

Making your multi-annual policy plan more sustainable through the SDGs

inspiration guide



Vlaanderen
verbeelding werkt



Belgium
partner in development

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This guide has been developed based on the context of Flemish local governments and their policy processes. Although not all data sources and suggestions are applicable to non-Flemish municipalities, the guide may serve as an inspiration to local governments worldwide.

Reading guide

In September 2015, all the Member States of the United Nations signed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This includes 5 Pillars (People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace Partnership) and 17 objectives (Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs) designed to transform our world into a fairer place that respects people and the planet.

Many municipalities, including perhaps yours, have already been working actively to realise the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in recent years. The new Policy and Management Cycle (PMC) offers the ideal opportunity to strengthen your local policy based on the socially relevant objectives of the SDGs.

The inspiration guide will support you in incorporating the SDGs in an efficient and effective manner into the design, implementation and follow-up of your multi-annual policy plan (MAPP). The guide is based on the many years of knowledge and experience of the VVSG (the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities) and the Flemish local authorities with the local translation of the SDGs.

The choices you make will depend on your starting position, the initial trajectory and your level of ambition.

We describe **three example trajectories**. From here, you can also click through to the various sections of the inspiration guide.



The explorer: The SDGs are still little known and not used, or used only to a limited extent.

There is, however, ambition among at least a number of people in the organisation to introduce the SDGs in an accessible way when drawing up the MAPP.



The builder: A number of initiatives have already been taken in the context of the SDGs. However, the SDGs have not yet been adopted throughout the organisation, and thus far they have tended to be used on an ad hoc basis.

There is a need for a structured approach.



The pioneer: The SDGs are a recognised framework. There is political and administrative support, with sustainability embedded in multiple policy areas. The new policy period is being seen as offering momentum to further embed the 2030 Agenda and to take the next steps, for example for SDG monitoring and the participation of external stakeholders.

At the end of the inspiration guide you will also find the **actual trajectories** of Herentals (explorer), Berlaar (builder) and Deinze and Harelbeke (pioneer).

The inspiration guide shows how you can integrate the SDGs into **the following steps of drawing up the multi-annual policy plan:**

- **Structure**
 - › preparatory documents such as context analyses
 - › vision and mission
 - › **determine policy priorities**
 - › objectives
 - › **action plans and actions**
 - › indicators
 - › budget
 - › final document
 - › communication on multi-annual policy plan
- **Implementation**
- **Monitoring and reporting**

For each step, we provide suggestions and tools for incorporating the SDGs, a number of concrete practical examples from municipalities and tips for explorers, builders and pioneers. 'In our opinion, the green steps offer the most important opportunities to integrate SDG reflections into your MAPP process.'

To include the SDGs in the multi-annual policy plan, we believe there are **three essential building blocks** that are indispensable in any trajectory:

1. **Political** mandate
2. **Official** leadership (management team, managing director, finance director)
3. **Core group** is familiar with the multi-annual policy plan and uses the SDGs

The SDGs should pack a punch.

We conclude the publication with a **methodology section** in which we explain all the tools mentioned in detail. In a summary matrix, we indicate at which stage you can use the methodology in question and how time-consuming it is.

From each chapter you can click through to the methodologies mentioned.

Want more information?

You can contact hanne.albers@vmsg.be or heleen.voeten@vmsg.be

Legend



important



tips

word

link



practical
experience



Explorer



Builder



Pioneer

Abbreviations used

MAPP Multi-annual policy plan

PMC Policy and
Management Cycle

CA Context analysis

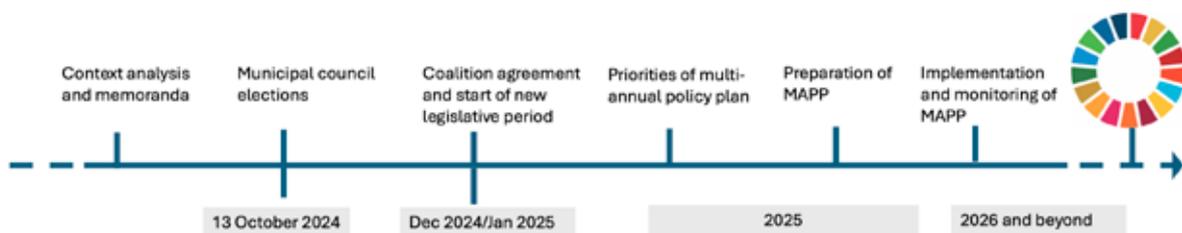
SDGs in the Policy and Management Cycle

A new legislative period, a renewed commitment to a sustainable future. The multi-annual policy plan (MAPP) provides perspective and sets out priorities for the next 6 years. The policy planning process also provides momentum for organisational development. What do we stand for as an organisation? What values do we prioritise? What do we see as our core mission(s) and how do we want to realise them? **Use the structure of the new multi-annual policy plan to set up your organisation on a sustainable footing.**

The 2030 Agenda as a compass

The **United Nations 2030 Agenda for sustainable development provides a compass for making your local policy more sustainable.** It includes 5 Pillars (People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace Partnership) and 17 objectives (Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs) designed to transform our world into a fairer place that respects people and the planet. No realisation of the SDGs without cities and municipalities. All objectives touch on the powers of local authorities. As the first level of government, local authorities are also best placed to involve citizens and inspire them to take sustainable action.

Municipal policy process



The Policy and Management Cycle (PMC) is the tool used to plan, implement and evaluate the policies of Flemish local authorities. The system applies to municipalities, public social welfare centres, autonomous municipal companies and welfare associations. The multi-annual policy plan is central to the PMC. It contains the (priority) policy objectives and budget for the period 2026-2031. This will be reported to the municipal council. In addition to the multi-annual policy plan, there are also supporting documents, such as the municipal context analysis and any administrative policy proposals.



General tips for your MAPP

- Choose a limited number of policy objectives.
- Think carefully about your cascade objectives – action plans – actions. Formulate objectives for what you want to achieve and what change you want to bring about. Some authorities make an additional distinction between strategic and operational objectives. Your action plans and actions describe what you are going to do. Building a new sports complex, for example, is an action plan, not an objective.
- Perform a SMART check on your policy objectives:
Specific – Measurable – Acceptable or Ambitious – Realistic – Time-bound.
- Be mindful of the way in which you want to achieve something, and choose sustainable methods wherever possible. Improving the quality of housing, for example, is one thing, but also consider the use of sustainable materials.
- Streamline your policy planning process in a milestone plan and an agreement paper.

The **purpose of integrating the SDGs into the multi-annual policy plan is to create a more sustainable policy.**

The 2030 Agenda is a useful framework:

- It is a clearly defined and communicatively attractive sustainability framework on which you can have a major impact locally. The SDGs offer a common language, internally and externally.
- The 5 Pillars of sustainability and 17 SDGs require a broad view of sustainable development, which encourages inter-service cooperation and input from a diverse group of experts.
- You are aligning your own policy objectives, actions and monitoring system with a framework that is also used regionally, nationally and internationally.

Around two in three Flemish local authorities have already applied the 2030 Agenda to their 2019-2024 PMC. Are you riding the SDG wave too?



Heist-Op-Den-Berg



Support

It is important that colleagues, citizens and partners are familiar with the 2030 Agenda and know how they can contribute to it themselves. This is how you create support for the necessary sustainable policy measures and internal strategic SDG exercises. Conversely, such exercises and measures can help build support for the SDGs. For example, introducing a systematic SDG assessment for projects requires internal training and raising awareness about the 2030 Agenda, but regularly applying this assessment will in turn create more internal awareness and a sustainability reflex.

Both internally and externally, it is about making people realise that they already do a lot in their daily activities that contributes to the SDGs. Recognition, ownership and involvement are important keys to motivation. If employees realise that their work has an impact on the SDGs, which is further increased by collaborating across policy areas, working transversally from a sustainability mindset becomes possible and attractive. The same goes for citizens and external partners. If they understand how their own behaviour and activities contribute to the SDGs, they will feel more involved in sustainable initiatives and be more motivated to participate in a sustainable municipal policy.

See the appendix "Support for SDGs" p. 102 for tips and tools to strengthen internal and external support for the SDGs.

Working with the SDGs: a win-win

What are the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs?

Our prosperity has increased dramatically over the past centuries. And yet inequality is still a major problem. Furthermore, our growth and development are having a major impact on the planet, which is reaching the limits of its carrying capacity. With the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, all countries of the United Nations are committing to setting our society and planet on a sustainable course.

The Agenda contains 17 goals – broken down into 169 subtargets – that bring together economic, social, ecological and democratic challenges.¹ These objectives are closely interrelated. Sustainable living and mobility, for example, require attention to inclusion and accessibility. Health, sports and leisure policies cannot ignore mental well-being and clean air.

Cooperation is crucial to realise the broad and integrated approach of the 2030 Agenda. Cooperation between countries, but also between governments, the private sector, NGOs, knowledge institutes and citizens. And all with an eye for the most vulnerable groups in society. We must leave no one behind in our pursuit of sustainable development.

The 17 SDGs are grouped into five pillars or ‘five Ps’ of sustainable development: **People**, **Planet**, **Prosperity**, **Peace** and **Partnership**. See also the appendix ‘Overview of the 17 SDGs’.



¹ Consult the full text of the 2030 Agenda with 17 SDGs and 169 subtargets.

Local authorities are crucial in realising the SDGs

The **Belgian federal and Flemish governments are using the 2030 Agenda** as a guiding framework for their sustainable development strategies. The national sustainable development strategy is based on the 5 Pillars and the most recent federal sustainable development plan (2021) aims to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs. The Flemish government developed its own 'Vizier 2030' in which it translates the 17 SDGs into 54 objectives for Flanders, explicitly naming local authorities as priority partners in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.



'Local governments are on the front lines of shaping a world that is more prosperous, sustainable, inclusive and interconnected.'

António Guterres,
Secretary-General of the
United Nations

Local authorities play a crucial role in the transition to a sustainable society. **International studies show that at least 65% of the SDG subtargets cannot be realised without the active contribution of cities and municipalities.**² They have the experience, the proximity and the necessary local partners to offer solutions to complex challenges such as combating poverty, greening, integration and sustainable living and travel.

Cities and municipalities in Flanders are considered worldwide to be pioneers in the local anchoring of the 2030 Agenda:

- 60% of Flemish local authorities integrate the SDGs into their multi-annual policy plans
- 40% monitor the local progress of the SDGs³
- 120 municipalities signed the VVSG's SDG commitment statement
- Almost 2 in 3 municipalities have already taken part in Sustainable Municipality Week

In the Flemish SDG Report published in 2023 by the VVSG and the Association of Flemish Provinces and in the SDG practice database of the VVSG, you can discover which sustainable actions and projects Flemish local authorities are undertaking and how they are using the SDGs as a sustainability test in policy development.

² See, among others, the OECD study 'A territorial approach to the Sustainable Development Goals'.

³ Figures from survey by the VVSG in March-April 2024.

We need to shift up a gear

Progress on the SDGs has been stagnating worldwide since 2020 due to factors including the coronavirus pandemic and ongoing conflicts. According to the latest SDG report from the UN, only 17% of the SDG subtargets will be realised by 2030 if accelerated and globally coordinated efforts are not made. Considerable progress has been made in some areas, including combating poverty, child mortality, access to electricity and the fight against disease.

Belgium is in 17th place (of 167 countries that are annually scored in the Sustainable Development Report of SDSN), but **year after year it continues to score poorly on ecological objectives**. This is mainly due to spillover effects, the impact of our production and consumption beyond our own borders.

The Flemish SDG Report also confirms the need for urgent action for the Planet and Peace pillars, among others. **SDG 15 (life on land)** even stands out alarmingly, with increasing paving in more than 90% of Flemish municipalities and a decrease in green surface area in 80% of the municipalities. The key to change can lie locally: from strengthening local flora and fauna to reviewing building plans for environmental damage and a local tree policy aimed at preserving and planting trees.

Sustainable Development Report 2024, SDSN



Note: The full title of each SDG is available here: <https://sdgs.un.org>

5 reasons to choose the SDGs

Opting for the SDGs is opting for a coherent sustainable policy in which economic, social and ecological interests come together. This requires cooperation, participation and long-term commitment.



What do you get in return?

- The SDGs strengthen **inter-service cooperation** and help transcend compartmentalisation. This is because all the goals are interconnected and require input from various services and experts.
- You speak a **common language** in your contacts with companies, associations and other partners.
- The SDGs are a **recognisable and visually appealing framework for communication and reporting** on sustainability. In comparison with other sustainability frameworks (such as the European ESG framework, the GRI standards or ISO 26000), the SDG framework offers greater leverage in international networks and more opportunities for exchange and benchmarking with equal actors (local authorities instead of companies).
- You give your municipality an **international image**. You present yourself as a municipality with an open view of the world and make it clear that local policy actions also have an impact outside your own municipality.
- You develop **long-term policy** with an eye to the well-being of future generations.

All SDGs touch on the powers of local authorities. So there is something for every representative and civil servant. Whether you work in mobility, the environment, welfare or participation, the SDGs offer a framework to strengthen your field of work. Want to know more about how the SDGs relate to your policy area? The VVSG offers inspiration on the [relationship between local policy areas and the SDGs](#) on its website. And in the appendix "Alderman powers linked to the SDGs" on [page 110](#) we link political powers to the (most important) SDGs.



GLOBAL GOALS
LOCAL FOCUS

DE LOKALE VERTALING
VAN DE 17 DUURZAME
ONTWIKKELINGSDOELSTELLINGEN

- 1 **LEVEN IN ARMOEDE**
- 2 **REIN WATER EN SANITATIE**
- 3 **GOEDE GEZONDHEID EN WELZIJN**
- 4 **KWALITEIT ONDERWIJS**
- 5 **GESLIECHTERSGELIJKE**
- 6 **GOED Kwaliteitswater**
- 7 **GOED Kwaliteitsenergie**
- 8 **GOED Kwaliteitswerk**
- 9 **INDUSTRIË, INNOVATIE EN INFRASTRUCTUUR**
- 10 **VERMINDERDE ONGELIJKHEID**
- 11 **GOED Kwaliteitswoonruimte en stedelijke ontwikkeling**
- 12 **DUURZAME VERBRUCH EN PRODUCTIE**
- 13 **KLIMAATACHT**
- 14 **LEVEN IN HET WATER**
- 15 **LEVEN IN HET LAND**

Provincie Antwerpen

DUURZAME

WINDMIL

P

MAX 30 MIN

P

↑6m↑

UITGEZONDENDE MOEDERDAG VAN 6.30u TOT 13.30u

Example routes:
explorer,
builder,
pioneer

We describe three example trajectories for integrating the SDGs into your multi-annual policy plan. Use them as inspiration to find your way through this inspiration guide. The steps depend on the starting point and level of ambition of your municipality. The steps in green (pages 18-19) are the steps where it is best to have minimum input, whether you are an explorer, builder or pioneer. Enrich the proposed steps from the three example trajectories with the many tips, exercises and tools from the inspiration guide.

The explorer

The SDGs are still little known and were used only to a limited extent, if at all, in the previous policy period. There is, however, ambition among at least a number of people in the organisation to introduce the SDGs in an accessible way when drawing up the MAPP and create support. You will continue to build on this in the coming years.

For example "Herentals" on page 67



The builder

In recent years, a number of initiatives have been taken in the context of the SDGs, such as using SDG icons, participating in Sustainable Municipality Week or an SDG check by a service. But the SDGs have not yet been adopted throughout the organisation and for the time being they tend to be used on an ad hoc basis. The board of mayor and aldermen and MAT are positive about the 2030 Agenda as an inspiring framework, but there is a need for a structured approach.

For example "Berlaar" on page 68



The pioneer

The SDGs are a recognised framework. They were used as inspiration or a compass for the previous MAPP. There is political and administrative support, with sustainability embedded in multiple policy areas. The new policy period is being seen as offering momentum to further embed the 2030 Agenda and to take the next steps, for example for SDG monitoring and reporting and the participation of external stakeholders.

For example "Deinze" on page 69 and "Harelbeke" on page 71



The SDGs should pack a punch: mandate Politics (board of mayor)



The explorer

You focus on knowledge and mandate with the councillors, MAT and MAPP core group, e.g. via information session. You make a proposal for easily accessible integration of SDGs in preparing the MAPP.

p. 20

Use the SDG monitor and link the main themes for the MAPP to the SDGs. Submit the conclusions (priorities according to SDGs) to board of mayor and aldermen and MAT.

p. 29

Incorporate the (priority) SDGs into action sheets for employees. Integrate a specific action plan on the implementation of the SDGs, ideally with budget.

p. 38



The builder

Your administration has made a formal commitment to the SDGs, e.g. via the VVSG commitment statement. SDG refresher for MAT and MAPP core group, in which each member is responsible for one or more SDGs or Pillars.

p. 20

Determine priority SDGs with the MAT or MAPP core group through an impact exercise.

p. 29

Incorporate the SDGs in input sheets for objectives. Pay extra attention to priority SDGs and key messages of the 2030 Agenda.

p. 32

Do the SDG circle exercise. Include the 2030 Agenda in the selection and/or elaboration of key projects.

p. 38



The pioneer

You provide a refresher course on the SDGs, incorporate the SDGs into the introductory session for staff and enter into discussions with other pioneering municipalities.

p. 20

Update your vision and mission based on the 2030 Agenda (5 Pillars).

p. 28

Also involve external partners to determine priority SDGs (SDGs in civic participation).

p. 29

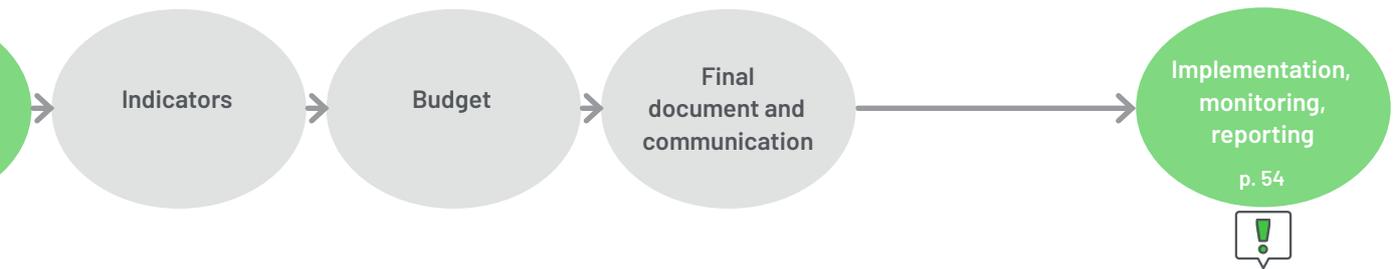
Use the 5 Pillars as a starting point for your MAPP.

p. 32

Organise inter-service pillar workshops and involve external partners. Consider both the positive and negative effects on the SDGs.

p. 38

and aldermen), Official (MAT), Core group MAPP



38

Incorporate the SDGs visually into the final MAPP document. p. 47

The municipality understands the SDGs and recognises the added value. There is an initial political and administrative mandate. ✓

Perform an SDG check on key projects. Integrate SDGs into subsidy schemes. Include SDGs in reports to board of mayor and aldermen and municipal council. Select SDG indicators (for priority SDGs). p. 54

38

Formulate SDG indicators for at least one objective at the level of the objective, action plans and actions. p. 42

Incorporate the SDGs visually into the final MAPP document, e.g. with a summary table or visual. p. 47

The SDGs have been included as a framework for reflection for the MAPP, which contributes to support and a more sustainable policy. ✓

Perform an SDG check on key projects. Highlight one SDG every year. Expand your SDG indicator set and develop an SDG dashboard. p. 54

38

Formulate targets for your indicators. p. 42

Provide a specific SDG budget whereby services can receive extra funding for an SDG action. p. 46

Include the SDGs in the final MAPP document and in your external communications about the MAPP. p. 47

The SDGs are anchored in the MAPP, with attention for internal and external participation and monitoring. ✓

Appoint colleagues as SDG ambassadors. Integrate SDGs into partnerships and build a local SDG network. Strengthen your SDG monitoring with data from external partners. Include SDG sheets in annual reporting or create separate SDG reports. p. 54

more sustainable local policy

SDGs should
pack a punch:
essential
building blocks

Every SDG trajectory is unique. Depending on your starting position and level of ambition, you look for the right building blocks for your journey. We describe three example trajectories and guide you step by step through the process of drawing up your multi-annual policy plan.

To incorporate the SDGs into the multi-annual policy plan, there are three essential building blocks.

1. **Political mandate**
2. **Official leadership** (management team, managing director, finance director)
3. **Core group** is familiar with the multi-annual policy plan and uses the SDGs

The SDGs should pack a punch. Work on this through your SDG journey.

Political mandate

The board of aldermen must agree to use the SDGs as a compass or inspirational framework for the multi-annual policy plan. You can take various steps, such as SDG exercises with employees or visualising the SDGs in the multi-annual policy plan. But without a political mandate or leadership, it is very difficult to make those steps part of a lasting process of SDG integration.

Therefore, work on a political mandate for SDG integration from the start. Or if that is not yet possible, then create it at a later stage, for example by including SDGs in reports to the board and municipal council. Check whether and how sustainability and the SDGs have been incorporated into the political party manifestos and the coalition agreement.

Creating or strengthening political mandate and leadership

- If the coalition agreement is still being drawn up, suggest incorporating the SDGs into it. This could be done, for example, by means of an SDG circle with policy priorities.
- Sign the VVSG SDG commitment statement with the board or the municipal council.
- Organise an SDG information session, to which you could invite the VVSG. Combine the information session with an inspiring lecture or debate on sustainability.
- Clarify the added value of the SDGs as a framework for local policy (see p. 10). The SDGs are not new. As a local authority, you already do a lot that contributes to sustainability. The visually appealing SDG framework helps to determine priorities and bundle actions together more efficiently. The interconnectedness of the SDGs promotes a cross-cutting view of sustainability.
- Use SDG data to show how your municipality is doing on the 17 goals, where your municipality's strengths lie and on which SDG themes you can still make progress (p. 60).
- Appoint SDG ambassadors from among local representatives.
- Appoint the mayor as sustainability watchdog and make the SDGs part of his or her portfolio.



Explorer

Start with an SDG meeting for the board of aldermen. Explain what the SDGs are and how your municipality is already working towards realising the goals. Clarify the added value of working with the SDGs and suggest how you want to use the framework in the drafting of the multi-annual policy plan.



Builder

Do the SDG circle exercise with the new administration (p. 84).



Pioneer

Write your own SDG commitment statement, in collaboration with advisory councils and possibly other partners.



The **reaffirmation of the SDG commitment statement** in **Edegem** has created renewed awareness among the board of aldermen and the municipal council, and has brought positive attention to the local commitment to sustainable development in the local press.

In **Ostend** and **Ghent** the board of aldermen was given an **inspiration sheet for each theme from the coalition agreement** for the 2020–25 multi-annual policy plan. In addition to elements from the coalition agreement and the previous MAPP, the sheet also included the relevant SDGs and SDG subtargets (p. 35).

Official leadership

The managing director, finance director and management team (MAT) are crucial actors. They help determine the structure of the multi-annual policy plan, are responsible for coordinating and monitoring the process, and manage the implementation and reporting of the multi-annual policy plan. It is essential that they support the choice for the 2030 Agenda and preferably also actively promote it.

Creating or strengthening official mandate and leadership

- Organise an SDG information session for the MAT, to which you could invite the VVSG.
- Do the SDG circle exercise with the MAT (p. 84).
- Organise a meeting between your managing director and his or her colleague from a municipality that has made a conscious decision to adopt the SDGs.
- Show what municipalities in the region are already doing in terms of the SDGs. You can request information from the VVSG.
- Provide concrete insights into the connection between your local policy and the SDGs: mapping of the current MAPP to the SDGs, strengths and challenges according to context analysis and SDG data (p. 60), priorities according to the coalition agreement, etc.
- Make each MAT member responsible for one or more of the 5 Pillars of sustainability. They monitor the way in which their Pillar(s) are dealt with in the multi-annual priority plan.
- Determine SDG priorities with the MAT (p. 29).

