



Local Support for Global Challenges

A local translation of the
Sustainable Development Goals



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COVER IMAGE

The city of Kortrijk displays the SDG flag during the Week of the Sustainable Municipality

LAYOUT

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Introduction

If you are reading this, you will likely be looking for ways to base your local policy on sustainable principles. Good news! This publication wants to encourage local authorities to start working with the sustainable development goals (SDGs). We do this using inspiring practical examples, enticing policy actions, and surprising bits of knowledge. Happy reading!

MORE INFORMATION

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STEFAN DEWICKERE

Local authorities: essential for the SDGs

On 25 September 2015, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda with its 17 sustainable development goals. This universal, inclusive, and transformative agenda offers an answer to the most pressing global challenges and must guide the world towards a sustainable future by 2030.

It is a global agenda, but do not be mistaken: as a first line government, local authorities are essential for achieving the SDGs. They are the key to initiating local bottom-up dynamics that drive the transition towards a sustainable world. The active involvement of the local level is necessary to achieve no less than 65% of the 2030 Agenda¹. This important role is embedded in a specific goal for local authorities: SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities. The SDGs also have a lot to offer to local authorities, as they are the ideal framework for preparing your municipality for a sustainable future.

This publication guides you through the 17 SDGs from a local perspective and is a source of inspiration for local authorities (municipalities, public social welfare centres, police zones, and intermunicipal partnerships). The target audience of this publication are mayors, aldermen, council members, the management team, municipal staff, and other local actors (such as advisory boards) that want to adopt a policy

1 Cities Alliance Discussion Paper – N° 3, Sustainable Development Goals and Habitat III: Opportunities for a successful New Urban Agenda, <https://www.citiesalliance.org>

approach for the SDGs. This publication is part of the broad range of publications created by VVSG International on the local implementation of the SDGs.

Why should local authorities focus on the SDGs?

The SDGs offer a unique framework for a high-quality, integrated, inclusive, and ambitious local policy plan. All SDGs have a link with the competences of local authorities and have something to offer to all public officials, who can contribute based on their own field of expertise. At the same time, the SDGs promote transversal cooperation across departments and help move past compartmentalisation, as all SDGs are connected. The framework forms an indivisible whole: if you work on one SDG, you also work on other SDGs.

In addition, the SDGs can enhance the focus, relevance, and visibility of your policy. After all, you make clear that local policy actions do not only address local needs, but are also relevant in the grand scheme of things. You give your policy an international, sustainable dimension and show that you dare to plan for the long-term. The horizon is 2030. Local authorities have two more terms to work on the SDGs. And because the SDGs are an attractive and strong brand, you can conveniently use them to communicate about your policy.

The municipal implementation of the SDGs includes both local and international actions, ranging from policy choices that contribute to global justice and solidarity like sustainable procurement, ethical banking, and encouraging global citizenship to international partner-

ships. This publication contains examples of municipal policy actions with both a local and a global impact. For cities and municipalities with international partnerships (e.g. a city-to-city cooperation, membership of international networks, etc.), [the SDGs are an excellent framework for international activities.](#)

Reading guide

Reasons enough to start working with the SDGs. This publication takes a look at each SDG from the perspective of local authorities. However, it is important to always keep in mind the way the SDGs relate to each other. The actions and practical examples listed for each SDG also contribute to other SDGs. Choosing for the SDGs is choosing for a comprehensive and coherent policy for sustainable development. This is why it is important to approach themes and actions holistically and explore links and cooperation between different municipal departments.

Firstly, we provide a brief description of each SDG. What is it about? What is the role of Flemish local authorities, and what are the most important partners? To what extent are the 'levers' located at other levels of government? We then illustrate the importance of each SDG using two facts and figures².

The United Nations have linked a total of 169 sub-goals or targets to the SDGs, which make the SDGs clearer and more specific. These

2 The sources of the facts and figures are primarily news articles and websites, and they may become outdated at some point or contradicted by other sources.

169 targets constitute quite a package and it is not easy to find your way. This is why we have selected the targets for each SDG we consider relevant to Flemish local authorities. Targets that are only relevant to local authorities in other countries (in the global south) are not listed here³.

To make the SDGs even more tangible, we have listed a series of local actions and initiatives for each SDG. However, these actions and initiatives virtually always contribute to multiple SDGs, and not solely to the SDG for which they are listed. These series are not complete, but give an idea of how the SDGs can be implemented locally in Flanders, and serve to inspire you. We have divided the actions and initiatives into 'quick wins' which can be completed within a short period of time with relatively little resources, and into 'big wins', more structural measures that often demand a transversal approach.

We conclude each SDG with one or two good practices that illustrate how Flemish local authorities are already contributing. In order to highlight the international dimension of the SDGs, we have regularly chosen initiatives in the context of municipal international cooperation. These practical examples show that local authorities are already doing a lot: looking for solutions for climate change, ensuring that services are accessible to everyone, working on short food chains together with citizens, local job creation, combating poverty, etcetera.

