on why different urban scales should be considered, as urban investment and implementation decisions generally take place at different levels. By taking into account the different scales and their interactions it could be easier for decision-makers to understand how to integrate systems at different levels. Climate-KIC developed flagship programmes and projects to better understand each of these scales, which include the Building Technologies Accelerator (BTA) flagship programme, Urban Transitions' Smart Sustainable Districts (SSD) flagship programmes, and Urban Transitions' innovation and start-up projects. All the information is collected in the **Urban Transition theme booklet.**

Council of European Municipalities and Regions[10]

The **Council of European Municipalities and Regions** (CEMR) was created in 1951 and brings together national associations of local and regional governments from 42 European countries, and is able, in this way, to represent all levels of territories (local, sub-national and regional). CEMR is also a member of the Global Task Force of local and regional governments recognised by the UN, which is the European section of UCLG, the world organisation of local and regional governments.

Since its creation in 1951, CEMR promotes the construction of a united, peaceful and democratic Europe founded on local self-government, respect for the principle of subsidiarity and the participation of citizens. Its work is organised around two main pillars:

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[10] The information provided in this paragraph are taken from CEMR official website as well as provided to the ESDN by a representative of the network

1. Influencing European policy and legislation in all areas having an impact on municipalities and regions;
2. Providing a forum for debate between local and regional authorities via their national representative associations.
3. Regarding the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, our CEMR's work consists in four main strands:

1. **Awareness raising of their constituencies** by organising regular trainings and workshops for European members on the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs. The Council encourage its members to work with their counterpart in partner countries, through city-to-city cooperation;

2. Secondly, **awareness raising of EU institutions** on the role municipalities, cities and regions play in the achievement of the SDGs: more than 65% of the goals will not be achieved without local governments' engagement;

3. The Council takes action on **monitoring and reporting** by encouraging its members to take part in the national voluntary reporting process, and by providing them with a simple online, visual, monitoring tool (the Reference Framework for sustainable Cities) to help them in their reporting to the national level, to EU institutions and finally the UN through the Global Task Force;

4. **Lobbying at international level** to make the voice of local and regional governments heard in the UN system.

CEMR is also a lead partner of the **PLATFORMA project**, the European voice of local and regional governments working on decentralised cooperation. The project started in November 2008 with the purpose to keep track of the implementation of the first European Commission communication on local and regional governments in development cooperation. In 2015, through a Framework Partnership Agreement with the European Commission (DG DEVCO), the signatories committed to take action by following common values and objectives aimed to tackle global poverty and inequalities, while promoting local democracy and sustainable development. PLATFORMA reflects the diversity of local and regional governments' realities in Europe and across the world and it aims to foster experience sharing among them and to reinforce local and regional governments' specific role in development policies.

On its website, the PLATFORMA project collects a number of studies produced by partners on how to reinforce dialogue and capacity building of local and regional governments in EU partner countries. In addition, it also publishes global and regional reports with the objective of providing the state of play of local government associations in EU partner countries and serves as a basis for future policy proposals. Also, the PLATFORMA project organizes several event taking place in different cities worldwide. You can keep track of the events on the project website.

While the five organizations presented above have European level coverage, some actions have also begun to be undertaken at the national and regional level. Two examples are the International Cooperation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG

International) and the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG). These two organizations and their initiatives will be briefly described in the following section.

VNG International

VNG International (Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten) is the International Cooperation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities. The organization strengthens local governments, their associations, training institutes and decentralization task forces both in developing countries and in countries in transition. In addition, the association develops high quality services such as benchmarks for local governments all over the world.

VNG International developed different projects dealing with local development and sustainability. These include:

- o **Global Goals Municipality Campaign**
- o **Inclusive Decisions At Local Level (IDEAL)**
- o **Local Government Capacity Programme**
- o **Local Government Resilience Programme**

In particular, the Global Goals Municipality Campaign (Gemeenten4GlobalGoals) was created to support the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs and focuses on the importance of local government, a key agent in the new development agenda. The campaign started shortly after the adoption of the SDGs in September 2015 with the aim to inform local governments in the Netherlands on the content of the SDGs and to encourage them to take their responsibilities in realizing the Goals. In the Campaign, VNG International undertook a role which consists of:

- o **Informing** on the Global Goals, the international dimensions and how Dutch municipalities can contribute in realizing the goals;
- o **Facilitating** exchange by forming and expanding the network of municipalities and facilitating interaction within the network and beyond;
- o **Encouraging** activities in municipalities that contribute to the SDGs;
- o **Advising** in order to support the translation of global agendas to local contexts and capabilities.

Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG)[11]

The Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG) is the representative organization of Flemish municipalities. The main purpose of the association is to promote strong local authorities through the development and support of initiatives that are able to enhance the quality of local policy.