- Provide the MAT with the SDG graphs for your municipality. Here you will find visual information about your municipality's score on all SDGs (measuring points since 2010). You can compile your own report at www.sdgmonitor.be, or request your personal graphs from the VVSG.



Explorer

Start with an SDG information session for the MAT. If the process for the multi-annual policy plan has already been determined, focus on suggestions for how the SDGs can easily be included. For example, by conducting an SDG check on one concrete project, an SDG circular exercise with an enthusiastic service to refine actions, an SDG in the spotlight every year, etc.



Builder

Carry out an SDG priority analysis with the MAT. See how you can translate the most priority SDGs into the multi-annual policy plan. For example, as specific objectives or as an additional check on the MAPP.



Pioneer

Enter into dialogue with the MAT of another advanced SDG municipality. This will allow you to exchange ideas and plans of attack, strengthen each other and arrive at new insights together.



Practical experience

For the [2020-2025 multi-annual priority plan](#), [Retie](#) chose the 5 Pillars of sustainable development. The MAT was the trigger. They learnt about the SDGs during an information session organised by the VVSG. The finance director was in favour from the start and managed to enthuse the other MAT members. The MAT members were particularly convinced of the potential: breaking away from what we always do, ensuring innovation, connecting local policy and SDGs within a logical process and not as extra work. The broad vision of sustainability, broader than just climate, was also an important trigger.



Londerzeel

The [Londerzeel](#) MAT also recognises the potential of the SDGs. In the run-up to the 2024 local elections, they invited the VVSG for an information session on the SDGs in the multi-annual policy plan. To also create broader support within the organisation, the MAT participated in a litter clean-up campaign in the municipality on the same day. After the information sessions, they wanted to investigate the feasibility of creating their own local version of [the VVSG's SDG test](#) for projects and consulting the strategic unit of experienced SDG municipality Harelbeke.

The Londerzeel MAT set out to collect waste.

Core group for multi-annual policy plan

The core group for the multi-annual policy plan coordinates the process. It determines the structure of the MAPP, collects and processes the information and resolves issues. Sometimes the core group is the same as the management team. But the composition of the MAPP core group may also be different, for example with heads of service and civil service experts.

How do you ensure support within the core group for the multi-annual policy plan?

- Organise an SDG information session, use the overview of the 17 SDGs (p. 99) or distribute the [Local Support for Global Challenges](#).
- Do the SDG circle exercise (p. 84). Discuss with the core group which existing sustainable initiatives you are proud of and what dreams there are for new or modified sustainable policy actions.
- Provide concrete insights into the connection between your local policy and the SDGs: mapping of the current MAPP to the SDGs, strengths and challenges according to context analysis and SDG data (p. 60), priorities according to the coalition agreement, etc.
- Make each member of the core group responsible for one or more of the 5 Pillars of sustainability or for one or more of the 17 SDGs. They will monitor the way in which their Pillar(s) or SDGs are addressed in the multi-annual policy plan.
- Determine SDG priorities (p. 29).



Explorer Start with an SDG information session. Ask each member of the core group to consider how his or her service is already contributing to the realisation of the SDGs and, if applicable, where they are not currently working on them. Together, consider how you can give the SDGs a place in your process. You can base yourself on the proposed scenario for starting municipalities (p. 16).



Builder For each step in your milestone plan, indicate whether and how you will integrate the SDGs. Will you incorporate the SDGs into planned participation events? Would you rather perform an extra check on the information collected? Is it necessary to allow extra time for explaining the SDGs or for an additional check? If so, make a time estimate and include it in your milestone plan.



Pioneer If you have an SDG working group in your municipality, include one of its members in the multi-annual policy plan core group. This person will help consider how and when the SDGs will be incorporated into the process and will help ensure that sustainability is approached from different perspectives (the 5 Ps). He or she will make suggestions on how to keep the SDGs alive after the MAPP has been finalised.



In the core group for the 2018 context analyses of Hoogstraten and Evergem, each member was responsible for one or more SDGs. They organised workshops for their SDGs or Pillars, and analysed and refined information. You can use a similar approach for the drafting of the multi-annual policy plan.

The town of Herentals has based its context analysis and policy proposals for 2024 on its own organisational structure, but has woven the SDGs into the process and the final document. An SDG watchdog has been appointed in each sector. They ensure that each policy proposal is linked to one or more SDGs.



Hasselt

SDGs when drawing up a multi-annual policy plan

Preparatory documents: context analysis, inspiration paper and coalition agreement

Experience shows that local authorities that used the 2030 Agenda in their preparatory documents laid a good foundation for the further use of the SDGs. Employees, representatives and partners were already familiar with the SDGs. This strengthens support for a follow-up programme.

Have you already used the SDGs in the context analysis, administrative policy proposals and/or the coalition agreement?

Yes - Build on what you already have. Examples:

- Let ideas that you collected when drawing up the administrative inspiration paper, for example through the SDG circle exercise, flow through to the multi-annual policy plan.
- If your context analysis and/or inspiration paper is structured according to the 5 Pillars or 17 SDGs, you can extend that structure to the objectives or action plans in the MAPP.
- If you worked visually with the SDG circle and icons, do the same for the multi-annual policy plan. That will improve recognisability.

No

- Is your context analysis not yet finished? Check out the [VVSG inspiration guide on SDGs in the context analysis](#). Publication of 2018. Version of 2024 only available in Dutch.
- Take a look at SDG data, such as the [SDG report of Provinces in Figures](#), the [SDG monitor](#) and the [SDG wijzer](#). These will provide more insight into the SDGs that your municipality is doing well and less well on.
- Link the administrative policy proposals (and any proposals from memoranda from advisory councils, for example) and topics from the coalition agreement to the SDGs. Among other things, this will show which SDGs are the main focus. It also makes clear which SDGs are addressed little or not at all: is this OK or should you devote extra attention to it?
- Incorporate the SDGs into input files for the development of policy objectives, as one of the sources of inspiration alongside, for example, the current MAPP, the context analysis and the coalition agreement ([p. 35](#)).



Explorer

Were the SDGs not used at all in the preparatory documents? Then definitely work on the essential building blocks (p. 20) and incorporate the SDGs in an accessible manner into the process, for example via input sheets for objectives and actions.



Builder

Did you work with the SDGs to a limited extent in the preparatory documents, for example by including the icons? Then try to go one step further when drawing up the multi-annual policy plan. Include the SDGs in the process as well, not just in the final document. For example, ask employees to indicate which SDGs their actions support. Check out the examples under objectives of the multi-annual policy plan and action plans and actions of the multi-annual policy plan.



Pioneer

Did you already organise internal inter-service brainstorming sessions for the context analysis for each Pillar of sustainable development? When drawing up the multi-annual policy plan, extend this to include moments for reflection with partners and citizens. Re-work your vision and mission according to the 5 Pillars.



The [inspiration guide for SDGs in the context analysis \(CA\)](#) contains many practical examples of how the SDGs have been incorporated into the CA and administrative policy proposals.

In the [Huldenberg 2019-2024 policy statement](#), each theme and accompanying proposal is linked to one or more SDGs.

Vision and mission

By anchoring your commitment to the 2030 Agenda in your vision and mission, you create an important lever for further strengthening of support. This is because the mission and vision are not only your municipality's calling card, they also have an internal role in motivating employees. They make clear what they are doing it all for.

You also create leverage for an ambitious and sustainable policy, because the vision and mission are the foundation on which you will build your objectives framework. You translate your vision and mission into values, organisational culture and processes.

Under the methodologies, you will find an example exercise to inspire your vision/mission on the 2030 Agenda (p. 77).



- For the 2020-2025 multi-annual policy plan, various municipalities translated the 5 Pillars of sustainable development in local terms. This can also be part of the municipality's vision and mission.
- See examples under objectives of the multi-annual policy plan (p. 34).
- Are you starting from your existing vision and mission? Then place your vision and mission in the [circle of the 5 Ps](#). Accessible, but effective.



The town of [Harelbeke](#) aligned its vision for the 2020-25 multi-annual policy plan with the 5 Pillars:

Harelbeke has chosen the sustainable development goals (SDGs) with a focus on 2030 as its policy framework. "Leave no one behind" is our point of departure (People). We are always looking for sustainable solutions to social challenges that improve the quality of life for all our citizens (Prosperity). We are protecting the climate for future generations (Planet).

Our organisation is evolving into a flexible, open, externally oriented and innovative organisation (Peace - Public Institutions). We will put Harelbeke on the map as a "world-class town", together with our citizens, businesses and partner organisations in a global partnership for sustainable development (Partnership).

Determine policy priorities

We consider this one of the most important building blocks, whether you are a beginner or advanced in terms of the SDGs. If you have to make choices, we recommend that you definitely include the SDGs when determining your policy priorities. Ideally, you will do this when you start drawing up the multi-annual policy plan. But it is also useful to define priority SDGs at a later stage of the process or once the MAPP has been completed.

Why determine priority SDGs?

- Realistic: it is more manageable to consider a number of SDGs than to scrutinise all 17 SDGs every time. For example, you can check your MAPP against the priority SDGs. Or you can pay extra attention to those SDGs when developing concrete projects.
- Higher level of ambition: focusing on a number of SDGs enables you to develop more targeted actions for those SDGs. You raise your level of ambition for those goals and go further than linking policy to the SDGs.
- Communication: You can orient your internal and external communications towards the priority SDGs.
- Implementation: In the further steps of the policy cycle, you can pay extra attention to the priority SDGs, for example by monitoring and reporting on those SDGs, focusing on a priority SDG every year with extra action for that SDG, or appointing internal and external ambassadors for the priority SDGs.

What are priority SDGs?

Depending on the type of exercise, the term 'priority' is interpreted differently.

- Priority SDGs or SDG themes⁴ are the goals or themes on which you as a local authority can have the greatest impact, both now and in the future.
E.g. for Sustenuto materiality analysis (p. 78) and CIFAL priority setting (p. 82)
- Priority SDGs or SDG themes are the goals or themes where you as a local authority can make additional efforts, where there is the most room for growth.
E.g. Antwerp Management School materiality matrix (p. 80)

How do you determine priority SDGs?

You use various documents to determine policy priorities. Think, for example, of the context analysis, administrative policy proposals, memoranda from advisory councils, citizen surveys and the coalition agreement.



- Are you new to SDG data? Analyse your municipality's scores in the [SDG monitor](#). For which SDGs, SDG themes and indicators do you score noticeably better or worse than other municipalities?
- Which of these SDGs and themes do you have an impact on as a local authority? Which trends do you want to maintain and which do you want to reverse in the short and long term?

⁴ SDG themes are the topics that form part of each SDG. SDG 11, 'sustainable cities and communities', covers themes such as heritage, housing and mobility. The themes are linked to the subtargets for each SDG.

SDGs in participation initiatives

Take advantage of external participation opportunities **to raise your citizens' awareness of sustainability and to gather policy input based on the SDGs**. This will also allow you to work together to find solutions to the complex challenges that the 2030 Agenda aims to address. Inclusive citizen participation, which ensures that every resident is heard, also expresses the basic principle of 'Leave No One Behind'.

- Do the [SDG circle exercise](#) with citizens and external stakeholders: which SDGs are important for the municipality? What can the local authorities, partners and stakeholders do? You can also apply the circle exercise to concrete project proposals. Are there any SDGs we can still work on? Are there existing SDG links that we can explore further or in which we can involve partners? [Deinze](#) did the circle exercise with its neighbourhood ambassadors in 2024.
- Hold an **SDG world café**, with discussion tables for each Pillar. (You could potentially include Partnership at the other 4 discussion tables.) A facilitator at each table gives an introduction to the Pillar and the SDGs involved. The participants then engage in a discussion. What works? What is already happening in our municipality? What are our dreams for the future? What actions can our municipality take? What can I do myself? [Grobendonk](#) applied this methodology in 2019. In addition, citizens participated in a survey on the same themes.
- Organise **SDG citizens' panels** [Deinze](#) put together a citizens' panel of [Deinze thinkers](#) in 2023. There was also an opportunity to reflect on People, Planet and Prosperity. During the meeting, participants were given an explanation of the Pillar and accompanying SDGs, and an interpretation of trends and figures. They brainstormed about future actions in Deinze. More information about this project can be found in [VVSG's practice database](#).
- **Collect SDG dreams**

During Sustainable Municipality Week in 2023 and 2024, municipalities collected 'dreams for a sustainable 2030' from their SDG heroes, schools and citizens. Participants received free campaign material ([dream cards](#)) from the VVSG and citizens could also enter their dreams on a [public website](#). In a [concise guide](#), the VVSG provides tips on how to collect the dreams in a creative way and how to use them afterwards.

The municipality of [Brasschaat](#) called on its residents in 2024 to leave their SDG dreams on a digital wall of ideas. From 300 dreams submitted, the administration selected 21 wishes, which citizens could then vote on. The 10 favourite wishes were communicated during Sustainable Municipality Week and given to local policymakers for inspiration.

Schoolchildren leave SDG dreams for the mayor in Kinrooi.

- **Ask citizens about their priority SDGs.**

The town of [Harelbeke](#) organised [the Tour of Harelbeke in the spring of 2019](#). Six consultation evenings, each linked to a number of SDGs. In addition to a brief explanation of the SDGs, citizens could also indicate which SDGs they thought were the most important for the municipality. Note: the 17 SDGs were simply arranged from 1 to 17. It was noticeable that the SDGs higher up on the list were chosen more often, so a lot about People (SDGs 1-5). A different listing of the SDGs might have produced a different result.

The English city of [Bristol](#) involved local partners in a survey (which SDGs do you contribute to?) and in-depth discussions in preparation for the [Bristol Voluntary Local Review](#).

External stakeholder mapping can help you to target your invitations to people and organisations (p. 97).



Tools and methods for defining priority SDGs:

- Conduct Sustenuto's materiality analysis and determine the SDG subtargets on which you as a local authority can have a significant or indirect impact (p. 78).
- Determine five priority SDGs for your organisation with CIFAL's SDG impact exercise (p. 82).
- Place the 17 SDGs in the Antwerp Management School's materiality matrix and determine not only which SDGs you as a local authority can have the most impact on (as yet), but also which stakeholders you can have a positive or negative impact on (p. 80).
- Have the main themes for your multi annual policy plan already been determined? See to which SDGs they are most strongly linked. Will People, Planet and Prosperity all be discussed? Are we taking the most vulnerable groups into account? You can supplement the priority SDGs with a targeted priority exercise (see methodology section).

Ideally, involve the board of mayor and aldermen in the chosen method. Check whether the priority SDGs can be found in the draft versions of policy objectives, action plans and actions.



- Are you a starting municipality? Do the exercise with the multi-annual policy plan core group. Base yourself on information such as context analyses, administrative policy proposals and coalition agreements. Which topics emerge most clearly? Present to MAT and board of mayor and aldermen: can they identify with this? Are there other SDGs that they consider a priority? This way, you have already determined a number of priority SDGs and you are simultaneously working on recognisability and support among key groups within the MAPP.



For the 2020-2025 MAPP, the town of **Harelbeke** created an **SDG materiality matrix** based on:

- Document analysis
- Interviews and workshops with core team of employees and representatives
- Surveys of external stakeholders, for example interviews with companies and entrepreneurs and surveys during citizen participation events



(From *Goeiemorgen Harelbeke strategic memo 2019*)

The 12 SDGs that scored high or average were translated into a concrete policy objective in the multi-annual policy plan.

The 2030 Agenda provided inspiration for the policy objectives in the 2020-2025 MAPP of Kortenberg. The local government decided to focus additional attention on SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities) and SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong public services).

The SDG working group in **Herentals** proposed priority SDGs for the 2025-2031 MAPP. After consultation with the MAT and the new board of mayor and aldermen, the choice (February 2025) falls on SDGs 1, 3 and 11. (see also p. 67)

Objectives of the multi-annual policy plan

The multi-annual policy plan includes (strategic) policy objectives, which in turn include action plans and actions. At policy objective level, there are two options:

- You use the 2030 Agenda as a starting point for your multi-annual policy plan. If you choose this option, we recommend working with the 5 Pillars and incorporating the SDGs into the action plans.
- You define objectives and then use the 2030 Agenda as a touchstone. This allows your organisation to get to know the SDGs better, identify potential gaps and make adjustments to the multi-annual policy plan to make it more sustainable.

You use the 2030 Agenda as a starting point for your objectives.

- Make a translation of the 5 Pillars. What do People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership mean to you? Where do you want to go with your local authority in the future? What will you be working on in the next 6 years?
- Translate your priority SDGs to the local context⁵. Look at the subtargets that fall under that SDG. Which are relevant for your municipality? What opportunities do those SDGs and subtargets present for your municipality? How do you translate this into local ambitions? Then consider which of these ambitions you will include in your own policy objectives and which you will include at action plan level.

You use the 2030 Agenda as a touchstone for your objectives.

- Check your priority SDGs: do they appear in your objectives?
- Which SDG(s) does each objective from the draft multi-annual policy plan match? In what way can the objective from the MAPP have a positive impact on the SDGs and what are the possible negative impacts?
- Carry out a check according to the basic principles of the 2030 Agenda:
 - › Leave No One Behind: are we paying attention to the most vulnerable groups in society? Do we have an eye for inclusion, accessibility, participation and (international) solidarity?
 - › Interconnection of SDGs: are the social, ecological and prosperity dimensions of sustainability in balance?
 - › Partnerships: Do we have a clear picture of the necessary partners and are we involving them in our MAPP? These partnerships can be local, regional, national or global.
 - › Do we have an eye for the long term?
- Mention the relevant SDG subtargets in the inspiration sheets you use to determine strategic objectives.



- Appoint an SDG watchdog for each Pillar or priority SDG. That person ensures that his or her Pillar or SDG(s) are reflected in the objectives, action plans and actions.
- Stakeholder mapping for the SDGs would also be useful (p. 96). It will help you decide which internal and external people you should involve in further developing your objectives, for example through the SDG circle exercise or in Pillar workshops.

⁵ Base yourself on the VVSG publication [Local Support for Global Challenges](#). We have already made an assessment of the SDG subtargets that are relevant to local authorities.

17 SDGs or 5 Pillars as a structure for your multi-annual policy plan?

A group of municipalities based their 2020-2025 multi-annual policy plan on the 2030 Agenda. They made a local translation of the 17 SDGs, such as [Harelbeke](#), [Berlaar](#), [Oud-Turnhout](#) and [Hoogstraten](#). Or they used the 5 Pillars of sustainable development as a starting point, like [Retie](#).

Municipalities that used the 17 SDGs often choose not to do so anymore for the new MAPP.

Harelbeke and Berlaar, for example, are using the 5 Pillars for the 2026-2031 multi-annual policy plan. The main reasons:

- 17 SDGs is a lot and not every SDG is equally relevant to your local government. For example, you have too many policy objectives and you set too few priorities.
- Confusion among staff. They find it difficult to keep track of their plans and budget when they are spread across objectives; it also means they have to report on multiple objectives. They are not always ready for this.
- Future of the SDG agenda. The 2030 Agenda will expire before the end of the 2026-2031 PMC. We suspect that the UN's post-2030 Agenda will look similar. The definition of sustainability according to the 5 Pillars is generally retained. However, the 17 SDGs will be grouped into overarching challenges, such as the digital revolution for sustainable development or education, gender and inequality.

Of course, you can always choose to graft your MAPP onto the 17 SDGs, but we do not recommend it. **The 5 Pillars are a more useful tool.** At action plan level, you can then build on the SDGs, for example.

Example: The [2020-2025 MAPP of Leopoldsburg](#) makes the link with the Pillars at policy objective level, and then the link with SDG subtargets at action plan level. Illustration:

Policy objective: *Promote the general welfare of each resident with specific attention to disadvantaged groups (People, Prosperity)*

Action plan: *The local government will take the lead in the area of social policy, both locally and in cooperation with other authorities (SDG 17.17 Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and network of partnerships).*





Agenda 2030 as a starting point for objectives

For the 2020-2025 multi-annual policy plan, various municipalities **translated the 5 Pillars of sustainable development in local terms**. Examples:

Bruges:

- People – Bruges is all about people
- Planet – A sustainable and green Bruges (Bruges for tomorrow)
- Prosperity – Bruges, with a resilient economy and Bruges as a lively place for residents and visitors
- Peace – the city of Bruges as a civil servant at the service of all Bruges residents
- Partnership – and we will realise all of this in a strong partnership with citizens and urban planners

Retie:

- People: a village on a human scale
- Prosperity: a village with prosperous and resilient cores
- Planet: a village where we can enjoy our open space together
- Partnership: a local authority that consciously chooses to work together intelligently in networks
- Peace: a local authority with the administrative power of Retie

The Flemish Government's **Facilitair Bedrijf** identified priority SDGs and subtargets in 2019. They translated this selection into their own objectives.

| SDG | Relevant sub-objective | Translation |
|---|---|--|
|  | 2.1 By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round 2.2 Eradicate all forms of malnutrition by 2030, including meeting the internationally agreed targets on stunting and underweight in children under 5 years of age by 2025; and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons | The Facilitair Bedrijf ensures that the food in its restaurants and coffee bars is healthy, varied and balanced, with attention paid to the use of products from sustainable food systems. |
|  | 3.9 Significantly reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and pollution and contamination of air, water and soil by 2030. | The Facilitair Bedrijf is creating a safe and healthy workplace. |
|  | 7.3 Double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency by 2030 | The Facilitair Bedrijf aims to create energy-efficient buildings, ensure continuous improvement of energy performance and utilise renewable energy. |



The 2030 Agenda as a touchstone for objectives

For the 2020-25 multi-annual policy plan, the board of aldermen in **Ostend** and **Ghent** received an **inspiration sheet for each theme from the coalition agreement**. In addition to elements from the coalition agreement and the previous MAPP, the sheets also include the relevant SDGs and SDG subtargets. As such, the SDGs served as inspiration for strategic objectives.

Example sheet Ghent 2019

Coalition agreement/

gent:

- Strengthening a diverse and accessible cultural offering that continues to challenge politics and society (including the importance of infrastructure, Ghent as a playground for artists and creative minds, social fabric, tourism, large outdoor projects, European Capital of Culture 2020)
- More people from Ghent are getting active, regardless of age, limitations or socio-economic background (including a diversity of sports, sports infrastructure and sporting events)
- Smart and sustainable growth of tourism in our city
- Parties and events are part of the forward-looking social and sustainable city where people live well together
- Diverse and high-quality leisure activities for self-development and talent development (including a child-friendly makeover, youth work in public squares, new youth initiatives, infrastructure, European Youth Capital, leisure activities for the elderly and other target groups, see link to chapter 12 Everyone different, all Ghent residents and 2. Governance through cooperation and dialogue)

Sustainable development objectives/

- SDG08 Work and Growth
 - 8.3 By 2030, develop and implement policies to support sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products
- SDG11 Cities
 - 11.4 Increase efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage

Context analysis/

- Ghent breathes art and culture and brings it to the streets.
- 10% of the people of Ghent take a critical view of the increasing flow of tourists and mainly experience inconvenience.
- 30% of the people of Ghent exercise every day.
- 6 out of 10 Flemish people do sports, but mainly low-threshold sports such as walking, swimming, cycling, hiking, etc.
- 1 in 4 plays sports in a club.
 - Ghent offers a wide range of sports, but not as many as some other cities.
 - Sports clubs are struggling with waiting lists and a lack of (certified) trainers.
 - Although the infrastructure on playgrounds and for youth activities has been expanded in recent years, the significant growth in the population means that it is insufficient.