3 However, these sub-goals may be relevant to municipalities with an international partnership.

Basic principles of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs

A total of 17 sustainability goals, 169 sub-goals, 244 indicators: it is a comprehensive and wide-ranging agenda whose underlying vision can be summarised in 6 values. The SDGs are universal, inclusive, and indivisible. They offer a long-term vision and demand an integrated approach and intensive cooperation.

The SDGs are the successors of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with the fundamental difference that they are no longer based on the classic north/south division. The SDGs are **universal** and apply to all countries of the world; north and south, east and west. All 193 member states of the UN, including Belgium, signed the 2030 Agenda. Everyone has the subsequent moral obligation to contribute to the SDGs. The SDGs focus on governments at all levels, companies, knowledge institutions, civil society organisations, and citizens, anywhere in the world. They can only be achieved by **cooperating** with all these actors, including at a local level.

The challenges which the SDGs wish to address are so complex that **a comprehensive, multidisciplinary, and transversal approach** is needed. The SDGs are also **inclusive**. "Leave no one behind" is the key message of the 2030 Agenda, which means that we must reach the most vulnerable groups in our society. Everyone must get on board. The SDGs offer a moral compass for a **long-term vision with 2030 as its horizon**. We must act now if we want to achieve them in 2030.

All 17 SDGs are inter-connected. They form an **indivisible** whole: when you contribute to 1 goal, you also make progress on other SDGs. This inter-connectedness is visualised in the figure below: the 5 pillars of sustainable development are interlocked. The 17 SDGs are categorised in **5 pillars** or clusters: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership. This makes them manageable and provides structure. It is important in this respect that the pillars of Partnership and Peace create the conditions needed to make progress on the other 3 pillars, and thus have a transversal effect.



VVSG International helps you with the local implementation of the SDGs

Did you develop a taste for it, and do you want to adopt a more ambitious approach to the SDGs? You can rely on VVSG International for advice, training, and support. Together with 20 committed local authorities, VVSG International conducted an SDG pilot (2017-2019) which led to useful methods, work instruments, and recommendations to make the municipal policy more sustainable using the SDGs. All these tools, ranging from awareness raising materials, to policy documents and inspiring sources can be found on our **SDG website for local authorities**. <https://www.vvsg.be/sdgs>. A selection of our materials⁴:



⁴ The materials listed here are available in English, unless stated otherwise, and can be accessed directly by clicking on the embedded links. All materials that have been translated from Dutch to other languages can be found on <https://www.vvsg.be/kennisitem/vvsg/sdg-documents-in-foreign-languages>.

Raising awareness:

- **SDG materials** (Dutch): publications, PowerPoint presentations, and digital formats for visual materials such as SDG banners, footstools, posters, and icons.
- **SDG circle exercises**: interactive gameboards to conduct an analysis of how your organisation already contributes and can contribute to the SDGs. Also available in French and Spanish.
- **SDG animation video**: an animated video which gives you easily accessible information about the SDGs and the crucial role of local authorities in realising them. Also available in French and Spanish.
- SDG video 'Flemish mayors for the SDGs': mayors explain the SDGs. Also available in French.
- **The SDGs in your municipality: 50 practical examples to raise awareness**: collection of 50 practical examples to introduce the SDGs to your municipal organisation, in your external communication, and to a broader audience at events.

Policy:

- **SDG Declaration of Commitment**: 96 Flemish municipalities and 11 municipalities in the Global South have signed VVSG's 'Global goals, local focus' commitment statement, thereby fomenting political support and policy engagement for the SDGs. Also available in French and Spanish.
- **SDG basic tool for municipalities**: an instrument for self-analysis which uses targeted questions (about raising awareness, commu-

nication, and policy) to gain more insight into the position of your municipality in the SDG story, and your short-term and long-term goals. Also available in French and Spanish.

- [Integration of SDGs into local party manifestos](#): a memo with proposals, recommendations, and examples to be used by local parties and politicians to incorporate the SDGs into their manifestos and communications.
- [Integration of SDGs in your multi-annual strategic plan](#): an inspiring brochure for the incorporation of the SDGs into your municipal planning process, including methods to use the SDGs as a framework to determine or assess your policy goals and actions.
- [Determine priorities with an SDG based impact analysis](#) (Dutch): 3 methods to determine priority SDGs for your municipal policy.
- [Local SDG indicators](#): a selection of 205 indicators (and a basic set of 54 indicators) to monitor your contribution to the SDGs, accompanied by a manual.
- [The SDGs as a framework for citizen participation](#) (Dutch): inspiration memo on various forms of citizen participation and ways to use the SDGs as a guiding framework, including participation methods and practical examples.

Inspiration:

- [Menu with actions per SDG and inspiration brochures with actions per policy domain](#) (Dutch): examples of the local implementation of the SDGs in Flemish municipalities.