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[11] The information provided in this paragraph have been provided by a representative of the network

Since 2015, VVSG (International) has been spreading the SDG-message. The association organized training sessions for local civil servants on the SDGs and their link with local governments. Furthermore, VVSG organized an international conference on the SDGs, mostly attended by Flemish municipalities and their city-to-city link colleagues from the Global South. Together with this conference, VVSG published a publication on the SDGs (**Glocal**).

Additionally, VVSG provides material on localizing the SDGs:

- The publication '**Local support for global challenges**', with information on the 17 SDGs and their targets and what local governments can do to achieve them;
- An **animation film on localizing the SDGs**, available in four languages
- The declaration of commitment '**Local goals, global focus**', available in four languages. This declaration has already been signed by about 60 Flemish municipalities, but also by multiple municipalities in the South because of municipal international cooperation.
- A gameboard helping local governments disclose what actions and activities they are already undertaking that can be linked to the SDGs
- SDG banners, pins, posters and facts
- Monthly article on good practices with regard to one SDG. These articles will be translated into English.

Most importantly, VVSG kicked off a pilot project on integrating the SDGs into local policy-making. In total, 50 Flemish municipalities, which is 1/6 of all Flemish municipalities, have signed up for the project. 20 municipalities have been selected to work intensively with VVSG to incorporate the SDGs into local policies, with sights set on the local elections in October 2018. This project is based on experiment: the association will work with the 20 municipalities to determine what is possible, what works, and what does not work. Eventually, tools and guidelines on consolidating the SDGs in local policy-making for all 308 Flemish municipalities will be made available. The first tool is planned to be distributed this fall. VVSG will also organize a concluding event in 2019 and an international SDG event in 2021.

Session 4: Practical Examples of SDG Implementation at the Local and Urban Level

This chapter will build upon the first chapter, or Session 1 of the Workshop, which looked into how sustainability and sustainable development have grown and changed over time, by exploring some practical examples of the implementation of the SDGs at the local level in Europe, which have often been built upon programs that have a rich history grounded in sustainable development, such as a particular project from Local Agenda 21 North Rhine-Westphalia called the "Global Sustainable Communities". The other two examples that will be looked at and discussed are Ludwigsburg in Germany and the City of Ghent in Belgium. All three of these case studies will have keynote presentations at the Workshop.

"Global Sustainable Communities in North Rhine-Westphalia"

"Global Sustainable Communities in North Rhine-Westphalia" ("*Global Nachhaltige Kommune in Nordrhein-Westfalen*"), or GNK in NRW, is one project that the "Regional Consortium Agenda 21 of North Rhine-Westphalia" (*Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft Agenda 21 Nordrhein-Westfalen*), or LAG 21 NRW, undertakes in its support of sustainable development and the SDGs. Within this project, LAG 21 NRW seeks to counsel 15 municipalities in NRW in their development of strategies for global sustainable development. The objective of the Global Sustainability Communities Project is to make a systematic contribution to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The 15 model communities are currently working on developing their sustainability strategies in the context of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The strategies that are being developed by these 15 model communities in NRW must also take into account the "German Sustainable Development Strategy", which was updated and published in January 2017, as well as the "Sustainability Strategy for North Rhine-Westphalia". The project accompanies and advises these communities through one-on-one advisory sessions, workshops, and networking events with other municipalities in this project. In addition to taking into account the 2030 Agenda, the "German Sustainable Development Strategy", and the "Sustainability Strategy for NRW", the municipalities enrolled in "Global Sustainable Communities" must also strive towards a sustainable and integrated urban development policy that connects the social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development and fosters cross-sectoral thinking and activities. All of these communities should be striving towards this when they are developing their sustainability strategies.

Ludwigsburg, Germany

Much like Hannover, Ludwigsburg also makes use of a specially designated body to handle the way in which the city deals with sustainable development, which is called the Council for Sustainable City Development. The way in which the Council fosters sustainable development in Ludwigsburg won the city the German Sustainability Award in 2014. The way in which the city of Ludwigsburg approaches sustainability is based on stakeholder participation, which includes members from the government administration, the City Council and citizens, who gather together every three years at events called "Future Conferences", the last of which took place in 2015, to discuss ideas for the city's "City Development Concept"

(Stadtentwicklungskonzept (SEK)), which acts as a guide for the city regarding how the city should continue to develop in a sustainable manner.[12]

The SEK is then used to make master plans for each of the city's 11 thematic fields, which each have their own goals embedded within them. This separation allows for everyone to be able to keep track of the topics discussed in the "Future Conferences" and the SEK, as well as how and when goals and targets are being met.[13]