14. Discover and enjoy Ghent

Ghent Tomorrow/

- 1.11 Events policy for everyone
- 1.12 Ghent, a city on the move
- 3.9 Culture goes from boring to fascinating

Strategic objectives (as is)/

- We pursue a child- and youth-friendly policy, visible in all areas of life and with attention for vulnerable youth.
- We opt for a well-considered growth of tourism by spreading it out in time and space and deepening the experience.
- We cherish our rich and diverse heritage by giving it a future once again.
- We give physical and mental space to cultural creation and ensure that more people in Ghent can create culture and develop a taste for it.
- We encourage people to get moving together, to take part in sports and to engage in recreation, with a specific focus on talents, diverse target groups and neighbourhood-oriented infrastructure.
- We pursue a parties and events policy in which quality, sustainability and manageability are key.





For the 2020-25 multi-annual policy plan of Pelt, the local government performed an SDG check on its objectives and action plans throughout the process. Are we sufficiently covering the 5 Pillars and the 17 SDGs? This is also clear in the final document. The strategic objectives take into account the 5 Pillars: Pelt is a caring, sustainable, active and helpful municipality. The relevant SDGs are then listed for each policy objective. In the description of the policy objectives, you can also see the SDG approach, for example, 'policy objective 1.4: Ensuring the physical and mental well-being of residents' (in line with the subtargets of SDG 3).

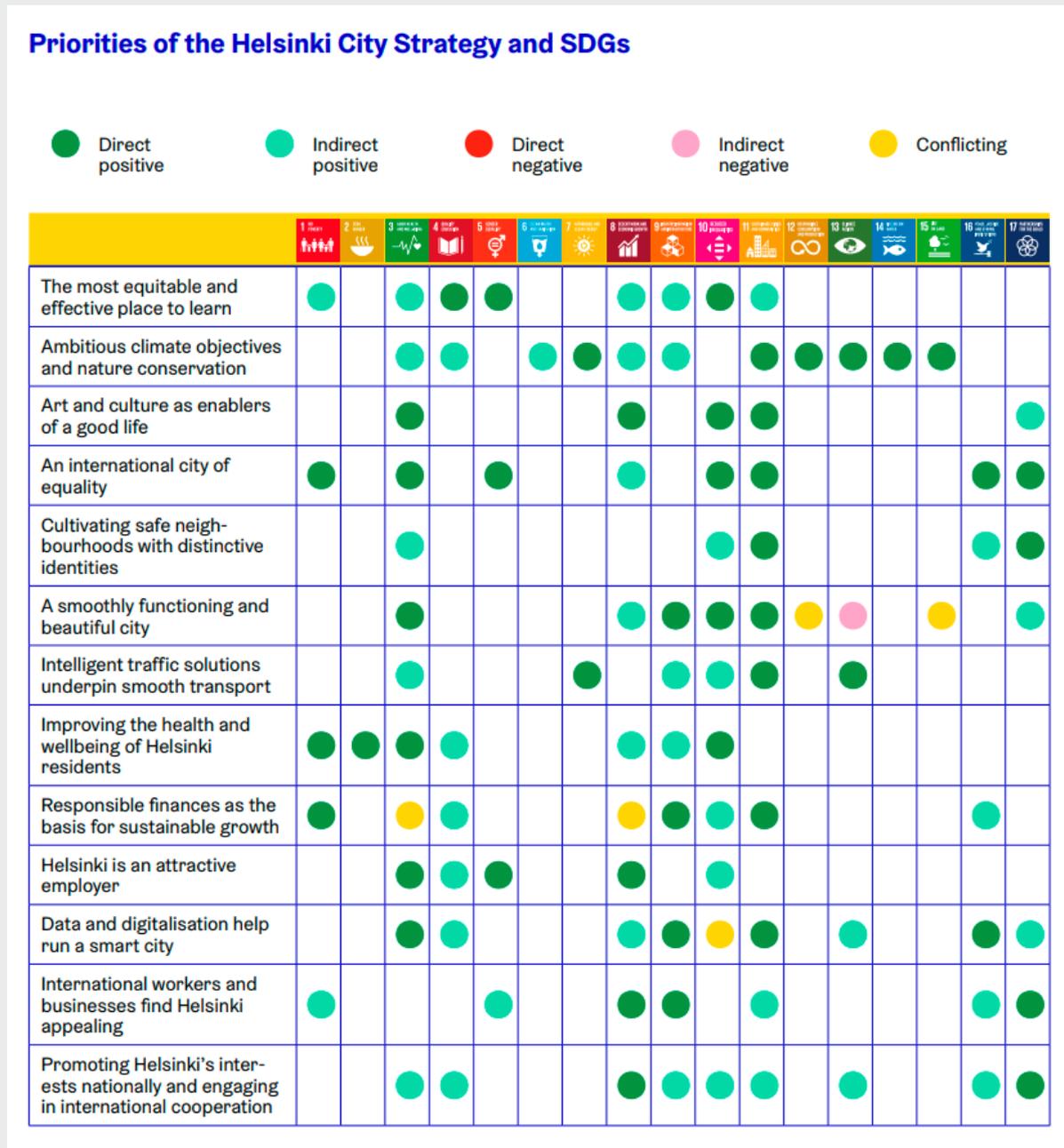
The 2020-2025 multi-annual policy plan of Edegem contains a **specific SDG objective**⁶: 'A sustainable Edegem contributes to the realisation of the SDGs'. Qualitative description: 'Edegem wants to pursue a coherent and sustainable policy that is also viable and affordable in the long term and contributes to the realisation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Sustainability is a given. It generates added value and increases quality. It is increasingly becoming a linchpin in economic developments and creates opportunities for current and future generations. Edegem realises that sustainability is not just about the environment, but also about the economy and sociology.'

The city council of Genk transformed the SDGs into a **horizontal objective in the 2020-2025 MAPP**. The commitment to sustainability has subsequently been further translated into the thematic policy objectives.



⁶ A specific SDG objective (or action plan) helps to reflect the commitment to the SDGs in your reporting.

The Finnish city of Helsinki analyses the 13 priority strategies in relation to SDGs in its SDG report (Voluntary Local Review Helsinki 2023). It goes further than mere labelling and examines the degree of positive and negative impact and where the city's priorities may conflict with the SDGs. For example, more attention needs to be paid to the climate impact of urban growth.



Voluntary Local Review Helsinki 2023, p. 16

Action plans and actions

We consider this as one of the most important building blocks, whether you are a beginner or advanced in terms of the SDGs. When developing action plans and actions, you involve a broad group of people. Internally and often also externally. This provides opportunities to involve more people in your SDG story and to make your multi-annual policy plan more sustainable through the SDGs.

You use the 2030 Agenda as a starting point for your action plans and actions.

- Organise inter-service workshops for each Pillar of sustainable development (p. 87).
- Use the SDG circle exercise to define actions for each policy objective or service, for example (p. 84).
- Use the result of your SDG priority analysis:
 - › Which SDG subtargets are the most important and what do they mean for your municipality? Translate these subtargets into action plans.
 - › Have each service or department double-check the priority SDGs.
- Integrate a specific action plan on the implementation of the SDGs.

You use the 2030 Agenda as a touchstone for your action plans and actions.

- Use the SDG circle exercise as an additional test for a number of important action plans or key projects (p. 84).
- Use the result of your SDG priority analysis: are the priority SDGs reflected in the proposed action plans and actions? Where can you still make adjustments? Check the level of the MAPP core group, or have each service or department double-check the priority SDGs. Ideally, you should do this for the entire MAPP, but you can also select a number of action plans or key projects.
- Include the (priority) SDGs in input sheets for employees (p. 95).
- Carry out a check according to the basic principles of the 2030 Agenda, such as attention to the most vulnerable groups and a broad view of sustainability. You can do this for the entire MAPP, but also for a number of important action plans or key projects (p. 95).
- Take into account both the positive and negative effects of your actions on the SDGs. Have your services make an assessment of their actions, for example in the input sheets (p. 95).
Either use the SDG test⁷ (p. 94) or the SDG Impact Assessment Tool (p. 91) for a number of key projects. Remedy the possible negative effects wherever possible.

Are you unsure who you will involve in the development of action plans and actions? Then create a stakeholder map (p. 96).

⁷ The SDG test was developed for the development of a concrete project (implementation of MAPP), but can also be useful in the design of the MAPP for projects for which you already have a fairly precise idea of how to realise it.



The VVSG offers inspiration on the relationship between local policy areas and the SDGs. How do you contribute to the SDGs in areas such as mobility, childcare and leisure, for example? See also the appendix 'Alderman powers linked to the SDGs' (p. 110).

Key projects

As a local government, you often identify a number of key projects to which you will devote extra attention during the legislative period in terms of elaboration, reporting and communication.

Use the 2030 Agenda as a criterion for defining key projects.

Where do we have the greatest leverage for sustainable development?

Include the basic messages of the 2030 Agenda in the criteria for defining key projects:

- Attention to vulnerable groups.
- Projects with a social, ecological and economic dimension.
- Need for or possibility of involving various partners such as multiple services, external stakeholders and citizens.
- Long-term effect.

Or integrate the priority SDGs into the criteria.

Is your local government not yet fully convinced of the SDGs? Then you do not even have to refer explicitly to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Simply mention the principles or the themes that the priority SDGs address. If a number of these criteria are already taken into account in the selection process, then in principle you are practising sustainability.

Your key projects can then form a balanced whole based on various aspects such as connection with multiple SDGs and services, different budget sizes, and positive and possible negative impacts on SDGs.

Use the 2030 Agenda 2030 in the elaboration of key projects.

Both in the design and implementation of the multi-annual policy plan, you can make key projects more sustainable through the 2030 Agenda. Use the basic principles, do the SDG circle exercise, look at your priority SDGs or do the SDG test.



Explorer

Provide the councillors and employees with information about the SDGs and communicate which SDGs the policy objectives support. Include the SDGs in input sheets for council and employees. This will enable them to take the various aspects of sustainable development into account when drawing up action plans and actions.



Builder

Organise at least one inter-service brainstorming session on the SDGs, for example with the SDG circle exercise. Consider which input from the exercise you will incorporate into the multi-annual policy plan. Have each participant name one action or point of attention that he or she will take back to their own service.



Pioneer

Also map out the possible negative effects on the SDGs and see where you can remedy them. For example, do you have to cut down trees to build new infrastructure or redesign roads? Then consider how you can accommodate this within the same project or via another project.

A new MAPP provides the opportunity to thoroughly consider current and future policy. What do we want to continue? What actions do we stop in order to make room for new activities? You will find a template for a **start-stop-continue** exercise under the methodologies on p. 89.



The 2030 Agenda as a touchstone for actions

Herent specified for each action in the long-term plan which SDGs it supports and on which SDGs it could potentially have a negative effect. It produced an Excel file overview of this. That Excel file could help identify key projects: which projects have a connection with multiple SDGs? Where is there potential to reduce negative impact?

Several municipalities had an SDG objective, SDG action plan or SDG action linked to a specific theme in their 2020-2025 multi-annual policy plan. They usually dealt with themes such as the climate and local global policy. Although SDGs are organisation-wide, this link to a single theme can form a starting point. That way, the SDGs have already been explicitly included in the MAPP. In the coming years you can work on broadening support and integration.

Examples: [Heuvelland](#), [Lint](#), [Vilvoorde](#).



The 2030 Agenda as a starting point for actions

For the 2020-2025 multi-annual policy plan of [Wijnegem](#), the board of mayor and aldermen and staff did the SDG circle exercise. The results have been translated into the multi-annual policy plan. In the document itself, the SDG icons have been added to the policy objectives.

In [Overijse](#), the SDGs were the topic of the annual information session for staff in 2019, linked to an SDG circle exercise. In [Zoersel](#), they also used the SDG circle exercise for the 2020-2025 MAPP. Each service evaluated current actions and considered future actions. The results were entered into an Excel file for each service. The Excel file contains a column with current actions, a column with future actions and a column for each SDG. For each action, the SDG to which it is linked has been ticked. Examples of future actions for the technical service: social employment, electric bicycle leasing and monitoring energy use in buildings. Various suggestions were also implemented, which had a motivating effect.

SDG circle exercise in Zoersel



The strategic objective 'Local government - inspiring by setting a good example' in the [2020-2025 MAPP of the municipality of Nazareth](#) contains an operational objective 'Do the SDG check'. It contains two action plans with accompanying actions:

- Communicate about the SDGs.
- Develop frameworks to anchor the SDGs, including assessment tools for sustainable procurement, sustainable building and renovation, and social aspects of local government regulations.

The [2020-2025 MAPP of the municipal council of Olen](#) contains a specific action plan on the SDGs: 'Olen is implementing the sustainable development goals in its operations.' This concerns actions for, monitoring and evaluation of, and communication about the 6 priority SDGs. These priority SDGs were determined using the materiality matrix of Antwerp Management School (see methodology p. 80).

Indicators

As a local government, you do not just want to implement policy. You also want to monitor the results of your activities, to know if you are doing the right things and if your policy is contributing to positive developments in your municipality.

A first step is choosing indicators for your multi-annual policy plan. The MAT or the MAPP core group takes the lead. But your employees can also contribute their thoughts. For example, in the input sheets or workshops, ask them which instruments they use to follow up their actions and what indicators they propose for their actions or action plans. See the appendix 'Overview of Flemish SDG data sources' (p. 105) for a refresher on the difference between context, input, process and impact indicators. And for tips on developing a balanced and effective set of indicators.

SDG indicators

You can use existing SDG tools to inspire your choice of indicators. In the appendix 'Overview of Flemish SDG data sources' (p. 105) you will find a brief overview of available SDG data sources in Flanders, including the advantages and disadvantages of each source. Bear in mind, however, that these tools often contain context indicators (because data is available centrally for this purpose) and therefore need to be supplemented with indicators that more closely reflect the efforts of the local authority.

The VVSG SDG indicator set (English version dates from 2018. Later update of 2022 are only available in Dutch) is a good starting point for selecting indicators for your city or municipality. For each SDG sub-objective, you will receive an overview of possible indicators. Depending on your own priorities and emphases, you can check which indicators are relevant to your local government. The VVSG based itself primarily on centrally available data (for example from the Gemeente-Stadsmonitor and Provinces in Figures), supplemented by a number of suggested indicators for which local authorities would have to gather the information themselves. For each indicator, it is indicated whether it is included in the SDG monitor for municipalities and the SDG report of Provinces in Figures. The tool also shows whether there is a link with the SDG indicators and objectives of the federal and Flemish governments. The guide on the first tab contains an overview of municipal policy themes and local SDG indicators. For each theme, an indication is given of the SDGs for which you can find one or more SDG indicators in the Excel document.

Other tools where you will find suggestions of indicators over which you as a local authority can have an influence:

- SDG-wijzer. An online dashboard of more than 110 indicators developed by Zwevegem, Harelbeke, Kuurne and Deerlijk, but with information for all Flemish municipalities.
- Dutch SDG indicator set: The Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) finalised an SDG indicator set in 2022 in collaboration with various local authorities. The basic set includes an average of four to five indicators per SDG for which the information comes from national sources. In addition, the VNG proposes a number of supplementary indicators based on local information (municipal sources and information from third parties).

- In appendix 2 of the [VVSG inspiration guide on SDG monitoring and reporting](#) (dating from 2022), you will find various examples of local SDG indicators used by cities and organisations worldwide, with a focus on indicators that zoom in on the efforts of the local authorities (input indicators).

Tools that focus primarily on context indicators:

- [SDG monitor](#). Online tool developed by Idea Consult and the UNU-CRIS training institute. The tool contains more than 200 indicators. You are given a score for each indicator, SDG and sub-theme in comparison with other Flemish municipalities. You can also see how your municipality is doing in relation to context factors such as income and size.
- [SDG report of Provinces in Figures](#). Report per municipality based on 84 indicators, with maps and graphs.

Would you like to learn more about SDG monitoring? Then take a look at the [VVSG inspiration guide on SDG monitoring and reporting](#).



Explorer

Select a number of context indicators based on your policy objectives or priority SDGs, for example from the SDG monitor, that you want to monitor throughout the term of the legislative period because they influence how you conduct policy.



Builder

Focus on the cascade of objectives – action plans – actions and try to choose an indicator for a number of SDGs, for example your priority SDGs, at each level.



Pioneer

Formulate concrete targets for (a selection of) indicators that are even non-legislative at objective level. 'We want to halve the waiting lists for social housing by 2030 (or 2050)' is more tangible than 'We want to reduce the waiting lists for social housing by 2030 (or 2050)'.





The municipality of **Essen** linked each **priority action plan** in the 2020-2025 multi-annual policy plan to one or more SDGs. Indicators based on the VVSG SDG indicator set were also selected for these priority action plans.

The quarterly report states whether the city is on track to realise its actions, but that does not necessarily mean that the objectives will be achieved. That is why in 2020 and 2021 the town council of **Harelbeke** invested in an SDG indicator set with a focus on the level of policy objectives. The strategic planner supported the services in drawing up the indicators by providing advice and a guide. If no indicators were found at objective level, the analysis was reduced to action plan or action level. Indicators were based on existing figures or new indicators were developed. **A target value was set for each indicator for 2025 (end of the legislative period) and also for 2030 (end point of the 2030 Agenda)**. Example of SDG 13: number of square metres of broken up pavement. Target value for 2025 = 5,000 m²; target value for 2030 = 10,000 m².

For the 2020-2025 MAPP, **Halle** used the **VVSG SDG indicator set** for policy objectives. If they did not find a suitable indicator in this set, the town added its own, for example 'satisfaction with the urban communication channels' and 'extent to which we meet the service standards for waiting and response times'. **A sheet was produced for each indicator**, including a description of the relevance of the indicator, the desired evolution⁸ and measurement frequency. The indicator set linked to policy objectives (as determined in 2019) is an appendix to the 2020-25 multi-annual policy plan.

The Icelandic town of **Kópavogur** chose **36 priority SDG subtargets**, spread across 15 SDGs. They arrived at this choice using three main criteria: priority goals of the national government, SDG objectives that local authorities can influence (according to the global organisation UCLG) and projects to which Kópavogur is committed. Progress on these priority SDG subtargets will be monitored even more closely. The choice of indicators is based on the OECD SDG monitoring system (comparability with other local authorities), ISO 37120 and the Social Progress Index.

(Read more about the examples of Harelbeke and Halle in the VVSG inspiration guide on SDG monitoring and reporting)

⁸ No concrete target value has been included for a number of environmental indicators because local authorities have little control over them. However, the indicator is relevant to follow because it provides an indication of social developments in the town, which the local authority can use to adjust its policy.

Budgeting

The multi-annual policy plan links content and budget. A MAPP that works on sustainable policy inspired by the SDGs is therefore automatically a form of SDG budgeting. A coherent sustainable policy examines the relationship between its objectives and fields of action and minimises the negative impact of one decision on another. In this way, the budget is also coherent when, for example, budget proposals regarding transport and mobility are in line with climate goals.

However, there are still questions. Can you really map out your budget according to the SDGs? Does that add value? Not all of your municipality's activities can be linked to the SDGs. Furthermore, a single action can contribute to multiple SDGs. To which SDG do you then link the budget? Some activities also cost more money, such as infrastructure works. But that does not necessarily mean that SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure) is more important than other SDGs.

How can you still establish an additional link between the municipal budget and the SDGs?

The issue of SDG budgeting is still little known and researched in Flanders. However, we can see a number of approaches based on experience and international literature:

- Provide a **specific SDG budget**, whereby services can receive extra funding for an SDG action. You can also link this annually to a specific SDG, see the example of Nazareth below. What could these SDGs be?
 - › A different priority SDG each year, for example SDGs with the most room for growth.
 - › An SDG around which several initiatives have already been planned for that year.
 - › An SDG that you can link to an important social event or trend, for example in the past SDG 3 during the coronavirus pandemic or now SDG 16 for the many conflicts worldwide.
 - › A theme that is very much alive among our members, as is evident from contacts and surveys.
- **Which planned projects have a significant financial impact**, for example because a lot of resources are allocated to them? Make sure these projects are planned and carried out in a sustainable manner. See also action plans and actions p. 38.
- **Attach sufficient importance to the narrative in budget proposals**, in which contribution to (priority) SDGs is clear. Both locally and in proposals for Flemish or European subsidies, for example.
- **Assign a tag to the budget for cross-disciplinary SDGs** such as gender, climate and nutrition.
- **Opt for a sustainable purchasing policy and ethical banking**. Governments have enormous leverage to steer the market towards more sustainable products and services. A coherent sustainable policy also means sustainable banking with an eye for ethical criteria and requirements in the areas of the environment, social performance, good governance and transparency.



The 2020-2025 multi-annual policy plan of **Nazareth** contained an operational objective 'Do the SDG test', as part of the strategic objective 'Local government: inspire by setting a good example'. For example, there was also a specific budget for the SDGs. That budget was mainly used to work across services on a specific theme (and therefore SDG) each year. Benefits:

- The sustainability expert could reach out to other services. An SDG budget made it feasible to work with the SDGs.
- The extra budget gave employees the opportunity to think more creatively and outside the box.

Final document

Although the process takes precedence, you can also include the SDGs in the final document. It is possible to combine several of the examples below.

If you are already well advanced in the drafting of the multi-annual policy plan or the process has already been completed, you can still make a number of useful interventions in this step to make room for the SDGs. A (visual) reference to the SDGs can raise awareness among employees and representatives. It is, however, only a first step. The end goal is a more sustainable policy. Further steps in the implementation and follow-up of the multi-annual policy plan are necessary.

SDGs in the introduction to the multi-annual policy plan

Inspiration text:

Global challenges such as climate change and social inequality are also making themselves felt here. We use the United Nations 2030 Agenda with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a compass for our local policy. This is because the SDGs provide an excellent framework for responding to the challenges of today and tomorrow.

It is at local level, including in <municipality x>, where the challenges are felt, but also where the solutions lie. After all, the municipality is the administrative level that is closest to the people, knows best what concerns them and what they need. All 17 SDGs also touch on the powers of the local authority.

By integrating the SDGs into the municipal long-term plan, <municipality x> will help build a sustainable society in which we take better care of people, the environment, prosperity and democracy. This requires cooperation. Not only within the municipal council, but also with residents, associations, entrepreneurs and other stakeholders.

The SDGs offer a unique framework for connecting local priorities with global challenges. They encourage action and innovation and plot a course for a future in which no one is left behind. In <municipality x> we will translate these global objectives into concrete actions. In this way, we are working together on a liveable, inclusive and resilient municipality for the generations of today and tomorrow.

SDG icons

Many municipalities included the icons of the 17 SDGs in their 2020-2025 multi-annual policy plan. At the level of objectives, action plans, or priority action plans and actions. A number of local authorities have also added an SDG appendix with explanations of the SDGs. Use the VVSG overview of the 17 SDGs (p. 99) as a basis for this.



Example of multi-annual policy plan for Lichtervelde 2020-25: SDG icons for policy objectives



BD-1: Een veilige gemeente met aandacht voor fietsers en voetgangers

De gemeente Lichtervelde streeft ernaar om de verkeersveiligheid te verhogen en een alomvattend mobiliteitsbeleid te ontwikkelen. We zetten in op een degelijke, veilige en duurzame verkeersinfrastructuur voor onze gemeente met aandacht voor verkeersveiligheid voor voetgangers, fietsers en autobestuurders. Een goed onderhouden wegen-, fiets- en wandelpadennet komt de mobiliteit en de veiligheid van alle Lichterveldenaren ten goede.