- [Municipal practical examples per SDG](#): articles from the VVSG magazine 'Local', with 3 detailed practical examples per SDG in each issue.
- [A page with interesting sources](#) (Dutch): documentation about, inter alia, the progress on 2030 Agenda in Flanders, Belgium, and Europe, and publications by partners that work on the SDGs with, for example, young people or companies.





GOAL 1. Eradicate poverty in all its forms everywhere

Combating poverty is about achieving fundamental rights and focuses on all domains of life. Important levers for the structural fight against poverty are employment, education, housing, health, and social security. These are mainly competences of the federal and Flemish governments, but cities and municipalities also have a role to play here and are essential for the adjacent poverty policy. They can alleviate the life of poor people and create the necessary conditions that make progress possible. The principle of 'Leave no one behind' is paramount in the SDGs and local authorities are an essential link in the chain to implement this. They are in the best possible place to quickly detect and address problems, work pro-actively, and organise accessible and open services. An effective poverty policy is only possible when people living in poverty have a voice, and local authorities can make sure that they are being heard.



Did you know that...?

- 11% of people in Flanders live with an income below the poverty line (€ 1139 per month, or € 30 per day for a single-person household)?
- global extreme poverty has been reduced by half in the last 20 years? 10% of the world population still lives below the absolute poverty threshold (less than \$ 1.9 per day). Over half of them live in Sub-Saharan Africa.



Which UN sub-goals are relevant for Flemish local authorities?

- 1.2 By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions
 - 1.3 Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable
 - 1.4 By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance
 - 1.5 By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters
- What can my municipality do?

What can my municipality do?



quick wins

- Ensure that all citizens have access to balanced nutrition: social grocery, social restaurants, 1-euro meals, hot meals at school, distribution of food surpluses, etc.
- Offer social tariffs for leisure activities, culture, sports and for the use of shared mobility and public transport.
- Detect and reach out to target groups for free energy and water scans.
- Support local share initiatives such as a diaper bank, goods swap, etc.
- Sign the Declaration of Mayors against Child Poverty.

What can my municipality do?



big wins

- Create a network of partners in various sectors to identify poverty, guide vulnerable groups towards help, and to allow for a multidisciplinary approach.
- Make sure that the framework conditions for work are met, for example through financial contributions to childcare, Dutch language courses, or psycho-social assistance.
- Activate citizens by guiding them to work, temporary work experience, district work, and social entrepreneurship.
- Arrange debt assistance and provide help with payment arrears related to electricity, natural gas, and water through the sound operation of the Local Advisory Committee (LAC).
- Combat the health gap by contributing to medical costs and cooperating with physicians and pharmacists.
- Apply the 'housing first' principle by prioritising homelessness.
- Focus on affordable and high-quality housing: social loans, social housing, combating dilapidation, insalubrity and 'slumlord' practices.
- Arrange shelter and transition housing to shelter and assist people in need.
- Cooperate with schools on the theme of debt prevention.
- Cooperate with diaspora organisations and other associations that work on combating poverty in the global south.

IN PRACTICE



Work placement: a powerful method to combat poverty

Target groups that have difficulty finding employment on the regular job market can increase their chances of a proper job and a better quality of life through coaching and assistance. Menen's social services prove this every day. The public social welfare centre maps the various areas of life (living, finances, network, health...) whenever someone applies for benefits to develop an approach that will structurally improve the applicant's life. Activation plays an important role in this integrated approach. Therefore, the public social welfare centre ensures that all the conditions for employment are in place. This can consist of a financial contribution to childcare, or a Dutch language course, or psychological assistance in case of addiction issues. The number of people who are employed under Article 60 (social employment) has increased exponentially in recent years. In 2006, an average of 57 people worked in municipal nursing homes, technical services, and second-hand stores in Menen each month. By 2016, this figure had increased to 79, with another 50 people receiving preliminary training.



Mol and Santo Tomás put the 'Poverty Declaration' into practice with a farmers' market

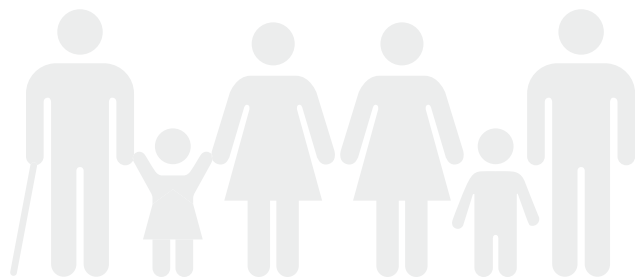
More money, a more secure income, and social recognition. That is what the farmers' market has come to represent for 20 households in Santo Tomás, Nicaragua. Every Sunday they sell their products directly to consumers in the main square. The city-to-city partnership between Santo Tomás and Mol provided the breeding ground for this initiative. Mol supplied the infrastructure for the market, and invested in a model farm where local farmers can test new techniques with an agricultural engineer. These techniques, combined with better seeds, ensure that farmers can now grow crops throughout the year. Moreover, the farmers are now paid more for their products, as the intermediaries do not take a cut. They also sell better quality products and they received training to better market their products. With this initiative, Santo Tomás and Mol show that they are serious about the 'Poverty Statement', which they signed with several other city-to-city partnerships between Flemish cities and their counterparts in Guatemala and Nicaragua. The declaration emphasises that the SDGs are a universal agenda, which can only be achieved if local authorities and civil organisations are involved.