Once the participatory and implementation processes have ended, the city administration evaluates the progress of the SEK and the process begins again from the beginning with an assessment of the current situation within the city and the further development of any strategic goals, such as the SDGs, for example. This then leads to these goals being discussed amongst the stakeholders of Ludwigsburg at the "Future Conferences", which, in turn, helps to inform the city how it should set up the SEK and how to then break it down into smaller master plans for each individual goal of the SEK.[14]

As the last "Future Conference" was in 2015, it is not surprising that the SDGs are not so prominently featured in the SEK. However, as 2018 marks another three year mark, and, hence, another "Future Conference", the SDGs will be a main theme for Ludwigsburg leading up to the Conference in June, 2018. However, before the Conference, the city has already been active in promoting the SDGs to citizens. In July 2017, a flyer stand was set up outside of the Nature Vision Film Festival, which distributed flyers with the 17 SDGs on them and asked citizens to indicate which 3 SDGs were most important to them. So far, the Council for Sustainable City Development has received around 100 filled-out flyers.[15]

In addition to awareness raising campaigns like this, the city administration of Ludwigsburg will also discuss the alignment of the SDGs with each and every masterplan of the SEK. This will then lead to an open SDG workshop in December, 2017, as well as to a preparatory meeting in February, 2018, where the participatory process will be discussed. As previously mentioned, this will then culminate in the "Future Conference" for 2018, in which stakeholders will come together to discuss the future of the city's sustainable development path and help to develop the next SEK and master plans for the cities 11 thematic fields.[16]

City of Ghent, Belgium

The City of Ghent is unique when it comes to the SDGs, because it represents 1 out of 8 SDG Voices, which is the name that Belgium came up with to refer to their SDG ambassadors, and Ghent is the only city to have become one. The idea for Belgium's SDG voices came from the spokespersons for the 2030 Agenda that UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon had chosen, and consisted of well-known personalities, such as the soccer player Messi, singer Shakira, and

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[12] https://www.ludwigsburg.de/,Lde/start/stadt_buerger/Stadtentwicklungskonzept.html

[13] https://www.ludwigsburg.de/,Lde/start/stadt_buerger/Stadtentwicklungskonzept.html

[14] https://www.ludwigsburg.de/site/Ludwigsburg-Internet/get/params_E853152870/1110806/2016_04_01_Pr%C3%A4sentation_NSE_Homepage.pdf

[15] Tobias Großmann. *SD and SDGs activities in the City of Ludwigsburg*. Presentation at the 15th ESDN Workshop. 17 October 2017.

[16] Tobias Großmann. *SD and SDGs activities in the City of Ludwigsburg*. Presentation at the 15th ESDN Workshop. 17 October 2017.

Belgium's Queen Mathilde. The Federal Institute for Sustainable Development took this idea and created a partnership with The Shift, which is a Belgian sustainability network that brings together 350 companies, NGOs and other organizations to stimulate partnerships and help co-create sustainable business models, in order to accomplish something similar to what the UN did, in Belgium. They decided to appoint 8 Belgian SDG Voices. These SDG Voices represent 8 organizations, which had been selected via a double selection procedure. This procedure entailed the enlistment of a committee consisting of 17 experts from civil society, who were tasked with creating a list of organizations with the biggest potential to carry out the SDGs in Belgium. Once the list of organizations was compiled by the expert committee, the list was put forward to a jury of communication experts, who chose the final 8 organizations with the best resume regarding sustainable development and in reaching the wider public.[17]

The main aim of these different organizations is to spread the message of the SDGs to their specific stakeholders and members of civil society, which will create a snowball effect by being able to reach people that are generally not reached with generic media and internet campaigns about sustainable development.[18]

In addition to being a SDG Voice, the city of Ghent has also created a platform to deal with sustainable development and the implementation of the SDGs. The platform consists of many meetings between different stakeholders in the city, including policy-makers and politicians. The platform seeks to develop and discuss ideas that stakeholders have and to then translate those ideas into concrete plans and action. It is the goal of the city to be able to extend and expand this platform to firstly engage with citizens, organizations and businesses more and gauge their reactions to these platform discussions, and the subsequent plans and actions that are taken based on those discussions.[19]

Apart from expanding the platform within the city, Ghent also wants to expand the platform to be able to discuss the SDGs with other well-established networks that have been dealing with sustainable development and the SDGs, such as ICLEI and Eurocities.[20]

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[17] E. Mulholland, A. Bernardo & G. Berger (2017), Communication and Awareness Raising in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs: Activities and Challenges, ESDN Quarterly Report 44, April 2017, ESDN Office, Vienna. p. 19-20.
[18] IBID. p. 20.
[19] Anja Van den Durpel. Ghent. Presentation at the 15th ESDN Workshop. 17 October 2017.
[20] Anja Van den Durpel. Ghent. Presentation at the 15th ESDN Workshop. 17 October 2017.