Example of 2020-2025 multi-annual policy plan for Dilsem-Stokkem: SDG icons for action plans

Actieplan 4: Uitbouwen van nieuwe en optimaliseren van bestaande outdoor sport- en speelfaciliteiten, zowel binnen als buiten clubverband (AP000004)



Situering

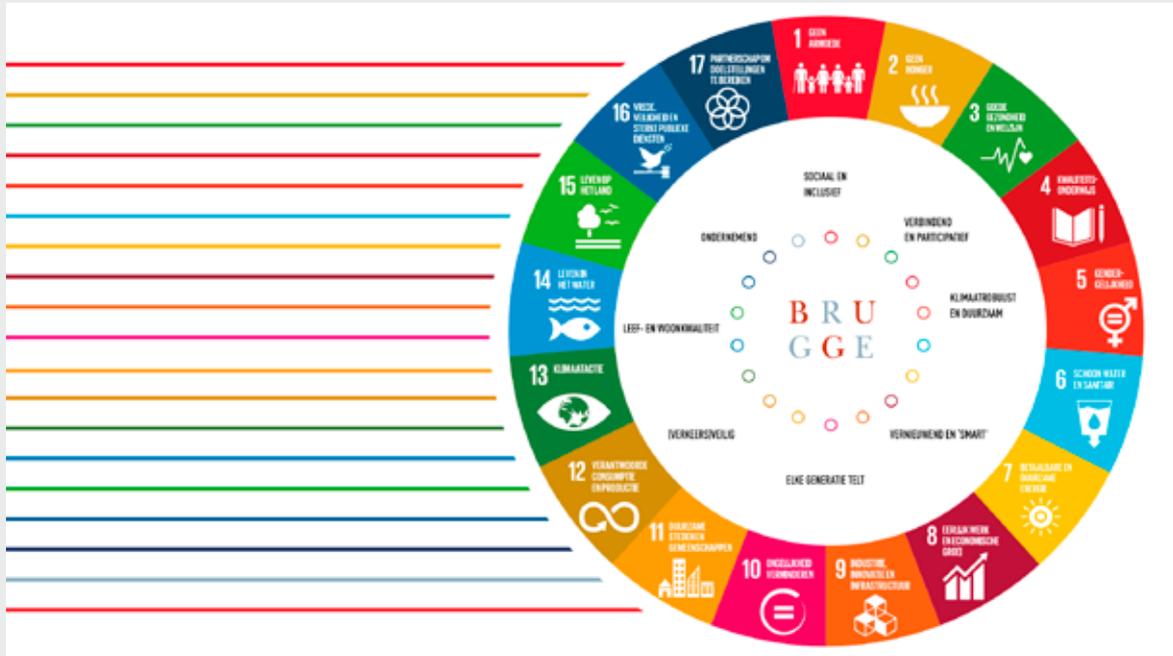
Behoort tot beleidsdoelstelling 2 'Bevorderen van warme, verbindende en gezonde samenleving in alle dimensies en geledingen'. (BD000002)

SDG visual

Place keywords from the multi-annual policy plan in the SDG circle.



Example of the [Bruges policy programme 2019-2024](#):



Or highlight a number of action plans or actions based on the 5 Pillars of sustainable development or the 17 SDGs. You can also limit yourself to the priority SDGs.



The [VVSG memorandum](#) for the supralocal elections in June 2024 contains a summary table with a number of key questions for other authorities for each Pillar.

| Met onze beleidsvoorstellen werken we mee aan de realisatie van de Agenda 2030 voor duurzame ontwikkeling. We lichten er een aantal uit per pijler van duurzaamheid. | 7 | 10 | 11 | 16 | 17 | 6 | 14 | 15 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| veelwaart | vrede en sterke publieke diensten | partnerschap | planeet | mens | | | | | | | | | |
| Kies voor lokale én lokale ambtenaren met lokale verantwoordelijkheid. | Zaak voor lokale én lokale ambtenaren met lokale verantwoordelijkheid. | Zaak voor lokale én lokale ambtenaren met lokale verantwoordelijkheid. | Zaak voor lokale én lokale ambtenaren met lokale verantwoordelijkheid. | Zaak voor lokale én lokale ambtenaren met lokale verantwoordelijkheid. | Zaak voor lokale én lokale ambtenaren met lokale verantwoordelijkheid. | Zaak voor lokale én lokale ambtenaren met lokale verantwoordelijkheid. | Zaak voor lokale én lokale ambtenaren met lokale verantwoordelijkheid. | Zaak voor lokale én lokale ambtenaren met lokale verantwoordelijkheid. | Zaak voor lokale én lokale ambtenaren met lokale verantwoordelijkheid. | Zaak voor lokale én lokale ambtenaren met lokale verantwoordelijkheid. | Zaak voor lokale én lokale ambtenaren met lokale verantwoordelijkheid. | Zaak voor lokale én lokale ambtenaren met lokale verantwoordelijkheid. | Zaak voor lokale én lokale ambtenaren met lokale verantwoordelijkheid. |

SDG register or summary table

In the appendix to the multi-annual policy plan, you show the link between your multi-annual policy plan and the SDGs.

You can start from the SDGs and provide an overview of the associated actions in the multi-annual policy plan for each SDG. Or you can link your (priority) objectives, (priority) action plans or actions to the SDGs. Visually with the icons or by using crosses in a table with a column for each SDG.



Multi-annual policy plan for Oostkamp 2020-25: For each SDG, a description of the local authority's areas of action, followed by an overview of the actions from the multi-annual policy plan. Example:



Beëindig honger, bereik voedselzekerheid en verbeterde voeding en promoot duurzame landbouw

- Een duurzame voedselstrategie ontwikkelen en inventariseren van alle bestaande initiatieven die hiertoe bijdragen, om van daaruit verder richtinggevend en ondersteunend beleid uit te tekenen;
- De korte keten en de verbinding tussen consument en lokale producent stimuleren, bv. door biomarkten te faciliteren;
- Aanbod van gezonde en evenwichtige voeding bij de Dienst Maaltijden in de lokale dienstencentra;
- De biologische landbouw ondersteunen en promoten;
- Allerlei initiatieven van stadslandbouw promoten, bv. volkstuintjes inrichten of buurtwerk ondersteunen om eetbare gevels aan te leggen;
- Compostmeesters opleiden en inzetten;
- Als gemeente op Fair Trade inzetten;
- initiatieven rond voedseloverschotten. Zo zijn er bv. sociale restaurants, sociale kruideniers, voedselbanken en voedselbedeelpunten.

10.2.2 ondersteunen initiatieven rond voedseloverschotten

3.5.6 voedselbedeling: heroriënteren van de huidige voedselbedeling naar een 'sociale kruidenier' met oog voor ontmoeting en duurzaamheid

Multi-annual policy plan for Koksijde 2020-25: appendix with actions from the MAPP corresponding to each SDG. One action can be categorised under multiple SDGs. Subdivision of SDG 11 into sub-themes, in line with the SDG reporting codes. Example:

SDG11-01. Duurzaam, veilig en betaalbaar wonen

11 Duurzaam, veilig en betaalbaar wonen

- ACT-140. Afbraak diverse gemeentelijke gebouwen (domein Windroos, Kerkstraat, Weldadigheidsstraat)
- ACT-152. Het woonloket verder uitbouwen met een energieloket en loket voor duurzaam bouwen
- ACT-160. Bekrachtigen van het burgemeestersconvenant
- ACT-161. Invoeren van klimaatsubsidies
- ACT-168. Architectuurprijzen verder uitbouwen
- ACT-238. Het zorg- en welzijnsaanbod versterken door in kwalitatieve accommodatie te voorzien (Sociaal Huis)
- ACT-251. Werkingsmiddelen woonloket om een efficiënte dienstverlening te garanderen
- ACT-254. Onderzoek naar stimuleringsmaatregelen voor duurzame investeringen meergezinswoningen met WVI
- ACT-258. Het aanbod sociale- huur en koopwoningen uitbreiden
- ACT-259. Het woonplan actualiseren om de lokale woning- en huurmarkt in kaart te brengen
- ACT-262. Uitwerken erfpachtregeling voor betaalbaar wonen gronden Kerkstraat – Karel Vanneckestraat
- ACT-265. Uitwerken initiatieven om betaalbaar wonen mogelijk te maken uitwerken
- ACT-268. Studie uitvoeren over het al dan niet behoud van sociale woningen in eigen beheer
- ACT-497. Aankoop woning Hovenierstraat 17 Koksijde



Multi-annual policy plan for [Damme 2020-25](#): summary table with SDG icons at action plan level.

| BELEIDSDOELSTELLINGEN | | ACTIEPLANNEN | | LINK MET SDG'S |
|-----------------------|--|--------------|---|----------------|
| Nr. BD | Omschrijving | Nr. A | Omschrijving | |
| 1 | DAMME ZIJT ALS VERBINDENDE PARTNER STERK IN OP SAMENWERKING | 1.1 | Uitbouwen van diverse vormen van samenwerking en optimaliseren van een regisstrantrol | |
| | | 1.2 | Realiseren van een nieuw dienstverleningsconcept | |
| | | 1.3 | Organiseren van burgerparticipatie en inspraak | |
| 2 | DAMME IS EEN ZORZAME STAD EN VERSTERKT DE SOCIALE COHESIE | 2.1 | Versterken van de zorg | |
| | | 2.2 | Versterken van het vrijwilligersbeleid | |
| | | 2.3 | Maakten en uitbouwen van ontmoetingsplekken | |
| 3 | DAMME IS EEN GEZONDE STAD MET OOG VOOR DE ONTPLOOIING EN PARTICIPATIE VAN ELKE BURGERS | 3.1 | Uitbouwen van vorming- en ontspanningsmogelijkheden | |

Multi-annual policy plan for [Vorselaar 2020-25](#): summary table connecting actions and SDGs

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| SD 1: Een duurzame woon-, werk- en leefomgeving met behoud en versterking van de eigenheid | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| BD1 Een actief natuur- en milieubeleid voeren | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| AP1 Afvalbeleid optimaliseren | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| A1 Waken over het principe "de vervuiler betaalt" | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| A2 Bestaande samenwerkingsverbanden evalueren en waar mogelijk nieuwe opzetten | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| A3 Mogelijkheden inzake uitbating recyclepark onderzoeken | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| A4 Sorteren om afvalcijfers te verbeteren | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Other examples:

- Multi-annual policy plan for [Zandhoven 2020-25](#): complete MAPP linked to the SDGs via icons.
- Multi-annual policy plan for [Boechout 2020-25](#): policy objectives linked to SDGs.
- Multi-annual policy plan for [Waregem 2020-25](#): the four priority objectives were linked to the SDGs. There was a match with 12 of the 17 SDGs.
- Multi-annual policy plan for [Wevelgem 2020-25](#): appendix with connection between priority action plans and SDGs.
- Multi-annual policy plan for [Beersel 2020-25](#): action plans linked to SDG icons.
- Multi-annual policy plan for [Balen 2020-25](#): The actions in the multi-annual policy plan are listed for each SDG. If there is a link with other SDGs, this is also indicated.
- Multi-annual policy plan for [Lille 2020-25](#): actions linked to SDGs

Communication on multi-annual policy plan

The Retie 2020-25 multi-annual policy plan uses the 5 Pillars of sustainable development as a starting point. This was also communicated to citizens in a concise, well-organised brochure.



Example:

PEACE: EEN LOKAAL BESTUUR MET RETIESE BESTUURSKRACHT

EEN DOORDACHT DIENST- VERLENINGSCONCEPT LEIDT TOT TEVREDEN BURGERS

We blijven inzetten op verschillende kanalen om onze producten tot bij de burger te krijgen. Langskomen op het gemeentehuis, telefoneren en e-loketten moeten daarvoor zorgen.

WE SPRINGEN ZUINIG OM MET DE BESCHIKBARE MIDDELEN ZONDER TE BESPAREN OP KWALITEIT

We springen zuinig om met middelen die zowel lokaal als bovenlokaal worden samengebracht en benutten mogelijke subsidiekansen, zonder in te moeten leveren aan kwaliteit. We blijven onze processen continu verbeteren om deze middelen zo efficiënt mogelijk in te zetten.

WE ZIJN EEN WENDBARE ORGANISATIE DIE RUIMTE GEEFT

AAN MEDEWERKERS OM TE SCHITTEREN

Tevreden medewerkers zorgen voor tevreden burgers. Onze medewerkers kunnen de nodige vormingen en opleidingen volgen om zich verder te verdiepen in hun vakgebied en kunnen gebruikmaken van kwalitatief werk materiaal om hun job behoorlijk te kunnen uitvoeren. Dankzij een uitgewerkt vrijwilligersbeleid tonen we onze waardering aan vrijwilligers op wie we regelmatig een beroep kunnen doen.

Information brochure for [Staden 2020-25 multi-annual policy plan at a glance](#): The local government notes that it used the SDGs as an important source of inspiration for its multi-annual policy plan. Each theme of its vision (e.g. Staden cultivates, Staden dreams, Staden commits) is linked to the SDG icons.

[Lille](#) also produced a short information brochure about the 2020-25 multi-annual policy plan with reference to the SDGs. [Hooglede](#) also had an attractive, concise brochure with a number of highlights for each theme. You could use a similar approach based on the 5 Pillars.

Or be inspired by the creative approach of the town council of [Deinze](#) during one of the past policy periods. It organised an exhibition for citizens, which was visited by many school classes. Each theme from the multi-annual policy plan was presented in a fun way. For example, there was a dark room for the theme of safety and a course based on the objectives regarding traffic. You can make such a concept SDG-proof: one room or corner for each SDG or pillar, or an explanation of the SDGs in the themes of the multi-annual policy plan.



The municipal council of **Merelbeke** created overview posters for each main theme in its 2020-25 multi-annual policy plan. The SDG icons are clearly visible.



SDGs in the implementation of the multi- annual policy plan

Drafting your multi-annual policy plan is an important step towards a sustainable policy. If you have already included the SDGs, you have already laid a good foundation for a follow-up process. Were the SDGs not addressed or only addressed to a limited extent in the drafting of your MAPP? There are still many possibilities when it comes to implementing your policy plan. In this chapter, we will explain five options with great potential for continuity, support and policy reinforcement.

Perform an SDG check on projects

There are often a number of key projects that you pay extra attention to during the legislative period. For example, projects with a significant financial input and impact. Or projects involving various services or partners. The 2030 Agenda can play a role in the selection of these projects (see p. 39). But you can also make those projects more sustainable during the implementation of your multi-annual policy plan and thus reinforce what is already planned with the SDGs. In the methodology section (p. 76) you will find a number of exercises to choose from:

- Check the project against your priority SDGs. Have you not yet determined priority SDGs? Then it is still a useful exercise from a policy and communication perspective (pp. 78-83).
- Take a look at the basic principles of the 2030 Agenda (p. 92).
- Do the SDG test. The advantage of this is that you also consider possible negative impacts (and you immediately receive a number of suggestions for improvement)(p. 94).
- Use the SDG circle exercise (p. 84) at service level too. For example, you could start with an enthusiastic service that applies the exercise to its plans for the coming years. This is how you make your actions sustainable at service level.



SDG test in Harelbeke

In 2023, the purchaser, sustainability officer and strategic planner applied the SDG test to the specifications for hot school meals. It took them about 1.5 hours. They came up with a number of suggestions for improvement, such as awarding more points to short-chain suppliers (SDG 2), reviewing fair-trade products (SDG 12) or examining how the supplier contributes to job creation for people who have difficulty accessing the regular labour market (SDGs 1, 8 and 10). A concrete policy proposal was also made for the next legislative period. If the supplier chooses sustainable fish, for example, this may result in a higher price. The local government can make up the difference for people who are having financial difficulties, possibly work with deferred meals at school, or have extra meals paid for by parents who are able and willing to do so.

SDG test in Bocholt

The project manager conducted the SDG test at the start of the project at the local service centre Het Dorpshuis. She thought it was a useful exercise that you ideally complete with several people, including the board of mayor and aldermen. This offers a nuanced picture and motivates us to think about projects structurally and in the long term. The intention is to repeat the SDG test with the stakeholders of the local service centre.



SDG circle exercise for key projects in [Lommel](#)

The town of Lommel identified 10 key projects for the 2020–2025 MAPP. Staff from various services were brought together for each project. They did the SDG circular exercise and discussed positive and negative effects. One of the projects was the reconstruction of a major road. This required trees to be felled. How will we offset this, within the same project or within another town programme? The infrastructure criss-crosses the territory. How does this affect mobility and accessibility? Can residents on one side of the road still easily reach the centre? The construction of a new customer contact centre was also placed in the circle. After a discussion about the impact on SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), the city decided to set up a helpdesk for senior citizens.

SDGs as an assessment framework for the tendering and redevelopment process of the town centre in [Hengelo](#) (Netherlands)

Tenderers had to demonstrate how their design and implementation would contribute to the SDGs. The award criteria took into account SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production) and SDG 13 (climate action). This could involve circular solutions, increasing biodiversity and limiting emissions, for example. Co-creation was also high on the agenda. Residents, entrepreneurs, students and advisory councils collaborated on the design. The result is a green and compact town centre with an eye for sustainable mobility and inclusive play facilities. The municipality and the main contractor jointly developed the '[SDG-GO treasure hunt](#)'. Using an app, the treasure-hunters are introduced to the 11 SDGs to which the new town centre contributes. Participants can win a prize from local businesses. More information about the [approach in Hengelo](#).

Circle exercise in Harelbeke



Highlight one SDG every year

Focusing on a different SDG every year has several advantages:

- Gradually increase knowledge about the SDGs.
- Targeted communication, both internally and externally, about the SDG and related topics. That makes the SDGs manageable and concrete. Communicate, for example, via municipal information channels about projects within the framework of that SDG, distribute facts and figures and inspiring actions related to that SDG among staff, or have each service explain in the internal newsletter how they contribute to the SDG.
- Option to emphasise the SDG further in reports to the board of mayor and aldermen and the municipal council.
- Motivate and mobilise employees and any external partners to make extra efforts for that SDG, potentially linked to an extra budget (see also SDG budgeting p. 46).

Choose, for example, a priority SDG, an SDG around which various initiatives are already planned for that year, or the SDG that is the main theme of the annual Sustainable Municipality Week.



The municipality of **Evergem** began highlighting an annual SDG in 2020. The choice of SDG was based on policy planning: which projects are in the pipeline? Water (SDG 6) was the theme for 2020, for example, because many water-related projects were planned. Everyone can then do something (extra) for that theme. This offers a clearer message than the previously ad hoc and often unrelated initiatives such as thick-jumper day, recycling day and world water day.

Theme of water in the spotlight for the Evergem project group



Take part in Sustainable Municipality Week

Sustainable Municipality Week is an annual public campaign organised by the VVSG. The campaign week is aimed at increasing awareness of the SDGs among the general public in Flanders and providing Flemish local authorities with concrete tools for sustainable and co-creative local policy in the long term. During the campaign week, participating municipalities will fly an SDG flag at the city hall and highlight their 'sustainable heroes'. These heroes are local citizens, schools, businesses and associations who contribute to one or more SDGs in their work or daily lives and therefore become the local faces of the 17 global goals.

Municipalities participating in Sustainable Municipality Week are positive.

- You can reach out to various services for the selection of heroes. This way they can get to know the SDGs better.
- The local heroes give a face to the SDGs. You can also use the heroes in other ways, for example for sustainability discussions at schools or as a pit stop on walks or bike rides.
- The VVSG offers ready-made material for communicating about the SDGs.
- Its organisation throughout Flanders, with the participation of more than 100 municipalities each time, increases its political visibility and commitment.
- The campaign week is an ideal opportunity to communicate about the local authority's sustainable policy initiatives. For example, the city of Ghent uses every Sustainable Municipality Week to launch its annual sustainability report.

Sustainable Municipality Week is a good way to raise awareness and communicate about the SDGs and in doing so increase support. The VVSG has a guideline for the Sustainable Municipality Week in English, French and Spanish. Also a lot of campaign material has been translated. Also check out our other tips in the appendix 'Support for SDGs' (p. 102).



Initiatives for SDG 4 (quality education) in the spotlight during Sustainable Municipality Week in **Gooik**

Education was the theme of Sustainable Municipality Week 2023. The municipality of Gooik distributed SDG bingo cards to schools and encouraged them to organise sustainable activities: picking up litter, waste policy at school, school cross-country races, promoting cycling and healthy



eating, attention for pupil welfare, library visits, etc. Four Gooik-based organisations that form the fourth pillar visited schools to talk about the school projects they support in the Global South. The Gooik 'Digihelpers' – volunteers who answer questions about digital applications in the library – were honoured as sustainable heroes.

Schools in Gooik organise sustainable actions.

Integrate the SDGs into citizen participation and cooperation

The SDGs can deepen citizen participation, but also strengthen other partnerships, for example with local authorities or with businesses.

- Include the SDGs in **partnership agreements with citizens' initiatives** to minimise negative effects on the SDGs. Consider doing the SDG circle exercise (p. 84) with them to see how they can make their activities more sustainable. Encourage them to include the SDGs in their communications, both in terms of content and visually.
- Perform an SDG check when **assessing citizen proposals**, for example in the context of participatory budgets.
- Integrate the SDGs into your **subsidy schemes**. Ask applicants to demonstrate how their project contributes to the SDGs and how they will make this clear in their communications.
- Use the SDGs to make policy planning and follow-up of **municipal partnerships** such as inter-waste associations and welfare organisations more sustainable. For example, work with them to see what concrete actions they can take for each SDG, by analogy with [the VVSG inspiration sheets for each policy area](#).
- Set up a **local SDG network** with associations, schools, businesses and other partners such as the Dutch municipalities of [Delft](#), [Deventer](#), [Utrecht](#), [The Hague](#) and [Oosterhout](#).



Subsidy schemes in [Malle](#), [Kruisem](#) and [Deinze](#)

Several municipalities have already included the SDGs in their subsidy schemes, usually within the context of local global policy. Examples are [Geel](#), [Harelbeke](#), [Mechelen](#), [Mortsel](#) and [Wevelgem](#).

In Malle, the [subsidy scheme for youth work](#) was reformed in 2020. Under the new scheme, applicants can earn up to 50 extra points for undertaking sustainable actions and incorporating the SDGs into communication materials.

The [subsidy scheme for charitable organisations in Kruisem](#) also allows for an extra budget for initiatives that contribute to one or more SDGs.

Each year, the town of Deinze awards a citizens' budget to residents who want to realise a project with social added value. Contribution to the SDGs is included as a [criterion in the selection of projects](#).



SDG circle exercise with neighbourhood ambassadors in [Deinze](#)

To make participation as people-oriented and local as possible, the town works with neighbourhood ambassadors who are committed to a constructive dialogue with the town council. During a consultation meeting, the ambassadors were introduced to the SDGs through the SDG circle exercise. They were then asked to consider the SDGs and look at the actions needed in their own neighbourhood.

Incorporate the SDGs into your policy monitoring and reporting

For more on this, please see the next chapter.

SDGs in monitoring and reporting

Every municipality, regardless of its size or SDG maturity, can participate in SDG monitoring and reporting. **The 2030 Agenda provides opportunities to strengthen local policy monitoring and reporting.** Conversely, such monitoring and reporting brings with it opportunities to dynamise your SDG story and substantiate the local realisation of the SDGs.