Reading tip

Sustainability and poverty. A contribution to the political debate and political action. (Dutch)

= A publication by the [Centre for Combating Poverty](#), with recommendations for a policy on sustainability and poverty





GOAL 2.

End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

This goal strives for food assurance and the eradication of hunger and malnutrition around the globe. At the same time, it focuses on encouraging sustainable agriculture which pays attention to nature and the climate to advance a global transition towards agro-ecological food systems.

The local level plays an important role, both in ensuring access to affordable and healthy food to everyone, and in supporting sustainable, small-scale, and creative agriculture. Local authorities hold plenty of aces for enhancing the short chain: they can facilitate a good connection between the cities as the sales point and local producers from the surrounding rural communities. This enhances the access to affordable and healthy food for urban citizens and gives local (agricultural) producers a fair wage. Various and broad partnerships with local actors can be set up in relation to themes like urban agriculture, short chain, fair trade, and food loss, including with local (organic) farmers, supermarkets, schools, nurseries, residential care centres, social economy, civil society, etc.



Did you know that...?

- malnutrition is not just a problem in the global south? In Belgium, 45% of people aged 70 and up face the risks of malnutrition, while more than 10% actually suffer from malnutrition.
- the turnover on local farmers' markets in Flanders increased by more than 16% in 2017? The success of the formula developed by the Buurderijen (Boeren & Buren) contributes to this growth.



Which UN sub-goals are relevant for Flemish local authorities?

- 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 By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons
- 2.3 By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment
- 2.4 By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality

What can my municipality do?



quick wins

- Support food banks, social restaurants, and social groceries, in close cooperation with poverty organisations and the public social welfare centre. Set up a municipal food depot for poor citizens.
- Provide healthy and balanced food in local service and care centres, in the canteen kitchens of municipal schools, and at other municipal services.
- Raise awareness about food wastage among municipal staff and citizens. For example, provide doggybags to take home food left after events and meetings.
- Organise educational and recreational activities related to healthy food and sustainable agriculture in cooperation with schools, residential care centres, youth organisations, playground initiatives, nurseries, etc.

What can my municipality do?



big wins

- Deploy a sustainable [food strategy](#) and address various policy goals at once: greater food security for vulnerable groups, better health, stronger local economy and organic agriculture sector, environmental and mobility benefits thanks to short chains, more consumption of local products, etc. Start with identifying existing initiatives that contribute to this and conduct a stakeholder analysis in order to develop your local food strategy.
- Promote the **short chain** and reduce food kilometers: improve the connection between local producers and consumers, purchase local and honest products wherever possible, offer free seasonal fruit to staff, support Food Teams and Buurderijen, organise activities during the Week of the Short Chain campaign, facilitate organic markets, and inform citizens about organic stores and farmers in your municipality.
- Participate in the [Fair Trade Municipality Campaign](#) and organise promotional campaigns to encourage citizens, associations, restaurants, and companies to consume or sell fair trade products. Fair trade products guarantee an honest wage for the producer, safe and legal working conditions, and environmentally-friendly production methods. They are a necessary addition to the choice for a short chain.
- Make municipal land available for organic and urban agriculture (e.g. Community Supported Agriculture), communal gardens and allotment gardens.
- Support organisations that work on sustainable agriculture and food chains in the global south together with local communities, agricultural cooperatives, local authorities, etc.



Reading tip

[Food waste and SDGs. An approach to the Sustainable Development Goals](#) (Dutch)

= a publication by FoodWIN, on how food waste can be included in the local multi-year strategic planning with the SDGs as a central theme



Ecological and inclusive gardening in Stokkem

The public social welfare centre in Dilsen-Stokkem created allotment gardens with other partners and volunteers. It received support from the Vlaamse Landmaatschappij (VLM) for this project. The sustainable agriculture project was given the name 'Maasmoosem'. Residents of Dilsen-Stokkem rent plots or make use of a raised tray in which they can grow their own organic vegetables. The service centre organised training courses in ecological farming to help the participants on their way, followed by practical assistance in their own allotment garden. Besides responsible farming, Maasmoosem also pays a lot of attention to the social aspect. The project wants to reach people from the neighbourhood and encourage social cohesion, and simultaneously work on healthy food and mobility. The allotment gardens are in the immediate vicinity of the residential care center and the assisted living accommodation of the public social welfare centre. The project is a result of intensive cooperation between the city, Velt, Limburg.net, and PXL UAS. The Terra Therapeutica non-profit association is also an important partner, as it brings people and nature together to have a positive impact on vulnerable persons. The public social welfare centre does not only focus on sustainable gardening, but also on garden therapy.



