

date: 18 June 2024

## SDG interactive circle exercise: manual

### 1. For what purposes can you use the SDG circle exercise?

- familiarize colleagues/partners with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)  
**SEE STEP 1**
- demonstrate to colleagues/partners that their work is already linked to the SDGs in very concrete ways  
**SEE STEP 1**
- identify additional sustainable actions and set priorities for the future  
**SEE STEP 2**
- further sustainable actions or projects  
**SEE STEP 3**

### 2. Conduct of the SDG circle exercise

Download the [game board in English](#) and print on size A0, in colour.

#### Introduction to the SDGs

If participants are not familiar with the SDGs, you can give a basic introduction. To do so, use this [overview of the 17 SDGs and their short content](#), or this [short animation video](#) from the VVSG.

#### **STEP 1: brainstorm on actions your city/municipality/department is already taking (about 20 minutes)**

Place your city / municipality / department at the core of the circle. Identify which policies and actions of your city / municipality / department can be linked to each of the SDGs.

Write down one action or project per post-it. Stick the post-it to the corresponding SDG.

Note: Keep in mind that the SDGs are interconnected. Consequently, an action or objective may link to several SDGs and does not always belong in one box.

Note: [Alternative game boards](#) exist

- ⇒ a **game board with 3 levels**, on which you can also stick actions per SDG at a specific level:
- **Internal** level: think, for example, of actions for HR, municipal buildings and internal procedures such as purchasing policy.
  - **Local** level: all actions, projects and services to the population
  - **Global** level: this refers to direct international cooperation (such as through town twinning), as well as participation in European and

international projects and municipal support for international justice organisations.

- ⇒ A game board based on the **5 pillars of sustainable development instead of** the 17 SDGs. This can be interesting for e.g. municipal services that have a very strong link to one pillar (e.g. welfare service: people pillar) and that want to see how their actions and projects can contribute to the other pillars (planet, prosperity, peace & partnership).

## **STEP 2: brainstorm on additional actions that your city / municipality / department can implement (about 20 minutes)**

You think about what more you can do as a city/municipality/department to contribute to each SDG. This can involve both strengthening current actions and taking new ones, as well as large and small interventions. Be sure to think about the SDGs on which your service currently has little or no commitment.

Write down one action per post-it. Use a different colour post-it for this than in step 1. Stick the post-it to the corresponding SDG (and to the corresponding level or pillar if you chose an alternative game board).

Optional: You can set some priorities in your group for the current and/or next policy period. You can use coloured dots for this. You can set these priorities in group, or you can individually pick a trio of actions.

## **STEP 3 (optional): make existing or planned actions more sustainable (about 15 minutes)**

You can also use the circle to check whether a specific action or defined project is SDG-proof. Choose an action that already sticks on the game board (from step 1 or 2) and now place it in the centre of the circle. Check whether it takes into account the different SDGs. Does your action take into account the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability and works on SDGs 16 (peace, security and efficient institutions) and 17 (partnerships)?

This step of the exercise already resulted in concrete adjustments to planned actions or projects in several municipalities. See examples at the bottom of this manual.

## **STEP 4: feedback (about 10 minutes)**

Finally, plenary feedback. Did the workshop help you gain a better understanding of the SDGs and the link to local policies? What do you take away from the workshop? Are there any issues (strong actions, additional short- and long-term initiatives) on which the group agrees?

## **General comments**

You can do the SDG circle exercise with different types of groups: employees of the same department, group of heads of department, the management team, politicians, an internal

working group, ... You can also use the circle exercise outside your municipal administration, for example in an advisory council or with a partner organisation.

You can also place a theme, organisation, partnership, project, ... at the core of the circle.

## **Annex: Practical examples step 3 (making actions and projects sustainable)**

The municipality of Zoersel asked all its employees to place all their policy proposals in the SDG circle as part of the preparations for the multi-year plan 2020-2025. This led to some adjustments to the activities. For example, after linking the weekly local market to SDG 2, the municipality decided to provide more stand space and support for local farmers.

The city of Lommel systematically places larger urban projects (on public space and mobility, among others) in the SDG circle. For example, it decided to set up a slow desk for seniors when the local service centre was checked off against SDG 10.

The city of Harelbeke also uses the SDG circle exercise when developing concrete projects. In 2023, they placed plans for the reconstruction of some streets in the SDG circle. Among other things, this led to an increased focus on SDGs 3 (well-being) and 15 (living on the land). Additional benches for meeting will be placed and small subsidies for façade greenery for residents will be provided.

More inspiration? Check out the [videos on SDG trajectories of Flemish cities and municipalities](#), often using the SDG circle exercise. Subtitles in English and French.

**QUESTIONS? Contact [internationaal@vvsq.be](mailto:internationaal@vvsq.be).**