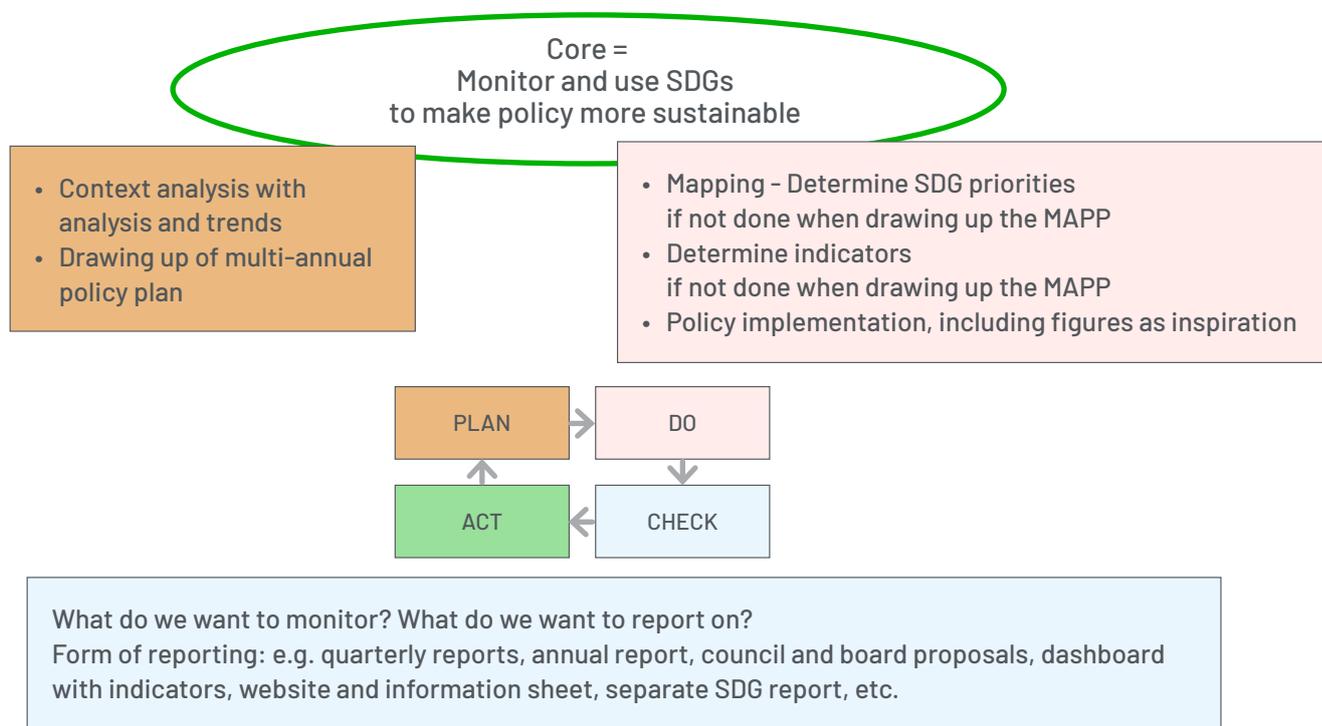
Make choices about what you will follow up in the context of the SDGs. For example, you could focus extra attention on important social developments and challenges as identified in the context analysis, focus on a number of priority SDGs, or follow up on the SDG(-related) indicators defined in your policy plan.

Ideally, you should aim for a holistic approach to SDG monitoring and reporting that applies to your entire policy and involves the entire organisation. You can of course take a gradual approach, initially focusing on a few SDGs, a number of projects or a number of services.



Monitoring is an important part, but obviously also only one part of a broader SDG policy. It is impossible to summarise all the information in figures. Implementing the SDGs is mainly about taking concrete initiatives and raising awareness among employees and residents about this global ambition.

SDG monitoring and reporting in the local policy cycle:



Would you like to learn more about SDG monitoring and reporting? Then be sure to check out the [VVSG inspiration guide on SDG monitoring and reporting \(2022\)](#).

Do you want to monitor the SDGs?

- Develop a balanced set of indicators that focuses on cascading policy objectives, action plans and actions. Combine quantitative and qualitative information and formulate at least a number of concrete targets.
- You can obtain information from various SDG data sources for Flemish local authorities, such as the SDG monitor, the SDG report in Provinces in Figures and the VVSG SDG indicator set (appendix 'Overview of Flemish SDG data sources' p. 105).
- There are various possible criteria for selecting your local SDG indicators, such as comparability with international and national indicators; balance between social, economic, ecological and institutional sustainability; and cross-indicators that apply to multiple SDGs.
- There are also criteria for defining target values for your indicators, such as the principle of worst and best performers, in which the target value is determined by comparison with other municipalities.⁹

Check out the trajectories of Harelbeke, Evergem and Halle in the VVSG inspiration guide on SDG monitoring and reporting.¹⁰



Pioneer

Enter into dialogue with local partners, such as businesses and associations. Do they collect data in the context of sustainability? Is this information useful for monitoring local policy? This way, you will improve your own monitoring and build a shared SDG trajectory.

SDG reporting

Reporting internally and externally on your efforts for the SDGs is a powerful tool for making your vision and impact visible. You show residents, businesses and other stakeholders how you are working towards a better future and explain how local actions contribute to global objectives. Good reporting can also encourage other parties to collaborate.

A number of avenues for SDG reporting are:

- **SDG reporting codes** for actions in PMC software (appendix 'SDG reporting codes' p. 108).
- **Quarterly and/or annual reporting:** for example, you can visually incorporate the SDGs into the report, display expenditure and progress based on the 5 Pillars of sustainable development or the 17 SDGs, or add separate SDG sheets discussing a number of indicators and projects per SDG.
- Link **council and board proposals** to the SDGs. This way you keep the SDGs on the political agenda and encourage services to connect their dossiers to the SDGs. For example, use the visual output (bar or spider diagram) of the SDG test (p. 94).

⁹ Inspiration guide on SDG monitoring and reporting, pp. 19-22.

¹⁰ The information was last updated in 2022 and therefore does not contain the latest information on the approach of the three municipalities.

- Display of **developments in SDG indicators** via a public website such as municipality X in figures or via SDG dashboards.
- More qualitative reporting with a focus on **good practices**, for example via website and info sheet.
- **Specific SDG report.**

If you have actively included the SDGs in the formulation of local policy objectives and action plans, then reporting on your policy plan will automatically have a sustainable approach. If your policy plan is structured according to the 5 Pillars of sustainable development, for example, then there will naturally be a strong relationship between policy reporting and SDG reporting.

SDG reporting codes

In the 'external reporting codes' field in the PMC software, various software suppliers offer the option to use SDG reporting codes. This allows you to link an activity in your multi-annual policy plan to one or more SDG codes. There is 1 code per SDG (e.g. code SDG 01). For SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities) alone, there are 8 sub-codes that deal with housing and heritage, among other things. You can find the overview of the SDG reporting codes in the appendix on p. 108.

Benefits of SDG reporting codes

- The SDGs are part of the existing PMC software, which means that as a municipality you can generate a report for each SDG.
- Using the codes can help to gain more insight into the SDGs that the local government is working on most actively, without linking a judgement about impact to this.
- You can assign multiple SDG reporting codes to a single action, which makes the connection between the SDGs clear.
- By involving municipal services and staff in the allocation of SDG reporting codes, you raise awareness about the 2030 Agenda.

Points of attention for SDG reporting codes

- In principle, it is an ex post assessment mechanism. So do not limit yourself to the codes: also look for other angles for support and policy.
- There is a risk of overcoding, in which you use SDG reporting codes for almost every action in the multi-annual policy plan, even if it does not necessarily contribute to sustainable development.
- You may have chosen the wrong SDG reporting code. For example, when you place a sewerage action under code SDG 14 (life below water), while code SDG 06 (clean water and sanitation) is the correct one. SDG 14 is actually about seas and oceans. To reduce this risk, we describe the themes linked to each SDG reporting code in the appendix.

The 2020-25 multi-annual policy plan of Haacht contains an index with a summary of the corresponding actions in the MAPP for each SDG reporting code. One action can be linked to multiple codes. Priority actions are coloured blue.

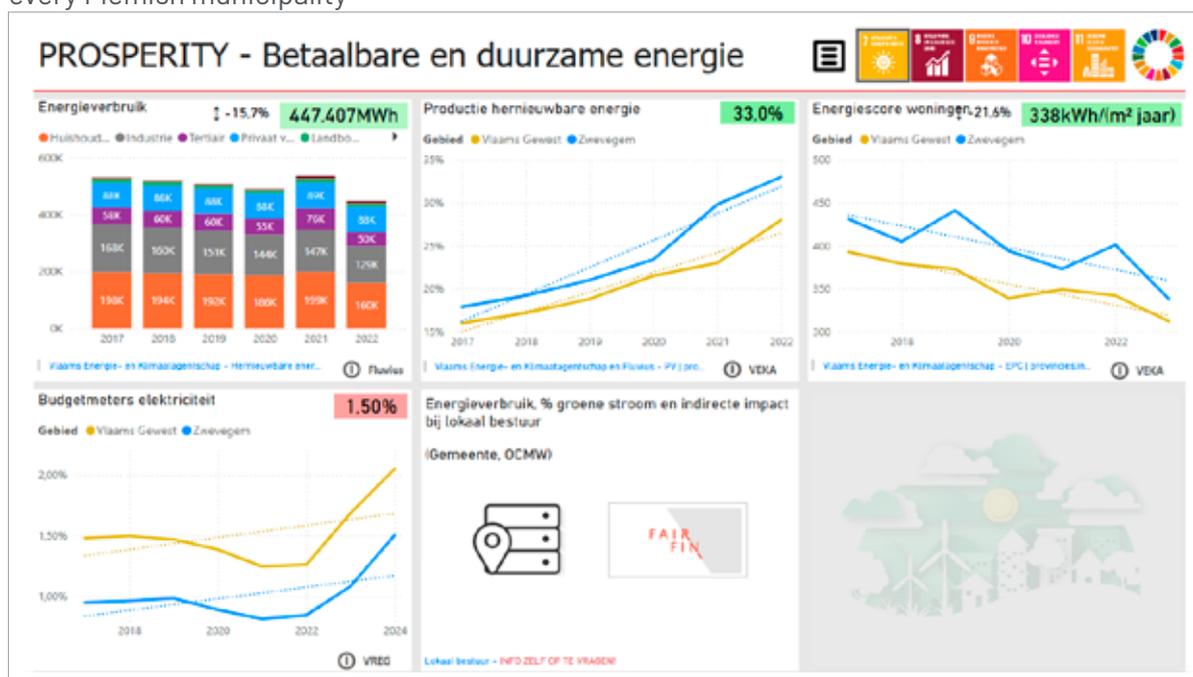
SDGs in council and board proposals

The Dutch municipality of Rheden integrated a mandatory SDG field into the templates for the proposals for the Mayor and Municipal Executive (similar to the board of aldermen in Flanders) and the municipal council. For each proposal, employees must click on the related SDGs (with three SDGs as a guideline), accompanied by a brief explanation of what the municipality wants to achieve with those SDGs.

The town of Eeklo introduced the same approach in 2024. In each board proposal, employees must indicate on which SDG(s) the proposal has a positive impact. The 17 SDGs are automatically visible in the template, and tenderers must delete those SDGs that do not apply. In the first half of 2024, SDGs 3, 9, 11 and 16 were the most discussed.

SDG dashboard

Zwevegem developed the SDG-wijzer together with the neighbouring municipalities of Harelbeke, Deerlijk and Kuurne. An online dashboard where you can see the evolution of a number of pre-selected indicators for each SDG. The system keeps itself up to date, so you always see the most recent information. You can compare with other municipalities, your province, the Flemish Region and reference regions. The SDG-wijzer contains information for every Flemish municipality



SDG-wijzer: Zwevegem's scores for SDG 7

On Utrecht in Figures, the city of Utrecht presents the evolution of a number of key indicators for each SDG. The city pays extra attention to SDG 11, with subdivisions into themes such as 'reducing the environmental impact in cities' and 'adequate, safe and affordable housing'. The data is available either centrally or at municipal level.

Sustainability reports

The city of Ghent has produced an annual sustainability report since 2020. In 2020, the city drew up a start-up report with data for all SDGs. This report was an internal exercise and only discusses indicators drawn largely from the context analysis.

From 2021 to 2023, qualitative reports were drawn up for each pillar of sustainable development – People in 2021, Prosperity in 2022 and Planet in 2023. The pillars of Peace (SDG 16) and Partnership (SDG 17) are addressed in each report. The focus of these reports is external. They highlight good practices from Ghent, selected by the Ghent stakeholders. The figure-based sustainability report in 2024 was compiled using data from the SDG monitor, supplemented by the baseline measurement in 2020 and information from the context analysis in 2024.



The Ghent sustainability report 2023

Since 2018, more and more local (and regional) authorities worldwide, such as Ghent, have produced an SDG report on their municipality or region. We also refer to these reports as Voluntary Local Reviews. In France, all local (and other territorial) authorities with more than 50,000 inhabitants are required to produce an annual sustainability report. Various French cities and regions have made the link with the SDGs, including Besançon and Niort.

Trajectories of Herentals, Berlaar, Deinze and Harelbeke

Herentals: starting municipality with ambition

| | |
|--|--|
| Preparations for the 2026-2031 MAPP | The SDGs are woven into the context analysis and administrative policy proposals for 2024 . An SDG watchdog has been appointed in each sector to ensure that each policy proposal is linked to one or more SDGs. There is mandate and support for including SDGs in the MAPP as well. There is an SDG working group . Its members include the equal opportunities project worker, head of equal opportunities, sustainability officer and policy planning and organisational development advisor. |
| Determine policy priorities and objectives | The SDG working group gathered additional SDG input to inspire the board of mayor and aldermen and MAT in their choice of priorities and subsequent objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The working group linked all actions and the associated budget in the current MAPP to the SDGs. It listed a number of actions that contribute to sustainable development, such as the development of a city-wide heating network and a circular shop for people with a reduced income. • It also used the intranet to ask which SDGs they thought the city was focusing on the most. • It looked at how other local authorities work with the SDGs. <p>The working group made a proposal for priority SDGs, which was ratified by the MAT and later discussed with the board of mayor and aldermen. In February 2025, these are SDGs 1, 3 and 11. In the MAPP, only these SDGs will be linked for the sake of clarity and focus.</p> |
| Action plans and actions | The local government has selected 15 strategic projects . The basic messages of the 2030 Agenda were used as inspiration when choosing these projects. The intention is to develop the strategic projects using the SDG test and the SDG circle exercise. Other projects will be assessed against the priority SDGs. |
| Budget | Consider the possibility of working with an additional budget for priority SDGs. |
| Implementing the MAPP | The intention is to raise awareness through workshops, podcasts, newsletters and awards. Each year, highlight one priority SDG for citizens, policy and employees. |

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Berlaar: from 17 SDGs to 5 Pillars

| | MAPP 2020-2025 | MAPP 2026-2031 |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| Preparing the MAPP | | For the Berlaar context analysis inter-service Pillar workshops (1 per Pillar); employees voted for the 3 most priority challenges per Pillar. In workshop of 3 tables: think about that challenge in a mixed group (each time a different group) and about challenges and opportunities. After 20 minutes, move on to another table. |
| Determine objectives | Local translation of 17 SDGs. MAPP core group (=MAT) tested product catalogue against SDGs. Each member received a list of products that did not fall under their department, so that they could examine them with a critical eye. Each product linked to 1 SDG. Eventually arrived at 13 policy objectives (13 SDGs for which there are sufficient products). | Also opted for 5 Pillars as starting point for MAPP objectives. Thinking in terms of structure of 17 SDGs for 2020-25 MAPP helped to develop inter-service objectives and kept SDGs in the spotlight during implementation. But there were too many objectives. Now opting for a more pragmatic approach of 5 Pillars. The intention is to make a 'Berlaar' translation. |
| Action plans and actions | A broader working group with employees from various services was able to provide feedback on the proposed product-SDG link. They then developed actions for the products, both regular and new. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of 2020-25 MAPP and actions linked to 5 Ps. • Managers will analyse 'new' actions and categorise them according to the 5 Ps. • 5 themes (such as experience, education and welfare) determined for action plans. These come up in every policy objective and therefore in every Pillar. |
| Indicators | Use VVSG SDG indicator set. Indicators for which you can collect data yourself are included in reports. | Again use VVSG SDG indicator set. Additionally, for priority actions, use your own local indicators that are monitored on a quarterly basis. Key figures are also included. |
| Budget | By using 17 SDGs for policy objectives (POs) as a starting point, you could link your budget to SDGs. Because services had activities in different POs, budgets were combined. | |
| Final document | SDGs in introduction. Specific action on SDGs. | Still unclear |
| Implementing the MAPP | Choosing SDGs for POs automatically translates into SDG reporting. Participation in Sustainable Municipality Week. | Work with annual themes. Idea to set up an internal think tank on sustainability with participation based on intrinsic motivation (e.g. someone from events, civil affairs, environment). |

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Deinze: SDG monitoring and citizen participation

Deinze already makes limited use of the SDGs in the [2020-2025 multi-annual policy plan](#), with SDG icons at action plan level. Example:

BELEIDSDOELSTELLING OPENBAAR DOMEIN (D04)

Deinze wenst het openbaar domein op een efficiënte manier te onderhouden en vernieuwen met het oog op de creatie van een aangename leefomgeving, dit in overleg met de bevolking en organisatoren

ACTIEPLAN AFVALWATER (AP009)

Deinze voert strategische rioleringsprojecten uit om de zuiveringsgraad van het afvalwater te maximaliseren



The image shows three SDG icons: 6 (Schoon water en sanitair), 9 (Industrie, innovatie en infrastructuur), and 11 (Duurzame steden en gemeenschappen).

Sustainable Municipality Week 2020 was the **real starting point** for the further implementation of the SDGs. The policy unit is leading the SDG story, supported by an **SDG working group** with participants from various services (at least one person for each Pillar of sustainable development) and the mayor. There is support from the board of mayor and alderman and the MAT.



In recent years, Deinze has undertaken various initiatives:

- Continuing participation in Sustainable Municipality Week.
- SDGs in internal and external communication.
- For period 2020-2026 each year **3 SDGs highlighted** for People, Planet, Prosperity. This way, all SDGs for the 3 Pillars are addressed.
- **SDG circle exercise** with all services: what are we already doing and where can we make additional efforts in the future.
- SDG circle exercise with neighbourhood ambassadors: what is the current state of affairs in our neighbourhood and what actions are necessary and possible.

- SDGs in criteria for selecting projects in the citizens' budget.
- Biennial feedback on the status of the SDG action plan to board of mayor and aldermen/municipal council and MAT.
- **SDG dashboards:**
 - › Dashboard that builds on indicators from the [SDG monitor](#) in which you can compare and zoom in on detailed data.
 - › Modified Halle Powermonitor in which you can filter by SDGs.

Also check out the video on [Deinze's SDG trajectory](#) (2021), and Deinze's context analysis approach in [SDG policy compilation video](#) (2024).

Deinze is resolutely continuing its SDG trajectory in preparing and drawing up the 2026-2031 multi-annual policy plan.

| | |
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| Preparations for the 2026-2031 MAPP | <p>Deinze went through an intensive process for the <u>context analysis</u>, with extensive internal and external participation. The SDGs were the starting point.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDG circle exercise during in-depth interviews with a select group of employees, following online self-evaluation with a broad group of employees. Exercise with at least 3 people from the service each time. Worked in three layers in the circle: environment (e.g. supra-local), organisation (how to translate to own organisation), priorities (stop, start, continue). The SDG circle exercise increased visibility and awareness of SDGs. • Data analysis: SDG monitor starting point, supplemented with SDG data from Halle Powermonitor (see also appendix overview of Flemish SDG data sources). • Citizens' panel of Deinze thinkers selected at random. Five meetings, each an opportunity to reflect on People, Planet and Prosperity. During the meeting: explanation of the Pillar and accompanying SDGs, interpretation of trends and figures, further reflection in small groups on what Deinze should focus on. <p>Output:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Report on SDGs and local authorities</u>: relationship between SDGs and local authority, SDGs in Deinze • <u>Research report on Deinze thinkers</u> • <u>Research report on statistics</u> |
| Vision and mission | The <u>vision and mission</u> of Deinze are infused with the SDGs, and the vision and mission also provide a clear starting point for defining the strategic objectives. |
| Indicators | SDG indicators for policy objectives (which fall under strategic objectives). Selection based on SDG monitor, SDG report in PinF, supplemented with own data. |
| Implementation of MAPP, monitoring and reporting | SDG indicators are monitored periodically. This allows for adjustments where necessary. Communication to council and administration. |

Approach of Deinze context analysis 2026-2031



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Harelbeke: Phased build-up towards strong SDG integration

Harelbeke has been working on a supported and extensive SDG trajectory since 2017. It was awarded the [SDG pioneer certificate](#) in 2022 and is now aiming for the SDG champion certificate. A number of highlights in their approach:

- Context analysis and administrative inspiration paper for 2018 structured according to 5 Pillars and 17 SDGs.
- Multi-annual policy plan 2020-2025: SDG materiality analysis and local translation of 12 SDGs.
- SDG working group with employees from the strategic planning, environment, global policy, communications, purchasing and local economy services.
- Internal and external awareness-raising, for example through SDG policy exercises and Sustainable Municipality Week.
- SDGs as a compass for city-to-city partnership with Eenhana. The city-to-city partners analysed each other's policies (coalition agreement and multi-annual policy plan) from an SDG perspective, among other things. They shared what stood out to them in the policy documents of the other municipality and provided input on how they would approach it
- SDG test for large urban projects.
- Strengthen sustainable purchasing policy.
- Expansion of SDG monitoring with a selection of own SDG indicators and targets, [SDG dashboard on Harelbeke in Figures](#), and development of [SDG-wijzer](#) together with neighbouring municipalities for preparation of 2024 context analysis.
- Choice of the 2030 Agenda also for the 2024 context analysis and the drafting of the 2026-2031 MAPP.