Ghent en garde

Ghent strives for delicious, local, and sustainable food. Not merely a charm offensive, but a tactical master plan to make the food system in Ghent more sustainable. Their strategy targets the entire local food chain: from production, processing, distribution, consumption to waste processing. The goal is to reduce the negative impact on the environment in each step of the food chain and make the entire food system more sustainable. Ghent went through an intensive process with stakeholders, farmers, citizens, and civil associations. This resulted in a broadly supported food strategy called 'Ghent en garde' with 20 operational goals divided into clusters of 5 strategic goals:

- A more visible, shorter food chain
- More sustainable food production and consumption
- Increase social added value of food initiatives
- Reducing food waste
- Maximum reuse of food waste as raw material

Ghent is an active member of the Food Smart Cities for Development Project, financed by the European Union, in which 13 pioneering cities from 3 continents unite. The project champions the key role of local governments to achieve inclusive, resilient, and fair (local) food systems and aims to accelerate the transition towards sustainable production and consumption models.



Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

This goal concerns both physical and mental well-being. Specific fields of action are child and maternal mortality, alcohol and drug use, mental health, traffic accidents, air quality, and raising awareness about contagious illnesses.

The levers for health policy are mainly located at other policy levels, but local authorities can also do a lot for the well-being of their citizens. The challenge is to adopt and embed a comprehensive approach. After all, health concerns physical, mental, economic, and social well-being, and intersects with a range of policy domains like energy, poverty, living, climate, youth, education, and inequality. Local authorities can contribute to SDG 3 with policies on urban planning and public transport, reducing traffic accidents, improving air quality, and promoting sustainable ways of life. A holistic approach with special attention to vulnerable groups is required because of the increasing health gap. Local authorities are often the engine for intensive cooperation with various actors, such as local service centres, home care services, social housing associations, schools, logos (regional health meetings), and organisations with specific expertise (fight against alcohol and drugs, suicide prevention, Kom-op-tegen-kanker, Centra voor Geestelijke Gezondheidszorg, Vlaams Instituut Gezond Leven vzw, ...).



Did you know that...?

- 1 out of 10 employees in Flanders suffers from a burnout, while 1 of 4 experiences stress-related complaints like negative emotions and physical and mental health issues?
- over 7 million people per year die because of tobacco use, and 890,000 because of second-hand smoke around the globe? One person suffers from a preliminary death due to smoking every 6 seconds.



Which UN sub-goals are relevant for Flemish local authorities?

- 3.1 By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births
- 3.2 By 2030, end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births and under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births
- 3.4 By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being
- 3.5 Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol
- 3.6 By 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents
- 3.8 Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all
- 3.9 By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination

What can my municipality do?



quick wins

- Create a healthy living environment for your employees: promote sports at work and bicycle use for commuting, organise courses on self-care and team care, allow flexible work arrangements wherever possible, provide (organic) fruit, offer free vaccines.
- Raise awareness about unhealthy food, mental issues, and addictions at schools and in your community.
- Encourage companies to develop a health policy, for example with the assistance of Jobfit. Improve traffic safety: restrict car traffic in school streets, address dangerous intersections, organise car-free days, create (temporary and permanent) car-free and low-traffic areas.
- Organise a 'quit smoking' group course led by a tobacco expert which citizens can attend at a social tariff.
- Raise awareness about breast cancer screening.
- Acknowledge and support home carers and volunteers.
- Create quiet areas.

What can my municipality do?



big wins

- Deploy a network of integrated home care services that addresses the various aspects of health (physical, mental, social, economic).
- Support local service centres, as they play an important role in prevention and neighbourhood-oriented care (social networking, preventing loneliness, etc.).
- Consider (mental) health aspects in your housing policy: encourage co-housing, intergenerational housing, and shared living to promote social cohesion and a sustainable lifestyle, and ensure that the quality standards are respected (energy, ventilation, dilapidation, addressing slumlords).
- Take measures for healthier air, such as low-traffic city centres, circulation plans, good public transport, electric and shared mobility, discouraging wood burning, etc.
- Address the health gap for people living in poverty, for example by contributing to their medical costs.
- Facilitate cooperation and the exchange of information between hospitals and other health care actors from the own municipality with those in the global south, for example through allowances for student internships and exchanges.

IN PRACTICE



Dilbeek wants to reduce the consumption of alcohol

In response to the legislative change in 2010 which further restricts alcohol consumption among young people, the municipality of Dilbeek started raising awareness among its citizens. The youth department, the well-being department, the police department, a number of schools in Dilbeek, and local organisations joined forces in the 'Nog Tijd Zat' ('Plenty of time left') campaign, which discourages young people from drinking alcohol at a young age. Dilbeek supports local stakeholders with implementing measures to curb alcohol consumption by people younger than 18. Event organisers, such as youth associations, receive free materials to raise awareness from the youth department. The campaign has also been focusing on the social environment of young people since 2015, and awareness is being raised among the parents during informative evenings since 2017.