SDG kick-off day in Harelbeke at start of preparation of 2020-2025 MAPP

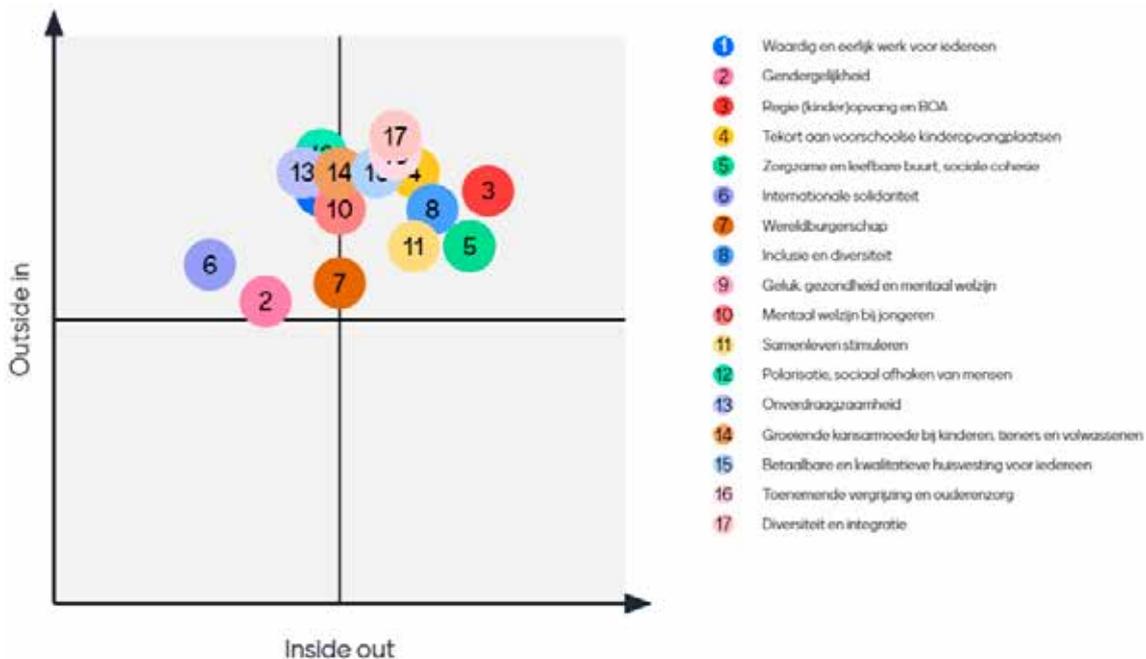


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| MAPP 2020-2025 | |
| Preparing the MAPP | <p>During a kick-off event and three subsequent brainstorming sessions (February-March 2018), the SDGs were announced to the employees of the city, the public social welfare centre, the Zorgbedrijf and the police district. The pillars of sustainable development – Peace, Partnership, Planet, People and Prosperity – and the accompanying SDGs formed the framework. At the kick-off event, an external speaker talked about the SDGs, followed by the story of a Syrian refugee in the context of Peace and Partnership. This was followed by 3 brainstorming sessions, each lasting an afternoon and focusing on People, Planet or Prosperity. Employees from various services and city organisations received a sheet with statistical data for Harelbeke. At the location they were given an assignment. For SDG 2 ‘zero hunger’, for example, the destination was the social grocery store. There, employees received tokens with which they could make purchases for their families for the entire week. They formulated policy proposals using the SDG circle exercise and posted them on the digital platform Citizenlab.</p> <p>This internal participation process resulted in the <u>inspiration paper entitled Good Morning Harelbeke</u>, containing the context analysis and the official memorandum, structured according to the 5 Pillars.</p> <p>The Harelbeke advisory councils jointly wrote an ambition paper with the 5 Pillars of sustainable development as a framework. Proposals that everyone had agreed on were included.</p> |
| Vision and mission | <p>The vision has been reworked with a local translation for the 5 Pillars.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Leave no one behind” is the point of departure (People) • Always look for sustainable solutions to social challenges that improve the quality of life for all citizens (Prosperity) • Protect the climate for future generations (Planet) • As an organisation, evolve into a flexible, open, externally oriented and innovative organisation (Peace – Public Institutions) • Put Harelbeke on the map as a “world-class town”, work together with citizens, businesses and partner organisations in a global partnership for sustainable development (Partnership) |
| Determine policy priorities and objectives | <p>SDG materiality analysis March-April 2019 (<u>see p. 31</u>). February-April 2019 <u>Tour of Harelbeke</u>. Six consultation evenings, each linked to a number of SDGs. Citizens could vote for the SDGs they felt were the most important for the municipality. Ultimately, the translation of 12 of the 17 SDGs into local policy objectives.</p> |
| Action plans and actions | <p>Including the use of policy proposals formulated in the preparation of an administrative inspiration paper based on the SDG circle exercise.</p> |
| Indicators | <p>2020-2021 development of a limited and supported <u>SDG indicator set</u>: input from services, target value for 2025 and 2030.</p> |
| Budget | <p>By using 17 SDGs for policy objectives (POs) as a starting point, you could link your budget to SDGs.</p> |
| Final document and communication on MAPP | <p>SDGs in policy objectives, e.g. SDG 03: Harelbeke ensures good health and promotes well-being for all ages.</p> <p>At the start of the new multi-annual policy plan in early 2020, every Harelbeek resident and entrepreneur received an <u>attractive brochure about the multi-annual policy plan</u> explaining the SDGs and the objectives of the multi-annual policy plan.</p> |
| Implementation of MAPP, monitoring and reporting | <p>Further work on policy and awareness-raising, e.g. setting up a sustainability working group, SDG dashboard on Harelbeke in Figures, SDG test for projects, SDGs in subsidy schemes, global policy and participation in Sustainable Municipality Week.</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| MAPP 2026-2031 | |
| Preparing the MAPP | <p>Joint context analysis with Zvevegem, Deerlijk and Kuurne. This led to the online SDG monitoring tool <u>SDG-wijzer</u>.</p> <p><u>Inspiration Paper drafted by administration</u> rebuilt according to the 5 Pillars. SDG game by The Forge also played with staff.</p> <p>Milestone paper for preparation of MAPP.</p> |
| Determine policy priorities and objectives | <p>Choice of 5 Ps as a starting point for policy objectives, instead of the 17 SDGs. This was partly due to the desire to move towards fewer policy objectives and to make Partnerships more explicit. There is also a new organisational chart with 3 clusters (people, environment, support) instead of 7 departments. By choosing 5 Pillars, you can also keep Planet explicitly on the agenda.</p> <p>SWOT per Pillar with the services: what are the relevant themes (based on a context analysis, among other things), what statistical data do we have, SWOT analysis (per Pillar, sometimes split into groups, for example for People: education, leisure, social welfare), and preparation of stakeholder analysis.</p> <p>After SWOTs, there are strategy afternoons for the MAT, one afternoon per Pillar. They start with the evaluation of the 2020-25 MAPP, discuss the SWOTs and perform a double materiality analysis in Mentimeter.</p> |
| Indicators | The aim is to first determine indicators at objective level and only then for action plans and actions. |

Double materiality analysis¹¹ for People, Huis van het Welzijn (2024)

- **Inside out:** what impact do we as a local authority have on a theme?
- **Outside In:** what impact does the theme have on us as a local authority (and the decisions we inevitably have to make)? For example, the themes of digital transformation, inclusion and diversity, the ageing population.



¹¹ More info on p. 79

Snapshot from the preparation of the stakeholder analysis of Huis van het Welzijn (2024)

| Stakeholders that have an impact on our organisation and service delivery | Power/influence | Interest | Most important stakeholders |
|---|-----------------|----------|-----------------------------|
| W13 | | | X |
| Zorgbedrijf | | | X |
| VDAB | | | |
| Agency of Flemish government for child development | | | |
| Agency of Flemish government for integration | | | |

| Stakeholders that we have an impact on as a local government | Power/influence | Interest | Most important stakeholders |
|--|-----------------|----------|-----------------------------|
| Non-profit organisation Kompass | | | |
| Non-profit organisation Dyzo | | | |
| Hise | | | |
| Poerderie | | | |
| Mobiel | | | |

SDG school day in Harelbeke during Sustainable Municipality Week 2023.





SDG street art in Harelbeke underpass

Raising awareness about SDGs in Harelbeke

The strong integration of the SDGs in policy has the effect of raising awareness and builds support. For example, the inter-service SDG circle exercises, SDG materiality analysis with administration and politics, interviews with external partners about sustainability, and involving services in SDG monitoring.

Harelbeke also undertook various concrete awareness-raising initiatives:

- **Street art projects:** In 'Tour Elentrik', artists joined citizens in tackling the electricity boxes. The works of art contain references to the SDGs and a QR code that people can use to find out more about the artist and the SDGs. The pedestrian tunnel at the station has also been brightened up with SDG street art.
- Every year, Harelbeke distributes an SDG magazine to all its residents (during Sustainable Municipality Week). In it, they describe the concrete actions the town council is taking to make Harelbeke more sustainable, greener and more social. SDG icons in the staff magazine and the municipal information magazine.
- With the '**Rainbow Warrior Covenant**', the town of Harelbeke offers schools in its area a subsidy for student projects that contribute to the SDGs. Involved teams of teachers receive training on the SDGs and are prepared to realise the Rainbow Warrior Covenant together with their students.
- Annual participation in **Sustainable Municipality Week**. In 2023, there was a large school event for all students of grade three and four of primary school (ages 6 to 8). The pupils created a time capsule and presented their sustainable wishes to the town council.

Curious about the SDG programme in Harelbeke? Take a look at the information on the [Harelbeke website](#), the video about the [Harelbeke SDG process \(2022\)](#) and approach to the context analysis in the [SDG policy compilation video \(2024\)](#).

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Methodologies

| Exercises | For which assignment is MAPP most suitable | | | | | | | | Complexity | Time investment |
|--|--|----------------------|------------|--------------------------|--|----------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|------------|-----------------|
| | Vision and mission | Determine priorities | Objectives | Action plans and actions | Participation of stakeholders/citizens | Determine indicators | Implementation of MAPP | Monitoring and evaluation | | |
| SDGs in vision and mission | X | | | | | | | | | |
| Sustenuto materiality analysis | | X | | | | | (X) | | ++ | +++ |
| Antwerp Management School materiality matrix | | X | | | | | (X) | | ++ | ++ |
| 5 SDGs with biggest impact CIFAL Flanders | | X | | | | | (X) | | + | + |
| SDG circle exercise | | | | X | X | | X | (X) | + | +(+) |
| Pillar workshops | | | X | X | | X | | | +(+) | +(+) |
| Start-stop-continue | | | | X | | X | | (X) | + | ++ |
| SDG impact assessment tool | | | | X | | | X | | ++ | ++(+) |
| Basic principles of 2030 Agenda | | | X | X | | | X | X | +(+) | +(+) |
| SDG test | | | | X | | | X | X | ++ | +++ |
| Objectives and action sheet | | X | X | X | | X | | | + | + |
| Stakeholder mapping | | X | X | X | X | | X | X | ++ | ++(+) |

SDGs in vision and mission: brainstorming exercise

- Step 1:** The participants are familiar with the SDGs. Have the overview of the 17 SDGs (p. 99) and the publication [Local Support for Global Challenges](#) to hand.
- Step 2:** Participants receive 5 Post-its each. On each Post-it they write 1 word or concept that they link to sustainability in the context of the municipality. The following questions may offer some guidance:
- How is sustainability expressed in your internal organisation? And in your external service provision?
 - What are your intentions? What do you want your municipality to look like in 2030?
 - What does your municipality stand for? What are your core values? What do you believe in?
- Step 3:** Stick the Post-its on the SDG that corresponds most closely to the word on the Post-it. To do this, you could use the [circle exercise with the 17 SDGs](#) or the [circle with 5 Pillars](#). Group the same and similar words together. If you have words or concepts from step 2 that are difficult to frame within the SDGs, keep them aside for discussion and consider which of these words and concepts you want to include in the final vision and mission.
- Step 4:** Discuss the result as a group. Which SDGs have the most words attached to them? Do these SDGs and words reflect the elements that should be part of your mission and vision? Which SDGs have the fewest words attached to them? Do these reflect the SDGs that you do not want to include in your mission and vision, or are these blind spots that you have not thought of, but that you still want to address?
- Step 5:** Select a workable number of words. Discuss as a group what these words mean and include them in the context of your municipality.
- Step 6:** Based on step 5, write out your vision and mission. Possibilities:
- State explicitly that your municipality wants to contribute to the 2030 Agenda and/or the SDGs.
 - Name the SDGs that clearly stand out.
 - Place the words that emerged from the exercise in an [SDG template](#) and so incorporate the SDGs visually into your vision and mission.



- Are you starting from your existing vision and mission? Then place your vision and mission in the [circle of the 5 Ps](#). Accessible, but effective.

Determine priorities: Sustenuto SDG materiality analysis

Sustenuto's SDG materiality analysis is part of the SDG guide for government agencies of the Flemish government in collaboration with Sustenuto.

In an Excel tool, you can check for each SDG sub-objective¹² what impact you could have as an authority. In other words, it is not about the impact you already have or wish to have. The following impact is possible:

- Material: Direct significant impact through the organisation's core activity
- Connected: indirect impact through the organisation's core activity
- Other: non-significant impact, more of a voluntary impact

Each type of impact has a weighting: material impact = 3; connected impact = 1; no impact = 0. At the end of the analysis, you will see which SDGs or subtargets your administration can have the most impact on. This analysis forms the basis for the discussion about the priority SDGs for your local government. Which SDGs score the highest? Are there significant differences in the scores between those who completed the tool? Are the SDGs with the highest score also our priority SDGs, or are there, for example, SDGs that we as a local government would like to have a (voluntary) impact on, but which are less central to the government's core tasks?¹³

Complexity and time investment

- Using this tool requires a certain time investment: at least 1 hour per person to complete the analysis, supplemented by a summarisation by the MAT or MAPP core group, and a discussion with the councillors.
- The description of the SDG subtargets is sometimes abstract and complex.

Benefits

- You analyse at the level of the SDG subtargets. This requires a greater time investment, but does ensure a much better understanding of the SDGs. You discover what each objective entails. For example, that SDG 2 'zero hunger' is also about the way food is produced. Or that a local purchasing policy is part of SDG 12 'responsible consumption and production'.
- You look beyond the current situation and make an assessment of the possible impact. This helps to identify SDG (subtargets) where there is still room for growth.
- The scores ensure a form of objectivity.

¹² Each of the 17 SDGs consists of a number of subtargets. In total there are 169 subtargets

¹³ The VDAB (Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training), for example, has chosen to include ecological objectives in its priority SDGs (in its own policy, e.g. with regard to purchasing and employees), even though this does not belong to the VDAB's core tasks.

Points of attention

- Have a number of key figures (e.g. aldermen, managers, MAPP core group) complete the materiality analysis individually and add up the scores. Ideally, supplement the analysis with interviews with senior officials and the board of aldermen (what are we good at as a local authority and what do we consider important).
- You can also perform the materiality analysis for each service or department. The service or department will therefore ensure that its priority SDGs are included in the development of the action plans and actions in the multi-annual policy plan.
- Not all 169 subtargets are relevant to your local authority. You can first select the relevant sub-targets with a core group and only perform the materiality analysis for these subtargets. This also ensures that the percentage scores for the SDGs will be less distorted because irrelevant subtargets do not drag down the score for an SDG. This is also explained in the Excel tool.
- In the materiality analysis, also take into account your municipality's internal policy, such as staffing policy, purchasing policy and the management of its own municipal buildings. It is not just about the services provided by the local authority.

Double materiality analysis

Businesses that are subject to the CSRD (Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive) conduct a double materiality analysis. Such an exercise is also useful for local authorities. You will need several workshops to achieve the end result. But you will then have an extensive and well-founded analysis for your policy priorities in the short and long term.

The core of a double materiality analysis lies in the inside-out and outside-in approach:

- Inside out: what impact do we as a local authority have on a theme?
- Outside In: what impact does the theme have on us as a local authority (and the decisions we inevitably have to make)? For example, the themes of digital transformation, inclusion and diversity, the ageing population.

In that sense, the double materiality analysis is an advanced form of Sustenuto's materiality analysis. Because, as a local authority, you do not just look at the impact you can have on the SDG targets (inside out). You also discuss how the context and evolutions for an SDG sub-objective affect how you conduct local policy (outside in).

Determine priorities: Antwerp Management School materiality matrix

The 17 SDGs are placed in a materiality matrix. First look at the horizontal axis and then the vertical axis.

- Arrange the 17 SDGs on the horizontal axis from left to right. Left = the local authority can only have a limited impact on that SDG. Right = the local government can continue to have a significant impact on that SDG.

For example: your local government has already made great efforts in the area of water management and there is little additional impact that can be made in this area. You should therefore place SDG 6 (water) on the left-hand side of the axis.

- In a second step, move the 17 SDGs up or down in the matrix according to the potential impact on stakeholders. Move the SDG down if there is little positive or negative impact possible on stakeholders. Move the SDG up if there is still a lot of potential for positive or negative impact on stakeholders.

For example: SDG 4 on education can have a major impact on stakeholders (the educational institutions in your municipality), but as an authority you may have little impact on this because there is no municipal education.

The highest-priority SDGs will be in the top right of the matrix. Then look at the SDGs in the top left and bottom right: do you also include these as priority SDGs?



This exercise is therefore mainly about identifying those SDGs where you as a local authority can make additional efforts, where there is still the most room for growth. It is therefore possible that you have a strong policy on poverty or water management, with the necessary resources allocated, but that you will make few additional efforts in these areas in the coming years. The corresponding SDGs are therefore not a priority. The priority SDGs are those where you can and want to make additional efforts.

Complexity and time investment

Average complexity. Plan on half a day for the workshop, with some time afterwards to process what you have learnt.

Benefits

- You work at the level of the 17 SDGs and not at the level of the subtargets. This is less in-depth, but does provide an accessible exercise for determining priority SDGs.
- You explicitly take stakeholders into account.
- You look at the margin for growth, which means you go beyond existing policy for the priority SDGs. You look at how you can make extra efforts and thus pursue a more sustainable policy for those SDGs.

Points of attention

- Because you are not working at the level of the subtargets, you risk a wrong or incomplete interpretation of what each SDG is about. Therefore, at least use the brief overview of the 17 SDGs (p. 99).
- The SDGs that you identify through this exercise are not necessarily the most important themes for your multi-annual policy plan. Your objectives and action plans are not based on what more you can and should do. You also integrate strong policies and policies that you want to continue. You mainly use the priority SDGs as a check on your local policy objectives and to determine actions.
- The exercise is also useful in a later phase of drawing up your multi-annual policy plan. You create your policy objectives and actions. And then there is the financial aspect and you have to make choices. If you determine a number of priority SDGs at that moment, it helps to make those choices more reasoned.

Determine priorities: 5 SDGs with biggest impact CIFAL Flanders

The exercise was designed by CIFAL Flanders (International Training Centre for Authorities and Leaders), an international training centre affiliated with UNITAR.

Put together a group that will do the exercise. This can consist of only councillors, but also of both councillors and civil servants.

Use the table below to determine your priority SDGs. In the first column, each person lists 5 SDGs that they believe their local authority can have the greatest impact on. Use a score from 5 (greatest impact) to 1.

Impact according to CIFAL Flanders: its real effects on society. These can be the direct result of the organisation's activities or an indirect result. The impact of an organisation is not only felt in the 'here and now', but also in the 'elsewhere and/or later', directly or indirectly. If you take this into account in your analysis, you will undoubtedly uncover additional impact zones where the organisation plays or could play a role.

Then discuss the scores in the group and come up with a joint top 5; place this score in the second column.

Complexity and time investment

Limited complexity and realistic in a workshop lasting 2 to 3 hours. You can even use the exercise as an introduction to the SDGs and to get a first impression of those SDGs that are important to your local government; allow an hour for this.

Benefits

You work at the level of the 17 SDGs and not at the level of the subtargets. This is less in-depth, but does provide an accessible exercise for determining priority SDGs. For example, you can also involve councillors with a more limited investment of time.

Points of attention

Because you are not working at the level of the subtargets, you risk a wrong or incomplete interpretation of what each SDG is about. Therefore, at least use the brief overview of the 17 SDGs (p. 99).

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| |  | SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere |
| |  | SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture |
| |  | SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages |
| |  | SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all |
| |  | SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls |
| |  | SDG 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all |
| |  | SDG 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all |
| |  | SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all |
| |  | SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation |
| |  | SDG 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries |
| |  | SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable |
| |  | SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns |
| |  | SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts |
| |  | SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development |
| |  | SDG 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss |
| |  | SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels |
| |  | SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development |

SDG circle exercise

The circle exercise is an easy exercise that you can use for various purposes and in various phases of the design and implementation of a multi-annual policy plan. Use it to develop objectives and actions, during participation initiatives, or to make concrete projects more sustainable. Or use the exercise as an introduction to the SDGs, where you spend half an hour together thinking about what the municipality is already doing that contributes to the SDGs.

Step 1: Organise round-table discussions

- Organise round-table discussions by Pillar, policy objective or cluster of themes. Or organise inter-service work sessions without any specific focus.
- Do you use the SDG circle exercise at a later stage to flesh out concrete action plans or projects? Then place the action plan or project in the centre of the circle.

Who will take part?

- Ideally, the exercise should be across services. This will give you a broad, integrated view of the topics or policy objectives under discussion. You could also organise the circle exercise by service or department, but then you miss out on the cross-fertilisation.
- Involve external partners where possible and appropriate. A stakeholder map will help you identify the most important stakeholders (p. 96).
- For each round-table discussion, appoint a note-taker who will take notes and process the information.

Step 2: Provide information about the SDGs

Provide the participants with basic information about the 2030 Agenda in advance or during the round-table discussions. Give a short presentation, show the VVSG's SDG introduction video, distribute the [Local Support for Global Challenges](#), or use the brief overview of the 17 SDGs (p. 99).

Step 3: Develop actions

You can choose from various SDG circles:

- [Basic circle of 17 SDGs](#)
- [Circle with three levels \(internal - local - global\)](#)

Consider:

- What do you already do that contributes to the SDGs for the Pillar, policy objective, theme or project under discussion? Note down one action per Post-it. An action can often be linked to multiple SDGs. Therefore, place the Post-it next to the most relevant SDG, but also note down on the Post-it any other SDGs to which the action is linked.
- What else can you do? For example, are there any SDGs for which you currently have few or no Post-its? Is this because the local authority has little impact on that SDG? Or is there still something you can do as a local authority? If you think there is potential for growth for a particular SDG, but you are not sure how to realise this, consider who you can turn to for advice. Note down one action per Post-it; use a different-coloured Post-it from the one used in the previous step.

Note: Are you using the basic circle? Make sure that people think about this at various levels. Look not only at the services you provide, but also at what you do and can do internally with regard to purchasing policy, staffing policy and municipal buildings.

Step 4: Make choices

Discuss which actions you want to retain.

Are you short of time? Give each participant a number of small sticker balls. Everyone sticks the stickers on the actions that are most important to them for the new multi-annual policy plan or for the project.

Is there room and ambition to discuss the choices in more detail?

- Place a few actions in the centre of the circle. Check whether you can make your initiative even more sustainable by determining for each SDG whether your initiative can contribute to it (even more), for example through cooperation with various services.
- Do a start-stop-continue exercise for the actions discussed (p. 89).

Step 5: process the information

Incorporate the input into the further elaboration of the multi-annual policy plan or project. Integrate the information in a table, for example. Fictitious example for SDG 13:

| Pillar | SDG | Objective | Action plan | Priority | Actions from circle exercise | Priority | Link with other SDGs |
|--------|-----|---|---|----------|--|----------|---|
| Planet | 13 | CO ₂ emissions on municipal territory will be reduced by 20% by 2030 | We are increasing the share of renewable energy | no | Work on building support for wind energy | No | 7, 11, 17 |
| | | | | | Install PV panels on municipal buildings | No | 7, 9, 11, 16 |
| | | | We are reducing CO ₂ emissions from transport and mobility | no | Stimulate the use of public transport by offering free bus and train passes to young people and the over-65s | No | 1, 11 |
| | | | | | We are reducing CO ₂ emissions in the built environment | yes | Renovation of social housing in a neighbourhood |
| | | | Awareness campaign to encourage residents, associations and small businesses to travel by bicycle | No | | | 3, 11, 17 |
| | | | Car-free city centre thanks to Park & Rides, a neighbourhood traffic plan and a dynamic parking guidance system | Yes | | | 3, 9, 11 |

Complexity and time investment

An accessible exercise that you can do with anyone and that is easy to facilitate. You can organise your own time investment. To make a proper exercise with extensive input, it is best to schedule a half-day workshop. But you can also gather some initial ideas in half an hour to an hour. The exercise also lends itself well to a 'train the trainer' approach. Organise them for service heads, for example (with or without the support of the VVSG) and then have everyone get to work with their own service.

Benefits

- An accessible exercise that requires little to no prior knowledge of the SDGs.
- You can cover the exercise as briefly or as extensively as you like.
- Possibility of organising work meetings across services.
- You can use the exercise when drawing up the MAPP, during further implementation and in participatory moments with citizens and stakeholders. This broad applicability makes the exercise recognisable.

Points of attention

- You will be working at the level of the 17 SDGs. Make sure it is clear what each SDG is about. Therefore, at least use the brief overview of the 17 SDGs p. 99).
- Always take your own operations (e.g. staffing and purchasing policy) and the services you provide into account. Be aware that many actions can also have a global impact, e.g. through global citizenship, limiting CO₂ emissions, or through social and ecological criteria in purchasing.
- A facilitator who is not linked to the policy objective, action plan or project under discussion can help to think outside the box and identify blind spots.

Pillar workshops

Organise a workshop for each Pillar of sustainable development: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership. You can also choose to integrate Partnership and possibly Peace into the workshops on People, Planet and Prosperity. In that case, you could use the discussion questions under SDG 16 (Peace) and 17 (Partnership) from the VVSG's SDG test¹⁴ as input for the workshops on People, Planet and Prosperity: With our actions for People, do we contribute to efficient and transparent services and communication (Peace)? Are our actions for the Planet designed in an inclusive and participatory manner (Peace)? With our actions for Prosperity, can we help to build capacity in the Global South (Partnership)? Etc.

You can also choose to treat Peace and Partnership separately but combine them in one workshop, which would give you a total of four Pillar workshops.

Several municipalities have already organised pillar workshops for their context analysis, such as Maldegem.

Provide the participants with basic information about the 2030 Agenda in advance or during the workshops, especially about the SDGs that belong to the Pillar under discussion. Give a short presentation, show the VVSG's SDG introduction video, distribute the Local Support for Global Challenges, or use the brief overview of the 17 SDGs (p. 99).

It is also preferable to create an inspiration sheet for that Pillar, which you can give to the participants beforehand. The file contains relevant information from, among other things, context analysis, any administrative policy proposals, coalition agreements and from the previous MAPP (what we are already doing). You can also list your local scores from the SDG monitor for all SDGs under the relevant pillar.

Exercises

There are various options for the pillar workshops:

- If you organise Pillar workshops to determine objectives:
 - › Look at the inspiration sheet: are the challenges and priorities based on context analysis, administrative policy proposals and coalition agreements recognisable? Is anything missing?
 - › Try to identify a maximum of five priorities for the Pillar.
 - › Reorganise these priorities into objectives, which you should formulate as SMARTly as possible.
 - › Develop actions. This can be done in the same workshop, a new workshop or by other means such as activity sheets that employees fill in at their own pace.
 - › Check with the MAT or the MAPP core group to see which objectives you will keep for the MAPP and which ones you can merge.
- SWOT analysis. If you have not yet carried out a SWOT analysis as part of the context analysis, you can still do so when drawing up the MAPP.
 - › Identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.
 - › Brainstorm about ideas for the future: what should we continue to do, what should we stop doing and what else can we do?

¹⁴ Excel SDG test, rows 73 to 82.

- SDG circle exercise, see p. 84.
- Flip chart with transfer system. Note down 1 question or topic per flip chart. Hang the sheets of paper around the room. Each group starts at a different sheet. After a set number of minutes, have the groups move on to the next sheet. Do this until each group has visited every sheet. Possibilities:
 - › What are we already doing in the context of this Pillar?
 - › What is an example project to be proud of in the context of this Pillar?
 - › What are possible future actions?
 - › Which partners (internal and external) are important?
 - › What tools and follow-up systems do we already have to monitor our policy, e.g. questionnaires, satisfaction surveys, registration of user numbers, etc.?

You can further develop the actions mentioned – both current and future – through a start-stop-continue exercise (see p. 89).

Who will take part?

- Make a voluntary appeal; invite one or more people from each service; or bring together experts from a number of services.
- Involve external partners where possible and appropriate. A stakeholder map will help you identify the most important stakeholders (p. X). However, be sure to maintain the integrated character of the SDGs. For example, also invite experts on social issues to the Planet workshop.
- For each round-table discussion, appoint a note-taker who will take notes and process the information.

Complexity and time investment

To make a proper exercise with extensive input, it is best to schedule a half-day workshop.

Benefits

- An accessible exercise that requires little prior knowledge of the SDGs.
- Possibility of organising work meetings across services.

Points of attention

- Make sure it is clear what the Pillar is about. Therefore, at least use the brief overview of the 17 SDGs (p. 99), so you can see at a glance that a broad title such as ‘SDG 11: sustainable cities and communities’ covers topics such as housing, mobility, green space and heritage management.
- Always take your own operations (e.g. staffing and purchasing policy, municipal buildings) and the services you provide into account. Be aware that many actions can also have a global impact, e.g. through global citizenship, limiting CO₂ emissions, or through social and ecological criteria in purchasing.
- Make the anchoring of all pillars in your municipality immediately concrete and tangible for the participants: Have each workshop take place at a location that has something to do with the content of the Pillar in question. For example, a People workshop in the social grocery store.

Start-stop-continue

A new MAPP provides the opportunity to thoroughly consider current and future policy. What do we want to continue? What actions do we stop in order to make room for new activities?

Below we provide a possible template for the start-stop-continue exercise with fictitious examples. Of course, you can also include other columns such as the SDG subtargets or links to MAPP policy objectives. If feasible, immediately add a 'follow-up' column: what tools and information sources are available to follow up the action (e.g. number of participants, surveys, census)?

The MAPP core group prepares the template, after which the employees fill in the columns start, stop, continue, explanation and link with other SDGs. Alternatively, the employees can first do the stop-stop-continue exercise, after or during a brainstorming workshop, for example with the SDG circle exercise, and the MAPP core group can then organise the information in the template.

Ideally, you should do the exercise across services. This encourages discussion, critical questions and cross-fertilisation. If a physical round-table meeting is too time-consuming, provide your employees with the template and ask them to fill it in.

| Pijler | SDG | Vaststelling OA | Bestuurskkoord | Start | Stop | Continue | duiding | Link met andere SDGs |
|--------|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------|----------------------|
| people | 1. Geen armoede | Het OCMW bereikt momenteel 50 gezinnen in armoede niet | We maken komaf met armoede | <i>Automatische toekenning van rechten en sociale voordelen</i> | | | | SDG 10, 16 |
| | 2. Geen honger | Ondervoeding bij ouderen neemt toe | | <i>Aan huis bedeling van voedselpakket ten bij ouderen</i> | | <i>Sociale kruidenier</i> | | SDG 1, 3, 10 |
| | 3. Goede gezondheid en welzijn | Het aantal verkeersongevallen is de voorbije jaren gestegen | Veilige gemeente | | | <i>We handhaven het STOP-principe</i> | | SDG 11 |
| | 4. Kwaliteitsonderwijs | De schooluitval is gedaald tot 1% | | | <i>Actieplan tegen schooluitval</i> | | | SDG 10 |
| | 5. Gendergelijkheid | Slechts 1 op 4 leidinggevende functies in de gemeente wordt bekleed door een vrouw | Gelijke kansen voor iedereen | <i>Vrouwen worden gestimuleerd om door te groeien</i> | | | | SDG 8, 10 |

Proposed template for determining actions via start-stop-continue method

Complexity and time investment

A start-step-continue exercise is not complicated, but you do need time to think it through properly. The exercise leads to choices, and it is best not to take these lightly.

Benefits

The exercise allows you to think critically about what you are doing. It also ensures that you do not create extra work. If you want to plan new activities, you also have to stop other things. That way, the workload remains manageable.

Points of attention

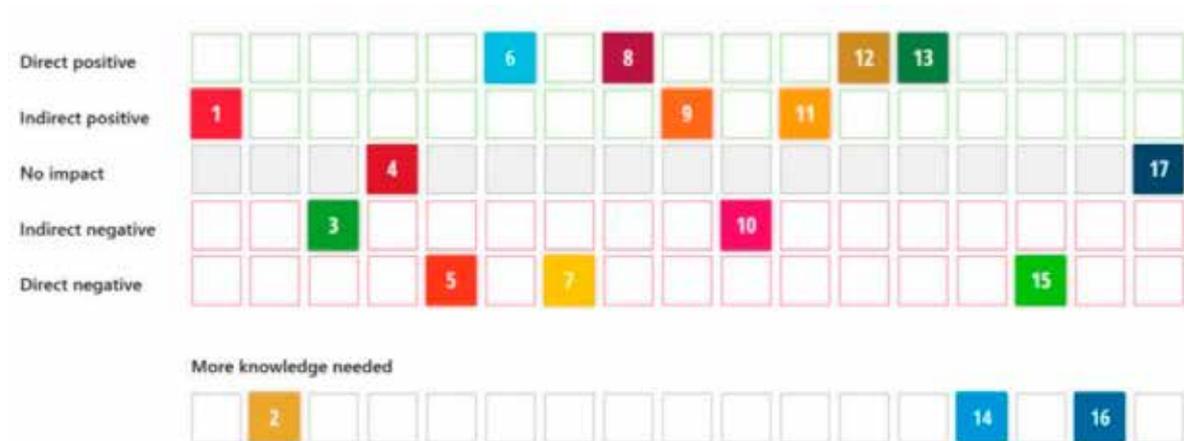
Make sure it is clear what the SDGs are about. Therefore, at least use the brief overview of the 17 SDGs (p. 99), or add some explanation about the Pillars and SDGs in the template itself.

SDG Impact Assessment Tool

The Gothenburg Centre for Sustainable Development, together with two universities and SDSN Northern Europe, developed the online [SDG Impact Assessment Tool](#) (available in English). You can use the tool when developing a specific project. You will be working at the level of the 17 SDGs and, like Sustenuto's materiality analysis (p. 78) you should distinguish between the possible impacts: direct, indirect or no impact. This tool makes further distinctions, in which you must also consider whether the impact is positive or negative. There are 5 steps in total:

1. Bring together various experts (across services)
2. Define the subject
3. Sort SDGs according to relevance
4. Determine impact
5. Develop strategy based on impact analysis

Example:



Complexity and time investment

You will be looking at all the SDGs, different degrees of impact as well as positive and negative impact. That makes it a valuable exercise, but increases the complexity and time investment. Therefore, involve people with knowledge about the SDGs or make sure that the SDGs are known before you start the exercise. Expect to invest half a day to a full day of your time.

Benefits

- The tool considers potential negative impacts.
- You conduct a comprehensive sustainability check on a specific project, involving various employees.

Points of attention

The tool is only available in English.

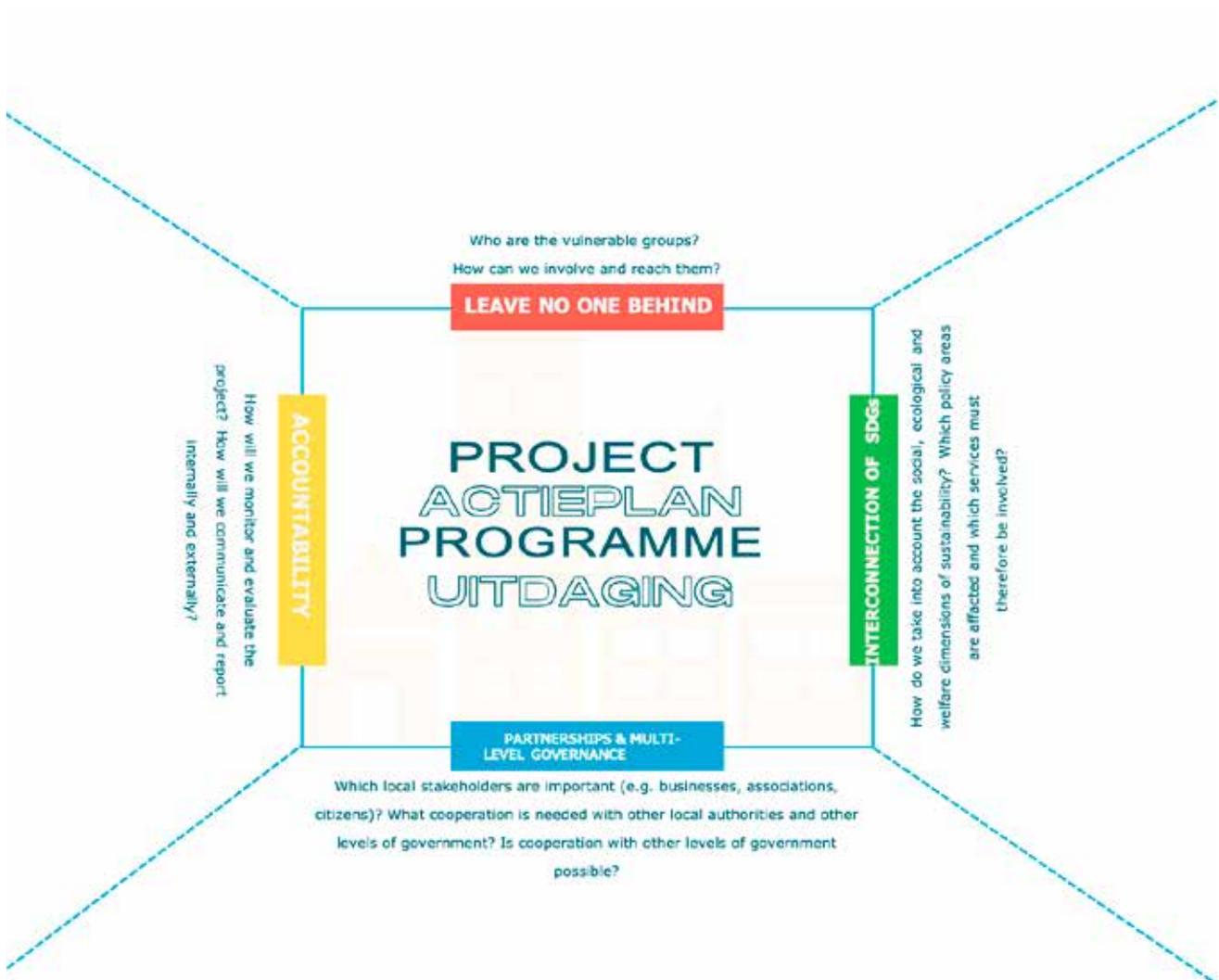
Basic principles of the 2030 Agenda

The 2030 Agenda not only consists of 5 Pillars and 17 SDGs, but also encompasses a number of important basic principles. Test your draft MAPP or a number of specific projects against these principles. Are your activities sustainable?

You can reflect on this at core group level. Or for a project, bring together a number of employees and use the template below.

Principles:

- Leave No One Behind (LNOB): we must pay attention to the most vulnerable groups in society. Who these vulnerable groups are can differ from one project to the next. Check out the [VVSG's visual on an LNOB approach to projects](#) to get an idea of what concrete questions you can ask in this step.
- Interconnection of SDGs: social, ecological and economic sustainability must be in balance.
- Partnerships: we cannot do it alone, we must work together to achieve sustainable development. These partnerships can be local, regional, national or global.
- Accountability: we must monitor policy (more data-driven policy) and make adjustments where necessary to work more sustainably.



If you are using the tool to draw up your new policy plan, it is useful to add another question about experience: what do we learn from the context analysis/what information is included in the context analysis; what do we learn from previous planning and evaluation and what should we therefore take into account?



- Link the various principles of this exercise to existing checks. For example, the SDG circle exercise or SDG test for 'interconnection of SDGs', an inclusion test for 'leave no one behind' or a stakeholder analysis for 'partnerships'.

Complexity and time investment

Allow at least half a day to do the exercise thoroughly.

Benefits

- No prior knowledge of SDGs required.
- A good tool to help basic principles gain acceptance in the organisation and to find a balance in the social, ecological and prosperity dimensions of sustainability.
- More timeless than explicit SDG exercises

Points of attention

- The SDGs themselves are not explicitly mentioned.
- You need a certain level of knowledge of the action plan or project under discussion.
- For a good result, you often need a number of additional methods. Stakeholder mapping for partnerships, for example. Or an inclusion checklist for Leave No One Behind.

Note: The exercise is originally from the [UCLG learning module on planning](#). The starting point is the redesign of a square. A brief description is given of the square in its current state (heavy traffic around the square, lots of litter, limited infrastructure such as benches or lighting).

Based on SDG principles, consider how you could redesign the square.

SDG test

Together with a working group of around 15 Flemish local authorities, the VVSG developed the SDG test in 2022 to assess local projects against the 2030 Agenda through a self-assessment and to make them more sustainable through improvement actions.

The tool in a nutshell.

- Generates a score for projects that are based on the 17 SDGs and three basic principles of the 2030 Agenda (leave no one behind, interconnectivity, multi-stakeholder partnerships).
- Maps both positive and negative impact.
- Offers concrete suggestions for improvement, allowing you to make your actions and projects more sustainable.
- Generates a visual result that can be incorporated into project files and documents for the city council and board.

Be sure to read the guide on the first tab before you start.

| SDG check | | | | | |
|--|---|---|----------------|---|------|
| Using evaluative statements, the tool helps you gain insight into the extent to which your project is SDG proof. You only need to fill in the light green boxes yourself, the other columns contain information to help you do this. To get a correct score, it is important that you answer all the statements, even if they do not apply to the project. | | | | | |
|  | Ensure equal access to high-quality education and promote lifelong learning for all | The project promotes equal access to childcare or education, regardless of gender, origin, religion, disability or socio-economic background. | Agree | 4 | 3,00 |
| | | The project increases pupils' chances of success in education. | Not applicable | 3 | |
| | | The project strengthens the skills of young people or adults that they need in the labour market. | Not agree | 2 | |
| | | The project increases knowledge about sustainable development or contributes to global citizenship, e.g. among pupils, associations, residents, municipal staff, etc. | Not applicable | 3 | |

Complexity and time investment

The combination of self-assessment according to positive and negative impact and discussion about suggestions for improvement does require a fair amount of concentration and time. To save time, the project leader can make an estimate in advance of the statements that do not apply to the project and fill these in.

Benefits

- Integral sustainability test with focus on key projects.
- Enables you to assess projects from the same framework
- Consider both positive and negative impacts.
- Based on SDG subtargets, which allows for more depth than if you only look at the level of the general objective.
- Looks not only at the 17 SDGs, but also at the basic principles of the 2030 Agenda.
- Visual output.

Points of attention

- It is a self-assessment, so be sufficiently critical as well.
- It is best to have prior knowledge of the SDGs.



- Do the SDG test with the project team. Looking for extra input and new ideas? Do the SDG circle exercise with a number of colleagues from different services for the project (p. 84).

Objectives and action sheet

Integrate the SDGs into fact sheets that you present to the councillors and employees. This is how you work on knowledge of and support for the SDGs, but also how you gather SDG information for the multi-annual policy plan in an accessible way.

- Incorporate the SDGs into an **inspiration sheet for the council**. In Ostend and Ghent, for example, the board of aldermen was given an inspiration sheet for each theme from the coalition agreement for the 2020-25 multi-annual policy plan. In addition to elements from the coalition agreement and the previous MAPP, the sheets, also include the relevant SDGs and SDG subtargets. As such, the SDGs served as inspiration for strategic objectives ([see p. 35](#)).
- **Have employees reflect on SDGs using the input sheets.**
 - › Integrate a question about the SDGs: “Which SDGs does the campaign contribute to?” “What positive contribution does the campaign make to those SDGs? Are there potential negative effects on other SDGs?”
 - › You can limit yourself to the priority SDGs: how do the proposed actions contribute to the priority SDGs? Are there any possible negative effects besides the positive ones?
 - › Does the proposed action contribute to the basic principles of the 2030 Agenda? If so, how?
 - Attention to vulnerable groups
 - An eye for the social, ecological and prosperity dimensions of sustainability
 - Collaboration with other services and external partners (citizens, associations, other local authorities, etc.)(Note: these three basic principles are the most relevant in the context of actions)
 - › In the sheets, do you also ask for an indicator to be formulated for the objective? Then refer to the [VVSG SDG indicator set](#) as a possible source of inspiration.

Complexity and time investment

If you are already working with input sheets, it only requires a little extra effort from employees to make the link with the SDGs.

Benefits

- You integrate the SDGs into an exercise you were going to do anyway.
- The employees are introduced to the SDGs. You can build on this first introduction in the future.

Points of attention

Do you also want to incorporate the connection with the SDGs in the multi-annual policy plan, underlying activity sheets or reports? Then check the links that the employees create. Are they choosing the most relevant SDGs and making the right connections?

Stakeholder mapping

Internal stakeholder map score 0-1-3-9

Who do you need to work on the various SDGs? You can have the services do the exercise themselves. Each service gives a score of 0-1-3-9 for each SDG, which reflects the extent to which their service contributes to that SDG. 0 means that the service does not contribute to an SDG, 9 means that the service contributes very strongly to an SDG. Note: Provide those involved with at least the overview of the 17 SDGs (p. 99) in advance so that they know what each objective is about.

Benefits:

- The services themselves make the link between their work and the SDGs. They learn more about the SDGs and reflect on their contribution and impact.
- The exercise supports inter-service workshops. For example, you involve in a Planet workshop at least those services that gave a score of 3 or 9 for SDGs 6, 12, 13, 14 and 15.
- For each SDG or Pillar, you can designate one or more leaders to double-check the multi-annual policy plan.
- You can bring people together around certain themes (e.g. all services that have given a score of 9 or 3 for SDG 1 'poverty') or appoint leaders for those SDGs.

| Service | SDG 1 | SDG 2 | SDG 3 | SDG 4 | SDG 5 | SDG 6 | SDG 7 | etc. |
|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| Service X | 9 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 | etc. |

Stakeholder matrix influence and importance

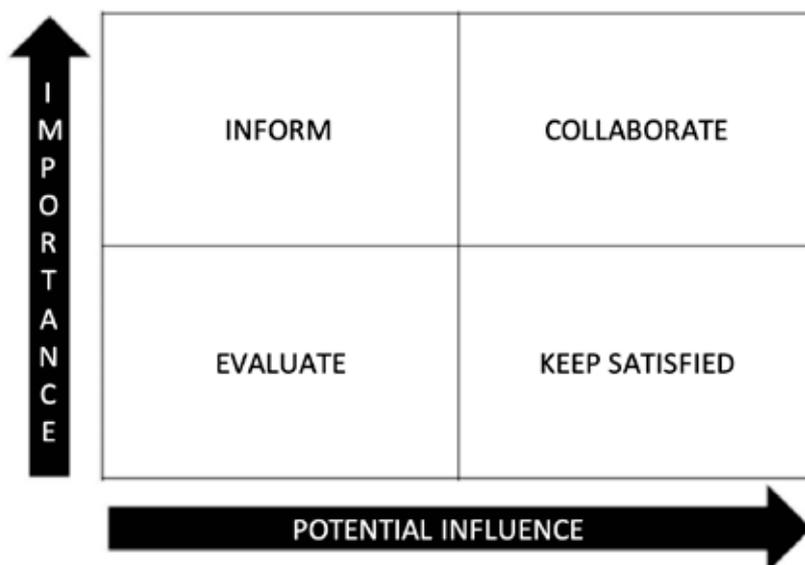
Make an overview of the stakeholders that are relevant to your SDG trajectory, both internal and external.

Then place those stakeholders in the matrix according to influence and importance.

Stakeholders who have a lot of influence and a major interest in your sustainability policy are key figures. You can then further divide the stakeholders by Pillar and/or by SDG. Do this at least for the key figures.

Or create an overview of relevant stakeholders for each (priority) SDG or Pillar and then place them in the matrix.

Talk to the key figures: what do they expect from the local authority and what are their needs? What do they think the most important sustainability topics will be in the coming years? Do they consider the balance between social, ecological and economic sustainability in their own operations and policies?



Stakeholder mapping and their input are useful for various phases in the development of your multi-annual policy plan: to identify priority SDGs; to shape objectives; or to involve stakeholders in the development of action plans and actions.

Voka uses the influence/interests matrix for the [Voka stakeholder management workshop](#), in which the 5 Pillars and 17 SDGs are given a clear place. You can consult their complete guide online for free.