Nursing students from Genk and Francistown learn from each other

Genk focuses on health care in its city-to-city partnership with Francistown in Botswana by supporting nursing education programmes. The Regina Mundi school in Genk and the Institute of Health Sciences in Francistown have been cooperating since 2008. They exchange study programmes and arrange annual internships. Students from Genk work in the district clinics in the Nyangabwe Referral Hospital in Francistown for four weeks. Because of the lack of doctors in Botswana, the students can perform an extensive range of tasks. The students from Francistown complete an internship at the Wit-Gele Kruis and the Hospital of Oost-Limburg. The years of cooperation between the schools in Genk and Francistown has resulted in a positive exchange experience at the level of the students, the teachers, and the school.



Reading tip

SDG web page of the World Health Organisation (WHO)

= statistics, infographics, action plans, indicators, and the like on the contribution of the international health community to the SDGs





Goal 4.

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

All boys and girls can freely attend primary and secondary school and have the chance to pursue an education. Technical, occupational, or university education must be freely accessible, regardless of gender or origin. Both young people and adults can acquire relevant skills. All students acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes in relation to sustainable development, human rights, cultural diversity, and global citizenship. Education facilities are accessible to children and people with disabilities.

Local authorities are relatively small players in the Flemish field of education, but play an important supplementing role with the municipal primary schools, flanking education measures, and the organisation of childcare. Education reinforces the local well-being policy, because it is a springboard for social equality and the key to participation and emancipation. This applies to both young people and adults. Lifelong learning is not a luxury, but a requirement for completing a successful career in a rapidly changing world.



Did you know that...?

- over 10% of secondary students prematurely leave school in Flanders? They face greater risks for unemployment, poverty, low wages, and are estimated to live 9 years shorter.
- the education rate among adults in Flanders is lower than the EU average? In 2018, 8.7% of Flemish citizens aged 25 to 64 attended an education programme, while the average in EU countries was 11.1%.



Which UN sub-goals are relevant for Flemish local authorities?

- 4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes
- 4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education
- 4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university
- 4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship
- 4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations
- 4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy
- 4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development

What can my municipality do?



quick wins

- Organise a summer school for children speaking other languages.
- Organise homework assistance.
- Offer contributions to after-school care and student transport.
- Organise qualitative student transport for special-needs education.
- Make municipal infrastructure available for extra-curricular activities.
- Lead by example in lifelong learning, offer additional training and education for the municipal staff. Make the municipal library an accessible and vibrant place by organising activities and workshops (e.g. a repair café or IT training courses for all ages). Set up neighbourhood libraries.
- Organise training in Education for Sustainable Development, diversity, inclusivity, poverty, and global citizenship for students and youth workers.

What can my municipality do?



big wins

- Organise a consultation platform with neighbouring municipalities on high-quality education.
- Ensure high-quality, sustainable, and inclusive childcare.
- Support parents and school teams in toddler participation, language promotion and absenteeism prevention.
- Make sure that school environments are healthy, safe, and easily accessible. Promote commuting by bike or public transport.
- Facilitate partnerships between schools and other sectors based on the model of Community Schools .
- Encourage citizens to discover and use their talents during their time off by deploying talent coaches in neighbourhood programmes.
- Encourage global citizenship among the municipal staff and citizens, facilitate workshops and programmes in schools, organise lunch sessions on global challenges and village festivities and leisure activities with a global aspect.
- Support the development of high-quality and accessible education in the global south. Enter into a school partnership, or work with the [VVOB](#).

IN PRACTICE



Retraining during working hours, with retention of salary

Mindy Willems was employed as a cleaner at De Speelboom after-school childcare centre in Lovendegem and was able to retrain as a childcarer thanks to Diverscity. She went back to school, free of charge and with retention of salary, and is now employed in her dream job. People who are employed in home care, family care, or childcare can participate in a part-time adult education programme to train as a certified healthcare or childcare worker. While they are in training, their employer can arrange for a substitute, for which funding is available from the Flemish government. This is possible thanks to the 'VIA4-agreement' (Flemish Intersectional Agreement) concluded between the trade unions, the VVSG, and the Flemish government. Partnerships like this are needed to facilitate lifelong learning for everyone and to enable everyone to achieve their full potential. Not only that, sustainable and dynamic careers are indispensable for a good balance between work and home life, as well as for a prosperous and resilient society.