Appendices

Overview of the 17 SDGs

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <p>End poverty everywhere and in all its forms: Today, many people in developing countries survive on less than 1.25 dollars a day. However, poverty also remains a pressing problem in Belgium. We must halve poverty at national level by 2030. The ultimate goal is to eradicate poverty everywhere and in all its forms.</p> |
|  | <p>End hunger, ensure food safety and security and promote sustainable agriculture: Everyone has access to affordable food. New agricultural techniques will grow healthy, high-quality food in a sustainable manner. This way, every person has food security.</p> |
|  | <p>Good health and well-being for all ages: Child and maternal mortality need to be reduced. The same goes for the use of alcohol and drugs. Information about contagious diseases is necessary to prevent their spread. The UN wants to draw more attention to mental illness and is calling for fewer road deaths.</p> |
|  | <p>Inclusive, egalitarian, high-quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all: Boys and girls are free to attend primary and secondary school. They also get the chance to continue their studies. Technical, vocational or university education must be freely accessible, regardless of gender or origin. The learning environment must be safe and inclusive. In addition, this objective is also about high-quality pre-school care and development and about educating pupils to become global citizens.</p> |
|  | <p>Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls: We must put an end to gender inequality: the glass ceiling, the wage gap and gender-based violence. Women, just like men, have the right to good health and knowledge about sexuality. There is a need for policy and legislation that focus on gender equality.</p> |
|  | <p>Access to water and sanitation for everyone and sustainable water use: Everyone has the right to safe drinking water and sanitary facilities. Water shortages must be addressed. In addition, we must also work on sustainable water management and improved water quality. This can be done by reducing pollution, stopping the dumping of chemicals and properly treating waste water.</p> |
|  | <p>Affordable and sustainable energy: Everyone should have access to affordable, reliable and sustainable energy. We must fight energy poverty and produce and use our energy more efficiently. In addition, renewable energy sources are becoming increasingly important.</p> |
|  | <p>Long-term, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full employment and decent work for all: The UN wants to eradicate slavery, forced labour and child labour. Youth unemployment must be addressed. Entrepreneurship must be supported and we must strive for economic growth, but without damaging the environment.</p> |
|  | <p>Resilient/robust infrastructure, inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and innovation: A strong economy and social welfare rely on a solid sustainable infrastructure. Innovative industry and internet for everyone are also essential.</p> |
|  | <p>Reduction of inequality within and between countries: This includes inequality based on income, age, gender and disability. Discriminatory legislation and policy are not acceptable. Social protection is important. Developing countries must also be given more say in the decision-making of international financial and economic institutions.</p> |
|  | <p>Inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and communities: This has to do with adequate and affordable housing, sustainable mobility and the environmental impact of cities and municipalities. Safe and green public spaces, disaster relief, sustainable spatial planning and heritage management are also part of SDG 11.</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <p>Ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns: Our consumer society produces a lot of waste. The sustainable management and efficient use of raw materials are a must. In addition, we must focus on less polluting and waste-reducing production, a sustainable purchasing policy and sustainable tourism. Sustainable consumption can also be achieved by combating food waste and by recycling and reusing waste products.</p> |
|  | <p>Taking urgent measures to fight climate change and its consequences: Climate change affects every country on every continent. That is why policymakers must take measures, for example to reduce CO₂ emissions, and citizens must become aware of ways to adapt to the changing climate. The UN wants to make vulnerable nations more resilient to natural disasters.</p> |
|  | <p>Protection and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development: Coastal ecosystems and those in seas and oceans must be protected. Overfishing, the pollution of marine ecosystems and illegal fishing must be combated.</p> |
|  | <p>Protection, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems: Land-based ecosystems such as forests, swamps and mountain ranges must be protected. Preserving biodiversity is a priority. We must combat the poaching and smuggling of protected species. Affected nature reserves will be restored.</p> |
|  | <p>Peace, security and legal certainty are essential to promote sustainable development: This is about fighting crime, corruption and violence, including violence against children, but also about promoting a strong justice system in which fundamental freedoms are protected. Furthermore, effective and transparent institutions that focus on citizen participation and inclusive decision-making are indispensable.</p> |
|  | <p>Strengthening the means of implementation and revitalising the global partnership for sustainable development: The UN expects more cooperation: between businesses, governments, citizens and organisations, but also between all the players themselves. Technology, knowledge sharing, trade, finance and data are very important</p> |

The 17 objectives are divided according to the **five pillars or five Ps of sustainable development**. The pillars are closely connected to each other. Focusing on one pillar also means consistently taking the others into account. Together they encompass a broad vision of sustainable development: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership.



Support for SDGs

Tips and tools to strengthen internal and external support for the SDGs. You can use the tips in every phase of your local policy cycle. You will also find them throughout this inspiration guide.

Internal support for the SDGs

- The **SDG circle exercise** is a tried-and-tested method for familiarising colleagues with the SDGs. Participants interactively discuss how their own city or municipality (or a specific service or project) already contributes to the SDGs and how it can contribute even more. Download the [game boards for the SDG circle exercise](#). You can ask the VVSG to supervise the exercise on site. The videos about the SDG process in [Deinze](#) and [Harelbeke](#) show the impact the exercise can have.



- Provide a general, possibly playful, **introduction to the SDGs** before you start with strategic policy exercises. Briefly explain what the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development entails, how you intend to give the Agenda a place in policy development and why that is important. For basic information, you can use the [VVSG's awareness-raising material](#). More fun activities and materials can be found in the publication [50 examples of practical awareness raising](#). Consider a customised introductory exercise. For example, have the participants choose three SDGs and discuss in groups how the municipality can contribute to these SDGs.
- **Highlight what you are already doing.** For example, have services link their actions from the multi-annual policy plan to the SDGs, in order to identify strengths and gaps. Or carry out internal stakeholder mapping (p. 96), in which services have to give themselves a score based on their direct impact on each SDG. This way, employees can make the link between their work and the SDGs, but you can also bring people together around certain themes (for example, all services that give themselves a high score for the same SDG) or appoint leaders for the SDGs.

- **Make the SDGs concrete.** What do broad objectives such as ‘no poverty’ (SDG 1) or ‘sustainable consumption and production’ (SDG 12) actually mean for a local authority? In the publication Local Support for Global Challenges, we provide a brief translation of each SDG into concrete responsibilities at local level and compile a series of actions and initiatives for each SDG that you can undertake as a city or municipal council (divided into quick wins and big wins). On our website you will also find inspiration sheets for each policy area. What actions or projects can you undertake to contribute to the SDGs in your leisure policy, waste management or childcare initiatives, for example? Playful tips for personal actions (for example on the SDG bingo cards or SDG beer mats) can also make the SDGs more tangible.
- **Incorporate the SDGs into your own policy tools**, such as workshops to define objectives and actions for the MAPP, action sheets in the drafting or implementation of the multi-annual policy plan, and reporting to the board of mayor and aldermen and the municipal council. For example, ask to indicate in action sheets which SDGs the proposal has a positive (or negative) impact on. Or prepare SDG sheets to fuel the discussion during workshops, in which you collect notable SDG figures and trends for your municipality for each theme.
- Appoint **internal SDG ambassadors**, like the municipalities of Brasschaat, Mechelen, Herne, Lubbeek and Rheden (NL). The ambassadors draw attention to ‘their’ SDG internally, in a fun way if they wish, and ensure that the SDGs receive sufficient attention in communications, policy and events.

External support for the SDGs

- It is also important to give the ‘comprehensive’ 2030 Agenda a more **concrete face** to citizens. Appoint local SDG ambassadors or SDG heroes, for example as part of the VVSG’s annual Sustainable Municipality Week campaign. Challenge schools or associations to SDG challenges, have local art academies design an SDG exhibition or award a prize to the local SDG entrepreneur of the year. More ideas can be found in the publication 50 examples of practical awareness raising or in the video Creating support for the SDGs.



- Integrate the SDGs into your **existing collaborations** with stakeholders and citizens. Ask advisory councils and citizens' panels to place links in their recommendations and memoranda. Invite an inspiring speaker to explain the 2030 Agenda during citizen participation initiatives. Ask participants in your climate round table to base their thinking on the 5 Pillars of sustainable development. Do the SDG circle exercise with existing consultative bodies such as neighbourhood ambassadors, community workers or energy coaches.
- Make the **SDGs 'unavoidable'**. Include sustainability criteria in all your subsidy schemes and partnership agreements, and assess proposals – for example in the context of participatory budgets – based on their contribution to the SDGs or the 5 Pillars of sustainable development.
- **Link your external communications to the SDGs**. For example, you could highlight an SDG every month on your social media, list local actions for each SDG in the municipal newsletter or publish important figures and results on a public website, linked to the pillars of sustainable development (such as Harelbeke in Figures).



Infographic from the Pelt information sheet: examples of local policy actions by SDG

- Unite citizens and partners in an inspiring **network** to work together on the SDGs. This could be an online platform where ideas are exchanged, but it could also be a broad movement that organises fun activities and helps think about sustainable local policy, such as the SDG Alliance in Bristol (UK) or the SDG Houses in the Netherlands.



- Set up an **SDG working group** with employees from various services (e.g. strategic unit, global policy, environment, communication, etc.) to help shape the SDG story in the municipality. You can start with a small working group of enthusiasts, which you can later expand with employees from multiple services.

Overview of Flemish SDG data sources

Table from the [VVSG inspiration guide for SDGs in the context analysis](#) (pp. 11-12).

| Description | Benefits | Points of attention |
|---|--|---|
| SDG monitor for Flemish cities and municipalities | | |
| <p>Online tool Developed by Idea Consult and the UNU-CRIS training institute. > 200 indicators available for all Flemish municipalities. Score per indicator, SDG and sub-theme in comparison with other Flemish municipalities; by analogy with the United Nations methodology. At individual indicator level, you can also see real values.</p> <p>You can read more about how to interpret the monitor on pages 13 to 14 of the inspiration guide for SDGs in the context analysis.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lot of information on socially relevant topics in one place. You have the perfect starting point for SDG monitoring. • Also take into account context factors of municipalities such as income and size. • You can view developments for each indicator and SDG for 2010-2023. • Also the score at SDG and sub-theme level, and not just the image for each individual indicator. • All graphics available. • You can compare with the Flemish average, Belfius clusters, other municipalities and provinces. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on outcome indicators that paint a picture of the municipality, not an evaluation of local policy. They offer valuable insights into the municipal territory, but are ideally supplemented with your own data. • Each indicator linked to 1 SDG so that it would not be counted twice when calculating the scores. In reality, an indicator often has links to multiple SDGs. See also VVSG SDG indicator set. |
| SDG report in Provinces in Figures | | |
| <p>Report per municipality based on 84 indicators in Provinces in Figures. Initially based on SDG monitor selection.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection with selection of indicators for SDG Monitor. • The data is constantly updated, so you always see the most recent information. • Contains graphics and maps for each indicator. There is also a summary graphic of all indicators for each SDG that shows how your municipality compares with the Flemish region or province (whether the value is (much) higher, (much) lower or average). • You also get an explanation of the figures. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicators describe the context, but are not an evaluation of the policy pursued. It is therefore always best to supplement this with indicators that are relevant to your municipality. • Each indicator is assigned to 1 SDG. |
| VVSG SDG indicator set | | |
| <p>Excel list box with overview of relevant indicators per SDG sub-objective. Combination of centrally available information (e.g. Gemeente-Stadsmonitor and Provinces in Figures) and suggested indicators for which data is collected locally.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combination of suggestions at the level of municipal context and local policy. • Indicator can be linked to multiple SDGs. • For each indicator, it is indicated whether it is included in the SDG monitor for municipalities and PinF SDG report. Also indicated whether there is a link with the SDG indicators and objectives of the federal and Flemish governments. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive overview of relevant indicators, so no pre-selection. • No option to create visuals. |

| Description | Benefits | Points of attention |
|---|--|--|
| SDG-wijzer | | |
| <p>Online dashboard developed by Zwevegem, Harelbeke, Kurne and Deerlijk but with information for all Flemish municipalities. > 110 indicators mainly from Provinces in Figures and Gemeente-Stadsmonitor.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pre-selection of indicators has already been made. This offers the perfect starting point for SDG monitoring. • You can compare with other municipalities, your province, the Flemish Region and reference region. • AI graphics available. • System keeps itself up to date and so you always see the most recent information. • Focus on indicators that you as a local authority can influence. • You can also search by theme, such as culture and leisure, government, or nature and climate. This helps people who are less familiar with the SDGs get started. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It involves a selection of indicators. It is therefore always best to supplement this with indicators that are relevant to your municipality. • Each indicator is assigned to 1 SDG. This remains a subjective choice of the municipalities that developed the SDG-wijzer. In reality, an indicator often has links to multiple SDGs. |
| SDG filter in Powermonitor | | |
| <p>Analysis tool in Power BI for Gemeente-Stadsmonitor, developed by the city of Halle in collaboration with other municipalities. In the explorer, you can filter on each SDG. You will then receive all the indicators relevant to that SDG. You can fully customise graphics according to your own choices, e.g. selection of indicators, comparison with respect to a cluster of other municipalities or the province, house style. You can also see correlations between indicators.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can see which developments are striking for your municipality, such as a remarkably high or low value compared with the Flemish average or a striking development of an indicator for your municipality alone. This can help in making choices in the (SDG) indicators. • You can create graphics according to theme from the Gemeente-Stadsmonitor to which associated SDG icons are linked, but also according to the 5 Pillars or the 17 SDGs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analytical tool developed for 2024-2025 context analysis. Will not be updated in subsequent years with more recent information. • Contains only indicators from the Gemeente-Stadsmonitor. • Knowledge of Power BI required. |

There are different types of indicators.

- Context indicators describe the context in which a local authority operates. These are situations and developments that are important to monitor, but over which the local authority has only limited control. Consider poverty statistics, employment in the municipality, the composition of the population, etc. You use this information for the context analysis, among other things.
- Input indicators provide information about the people and resources that are utilised to accomplish a certain objective or action.
- Process indicators provide information about the organisation or the approach of an action or measure. Examples of this are waiting times at the reception desk or the involvement of citizens in an action.
- Effect indicators measure the impact (of a strategic objective), the result (of an operational objective or action plan) or the output of an action.

Develop a balanced indicator set

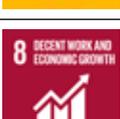
- **Formulate indicators at the level of policy objectives, action plans and actions.** This allows you to create a combination of indicators that provide insight into the local context and indicators that relate to your own policy. The higher the level, the more you monitor effects and the context.
Example regarding the pursuit of a climate-friendly municipality:
 - › Example of indicator for objective: CO₂ emissions by sector in the municipality
 - › Example of indicator for action plan: CO₂ emissions from the municipal vehicle fleet and/or municipal buildings
 - › Example of indicator for action: Number of trees planted
- **Combine quantitative and qualitative information.** Qualitative information provides insight into the subjective experience of citizens, for example, see the citizen survey in the Gemeente-Stadsmonitor.
- Set as many concrete **targets** as possible. Ideally, you monitor more than just the evolution of an indicator. You also set concrete targets, such as an X% reduction in CO₂ by 2030 or planting X number of additional trees. This is certainly the case for indicators that you as a local authority have a direct impact on. Be realistic in determining your target values, but also show sufficient ambition.
- If possible, unravel the data you collect at a sufficient **level of detail** (break it down by target groups, neighbourhoods, etc.).

SDG reporting codes

For ease of use, one reporting code per SDG has been chosen: SDG01, SDG02, ... to SDG17. So we do not work at the level of the 169 subtargets.

There is one exception, namely for SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities). SDG 11 is directly related to the core tasks of a local authority and covers a wide range of topics. A single reporting code for SDG 11 would therefore be too all-encompassing and consequently meaningless. SDG 11 is divided into 8 sub-codes (from SDG1101 to SDG1108). If you check one of the sub-codes, please also check the general code SDG11. Depending on the software you are working with, this happens automatically or you have to do it manually. By also checking the general code SDG11, you can generate an overall report SDG 11.

This table provides an indication of the subjects/themes to which an SDG reporting code relates.

| Sustainable development goal / SDG | PMC reporting code | Description |
|---|--------------------|---|
|  | SDG01 | Combating poverty in all its dimensions, e.g. access to basic services, access to economic resources, social protection systems, housing quality |
|  | SDG02 | Food safety and security, malnutrition, sustainable agriculture, short supply chain |
|  | SDG03 | Physical and mental health; alcohol and drug use; access to high-quality and affordable healthcare; traffic safety; health risks due to air, water and soil pollution |
|  | SDG04 | Access to high-quality and affordable primary, secondary and higher education; delayed school entry and dropping out of school; lifelong learning; pre-school care (including childcare); global citizenship |
|  | SDG05 | Gender equality; gender violence; unpaid care and home work; political and economic inclusion of women |
|  | SDG06 | Access to drinkable water and sanitary facilities; sustainable water management; water quality |
|  | SDG07 | Energy poverty; sustainable and renewable energy; increasing energy efficiency |
|  | SDG08 | Economic diversification and innovation; inclusive employment (including gender, origin, people with disabilities); youth unemployment; decent work; entrepreneurship; climate-friendly economic development (use of raw materials); tourism; fair trade; clean clothes |

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|  | SDG09 | Infrastructure; sustainable industrialisation (environmental impact); innovative industry; access to the internet |
|  | SDG10 | Combating inequality and increasing inclusion (including age, income, gender, origin, people with disabilities); integration; social cohesion; international inequality |
|  | SDG11 | Inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and communities |
| | SDG1101 | Sustainable, safe and affordable housing |
| | SDG1102 | Inclusive and sustainable mobility |
| | SDG1103 | Inclusive and sustainable municipal development and planning, with attention to participation |
| | SDG1104 | Heritage |
| | SDG1105 | Tackling climate-related disasters |
| | SDG1106 | Environmental impact of municipalities, including air quality and waste management |
| | SDG1107 | Design of public space with attention to safety, green space, accessibility and vulnerable groups |
|  | SDG12 | Raw materials management; sustainable production patterns (e.g. less polluting and less wasteful production), also encouraging companies to do the same; food waste and food surpluses; limiting waste production through prevention, recycling and reuse; sustainable purchasing policy and sustainable public procurement; sustainable consumption, including by citizens and a combination of local food and fair trade |
|  | SDG13 | Measures and policy plans to combat climate change and its consequences, such as the reduction of CO ₂ emissions; mayors' covenant; collaboration with citizens on climate action |
|  | SDG14 | Protecting coastal and marine ecosystems; sustainable fishing; preventing marine pollution |
|  | SDG15 | Land ecosystems such as forests and swamps; biodiversity; trade in protected plant and/or animal species |
|  | SDG16 | Security; corruption; the constitutional state; transparent and efficient service provision; citizen participation and representative decision-making; diversity in government |
|  | SDG17 | Focus on international partnerships and international cooperation; partnerships around sustainable development/SDGs (within and between municipalities); promoting cross-disciplinary work around sustainable development |

Alderman powers¹⁵ linked to the SDGs

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| General management and internal organisation | SDG 16: peace, justice and strong public services (subtargets 16.6, 16.7 and 16.10) SDG 17: partnership for sustainable development (subtargets 17.14, 17.17 and 17.19) SDG 5: gender equality (sub-objective 5.5) |
| Finance | SDG 16: peace, justice and strong public services (subtargets 16.6 and 16.7) SDG 12: responsible consumption and production (subtargets 12.7 and 12.c) SDG 17: partnership for sustainable development (subtargets 17.1 and 17.3) |
| Public works and mobility | SDG 11: sustainable cities and communities (subtargets 11.2, 11.3 and 11.6) SDG 9: industry, innovation and infrastructure (subtargets 9.1 and 9.4) SDG 13: climate action (subtargets 13.1 and 13.2) |
| Spatial planning | SDG 11: sustainable cities and communities (subtargets 11.3, 11.4, 11.6, 11.7 and 11.a) SDG 15: life on land (subtargets 15.1, 15.3 and 15.5) SDG 13: climate action (subtargets 13.1 and 13.2) |
| Housing | SDG 11: sustainable cities and communities (subtargets 11.1 and 11.3) SDG 1: no poverty (subtarget 1.4) SDG 7: affordable and clean energy (subtargets 7.1 and 7.3) |
| Environment and climate | SDG 13: climate action (subtargets 13.1, 13.2 and 13.3) SDG 11: sustainable cities and communities (subtargets 11.6 and 11.7) SDG 12: responsible consumption and production (subtargets 12.2 and 12.5) SDG 6: clean water and sanitation (subtargets 6.3 and 6.6) SDG 15: life on land (subtargets 15.1, 15.3 and 15.5) SDG 7: affordable and clean energy (subtarget 7.2) SDG 2: zero hunger (subtarget 2.4 on sustainable food production) |

¹⁵ In practice, the term often used is 'individual alderman powers', but legally these are not effective powers because an alderman cannot take decisions on his or her own. This concerns internal working agreements/distribution of tasks within the board, in which it is agreed who will succeed the board in which areas, prepare the positions, communicate, etc. The listing and distribution of these areas varies greatly from one municipality to another, and the above list is therefore not exhaustive.

¹⁶ For the subtargets for each SDG, check the [official publication of the 2030 Agenda](#).

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| Social affairs and welfare | <p>SDG 1: no poverty (subtargets 1.1, 1.2 and 1.4)</p> <p>SDG 2: zero hunger (subtarget 2.1)</p> <p>SDG 3: good health and well-being (subtargets 3.4, 3.5 and 3.8)</p> <p>SDG 5: gender equality (subtargets 5.1 and 5.5)</p> <p>SDG 10: reduced inequalities (subtargets 10.2 and 10.3)</p> |
| Youth and sport | <p>SDG 3: good health and well-being (subtargets 3.4, 3.5 and 3.9)</p> <p>SDG 4: quality education (subtargets 4.1, 4.5 and 4.7)</p> <p>SDG 8: decent work and economic growth (subtarget 8.6)</p> <p>SDG 10: reduced inequalities (subtarget 10.2)</p> <p>SDG 11: sustainable cities and communities (subtarget 11.7)</p> |
| Culture and heritage | <p>SDG 11: sustainable cities and communities (subtargets 11.4 and 11.7)</p> <p>SDG 4: quality education (subtargets 4.7 and 4.a)</p> <p>SDG 8: decent work and economic growth (subtarget 8.9)</p> <p>SDG 10: reduced inequalities (subtarget 10.2)</p> |
| Education and childcare | <p>SDG 4: quality education (all subtargets)</p> <p>SDG 5: gender equality (subtargets SDG 5.1, 5.4 and 5.5)</p> <p>SDG 8: decent work and economic growth (subtarget 8.6)</p> <p>SDG 1: no poverty (subtarget 1.4)</p> |
| Economy and employment | <p>SDG 8: decent work and economic growth (all subtargets)</p> <p>SDG 9: industry, innovation and infrastructure (subtargets 9.2, 9.3, 9.4 and 9.5)</p> <p>SDG 12: responsible consumption and production (subtargets 12.6 and 12.b)</p> <p>SDG 17: partnership for sustainable development (subtarget 17.17)</p> |

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| Civil affairs, communication and participation | SDG 16: peace, justice and strong public services (subtargets 16.6, 16.7 and 16.10) SDG 10: reduced inequalities (subtargets 10.2 and 10.3) SDG 5: gender equality (subtarget 5.5) SDG 11: sustainable cities and communities (subtarget 11.3) SDG 3: good health and well-being (subtarget 3.4) |
| Safety and emergency planning | SDG 11: sustainable cities and communities (subtargets 11.5, 11.7, 11.b) SDG 16: peace, justice and strong public services (subtarget 16.1) SDG 3: good health and well-being (subtargets 3.6 and 3.d) SDG 13: climate action (subtargets 13.1 and 13.3) |
| International cooperation, global policy and sustainable development | SDG 17: partnership for sustainable development (subtargets 17.9, 17.16 and 17.17) SDG 11: sustainable cities and communities (subtarget 11.3) SDG 4: quality education (subtarget 4.7) SDG 12: responsible consumption and production (subtarget 12.8) |
| Digitalisation and innovation | SDG 9: industry, innovation and infrastructure (subtargets 9.4 and 9.5) SDG 8: decent work and economic growth (subtarget 8.2) SDG 17: partnership for sustainable development (subtargets 17.6 and 17.8) SDG 1: no poverty (subtarget 1.4) |
| Equal opportunities, diversity and inclusion | SDG 10: reduced inequalities (subtargets 10.2 and 10.3) SDG 5: gender equality (subtargets 5.1 and 5.5) SDG 1: no poverty (subtarget 1.4) SDG 4: quality education (subtargets 4.5 and 4.7) SDG 8: decent work and economic growth (subtargets 8.5 and 8.6) SDG 11: sustainable cities and communities (subtargets 11.3 and 11.7) SDG 16: peace, justice and strong public services (subtargets 16.6, 16.7 and 16.b) |

More info

For more information

www.vvsg.be/sdgs

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About the VVSG

The non-profit organisation Vereniging van Vlaamse Steden en Gemeenten (Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities) is the support centre, the advocate and the movement of local government. All 300 municipalities and public centres for social welfare in Flanders are members, as well as many police districts and intermunicipal partnerships. A centre of trust that provides its members with advice and guidance, customised information, education and training, organises meetings and offers other support services. More than 10,000 politicians and civil servants attend a seminar or training course at the VVSG every year.

VVSG