World Multi-Day Event becomes global bath

Raising awareness among youth of the global society in which they live also contributes to SDG 4. The World Multi-Day Event submerges pupils and teachers for half a school day in a global bath with a world film and an interactive 'world market' with forty stands featuring plenty of activities. NGOs and fourth-pillar organisations man the interactive stands while volunteers provide the students with brief assignments. More than 11,000 young adults from almost 60 schools annually learn about the most pressing global challenges and how we can address them. An extensive educational package with files, videos, and education folders is available to prepare the class for this project and to serve as a discussion tool after the event. The 2019 edition was developed by non-profit association Mundio together with the Global Policy department of the province of Antwerp. The municipality of Brasschaat and the city of Mechelen hosted the event.



GF KONINKLIJK ATHENEUM EKEREN



Reading tip

[SDG web page of the Flemish Library and Archive Association \(VVBAD\)](#) (Dutch)

= material to raise awareness, brochure, and toolkit on how the library sector can help achieve the SDGs, based on materials of the international library organisation IFLA





Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

We must end gender inequality: the glass ceiling, the pay gap, and gender violence. Women are entitled to – just like men – good health, knowledge about sexuality and reproduction, and to complete and effective participation at all levels of decision-making. All policy levels must pursue equal opportunities for women and men. Local authorities have an important exemplary role as a first-line government. Gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting are ways to accelerate progress on SDG 5, as are urban planning and safety policies targeted at decreasing gender-related violence. Cooperation and dialogue with women associations, neighbourhood committees, the police, and the public social welfare centre are key.



Did you know that...?

- only about 15% of the mayors, and 1 out of 3 aldermen and municipal council members in Flanders are women?
- half of the women over the age of 15 in the European Union has suffered from sexual harassment? In Belgium, this applies to 30% of women.





Which UN sub-goals are relevant for Flemish local authorities?

- 5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
- 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation
- 5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate
- 5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life

What can my municipality do?



quick wins

- Avoid gender stereotypes in communication and images.
- Appoint internal counsellors who staff members can contact about sexual harassment.
- Instruct the police to adopt a rapid and decisive approach to sexual harassment and gender violence.
- Arrange pedagogical assistance for minority mothers at municipal schools.
- Sign the European Charter for equality of women and men in local life and use it as a source of inspiration.
- Organise actions for International Women's Day (8 March)..

What can my municipality do?



big wins

- Promote gender equality in your human resource policy: use quota for women in management positions, offer teleworking and flexible hours, list m/f/x in your vacancies, ensure gender balance in selection juries, inform male employees about their right to parental leave, etc.
- Develop a municipal gender action plan with actions in various policy domains and in cooperation with local women's associations, neighbourhood committees, the police department, and the public social welfare centre. Think about gender budgeting in this respect: check the direct and indirect impact of your policy and your expenditure on the situation of women and men. Base your policy on gender-specific data. Monitor, for example, the access to leisure activities (sports, youth, culture) for (young) men and (young) women.
- Promote gender equality through your urban planning policy: safe transport, safe public space, street lighting, clean and accessible public toilets, lactation rooms, etc.
- Encourage municipal schools to pay attention to gender issues and to treat boys and girls equally. Ensure that both men and women can participate and are involved in international partnerships and programmes (e.g. city-to-city partnerships, working visits, exchanges, projects, etc.).
- Support projects in the global south that work on the empowerment of women. Promote cycling in your partner city, for example. Cycling can give women and girls better access to water, education, and jobs.



Efforts by municipalities in Benin to promote gender equality

Not only Flemish municipalities have city-to-city partnerships with other local authorities around the world. The VVSG also works directly with its partner associations. One of these is the Association Nationale du Bénin (ANCB). Together, they work on increasing gender awareness at local authorities in Benin. To this end, the two partners launched a pilot with twelve local governments in Benin in 2017. The ANCB works with them to analyse how gender can be mainstreamed in their municipalities and their local multi-annual strategic plans. The recommendations from the pilot will be distributed to all 77 local authorities in Benin. At the same time, the ANCB supports a network in which all female elected politicians exchange experiences and meet. The exchange of knowledge, expertise and contacts within this network encourages women to play a prominent role in Beninese politics and society.



Elsene and Schaarbeek pioneer with gender budgeting

Elsene and Schaarbeek were the first municipalities in Belgium to apply the principle of gender budgeting. Elsene does this for all municipal government expenditure based on 3 categories: neutral, gender-specific, and potentially gender-sensitive expenditures. The implementation takes place progressively and is monitored using indicators. Gender budgeting is a learning process and is supported by training and coaching in Elsene. Schaarbeek is also pioneering with gender budgeting and mainstreaming. The municipal departments studied their budgets through a gender perspective and identified their good practices and potential improvements regarding equal opportunities with the assistance of Gender@Work. This resulted in a gender action plan. A gender manager was hired to implement the action plan, to monitor the equality between men and women in all policy domains, and to coordinate the required cooperation between all municipal departments. Schaarbeek also offers sports vouchers to girls to encourage them to exercise more and introduced a label in the municipal library which highlights children's books that do away with gender stereotypes. The 'Women's Home' organises a wide range of emancipatory activities. Both Elsene and Schaarbeek included gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting in the coalition agreement 2012-2018, assigned an alderman for equal opportunities, and signed the European charter for equality of women and men in local life.



Reading tip

Leave no one behind – SDGs and LGBT+ inclusivity (Dutch)

= a brochure by non-profit associations KliQ and çavaria on actions that local authorities can take to work on the SDGs in an LGBT+-inclusive manner



Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

This goal strives for sustainable water management and access to drinkable water and sanitary facilities for everyone. Water quality must improve, including by reducing contamination, stop dumping chemicals, and reducing wastewater by half. Water scarcity must be addressed. Sustainable water management requires a comprehensive approach to drinking water, river basin management, and urban planning of both urban and rural areas. Local authorities in Flanders are responsible for waterways of the third category and for the municipal canals with a public interest. They, or a sewer manager appointed by them, are responsible for the collection of domestic wastewater. Municipalities are initiators of local erosion prevention plans, responsible for granting environmental and construction permits, and applying the water check. This means that local authorities are important partners in a wide network of cooperating actors: various departments and agencies of the Flemish government (Environment, Mobility and Public Works, Agriculture and Fishery), the provinces, intermunicipal partnerships, polders and water boards, drinking water companies, regional landscape organisations, civil associations (Natuurpunt, Boerenbond, VOKA), etc. The rules and norms on water quality standards, however, are set at the European level.



Did you know that...?

- the production of 1 kg of beef requires 15,500 litres of water? You can fill your bath 135 times with this amount of water. The production of 1 litre of milk requires 960 litres of water, of a bread 600 litres, and a glass of beer 75 litres.
- over 2 billion people on Earth have no access to clean drinking water due to water scarcity and contamination? This number will increase to 3.9 billion by 2050.



Which UN sub-goals are relevant for Flemish local authorities?

- 6.1 By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all
- 6.2 By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations
- 6.3 By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally
- 6.4 By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity
- 6.5 By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate
- 6.6 By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes



Walk for Water in Peer and Zonhoven

What can my municipality do?



quick wins

- Provide sufficient clean and free public toilets that are accessible for women and disabled persons.
- In the municipal buildings: install a rainwater reservoir, properly configure taps, install taps in the toilets with an on- and off-button, rinse the toilets with rainwater, use biodegradable cleaning agents, encourage the use of tap water (using a water distributor) and reusable bottles.
- Subsidise drinking water fountains and rainwater wells.
- Support vulnerable families with efficient water consumption. Offer (free) water scans.
- Promote alternatives to pesticides.
- Choose for local and plant-based food, leading to a smaller water footprint.
- Inform the municipal staff and citizens about their 'indirect water usage': the water needed to produce food, clothing, paper, etc.
- Sign the ['Tap water' charter](#) for municipalities.
- Organise activities on World Water Day (22 March) to raise awareness about global water issues (e.g. challenge local stakeholders to reduce their water usage).



big wins

- Replace the existing sewer systems with a separated sewer grid for rain- and wastewater. Protect water-related ecosystems such as forests, swamps, lakes, and rivers.
- Pay attention to climate adaptation when restructuring the public space: type of tiles, small water units, water basins, heat-resistant measures, create flood areas, groundwater level management, etc.
- Encourage the use of water-permeable concrete and green roofs, both in new constructions and renovation projects.
- Strive for a healthy balance in your water and agriculture policy. Large-scale industrial agriculture uses a lot of water.
- Facilitate the exchange of knowledge between experts in water management from your own municipality and municipalities in the global south.





The buildings in Ledegem are 'waterproof'

The Vlaams Kenniscentrum Water (Vlakwa) [Flemish Water Knowledge Centre] studied the water usage of five municipalities (Harelbeke, Hooglede, Ledegem, Menen, and Poperinge) during a pilot project. A series of simple measures can save up to 30% on the water usage in the municipal buildings. This enables local authorities to save up to thousands of euros on their drinking water bill. Ledegem made an inventory of all water usage sites in their buildings and identified possible bottlenecks and leaks by inspecting the municipal buildings with a checklist. Ledegem replaced, among others, the traditional taps with push buttons and installed more efficient shower nozzles in the sports hall, reducing the water usage by over a fifth. In cooperation with the VVSG, Vlakwa deployed the project in all 300 Flemish governments in 2017.



Berlare works on access to drinking water in Ecuador

Clean drinking water is not self-evident in many countries of the world. This is why the municipality of Berlare entered into a water partnership (a 'light' city-to-city partnership) with the municipality of Rio Verde in Ecuador and other partners such as the Flemish province of Oost-Vlaanderen, the Belgian NGO Join for Water, and the Ecuadorian Cefodi organisation. Berlare offers financial support to various local projects, such as the construction and maintenance of water installations and water pumps. Berlare is also raising awareness about the water partnership and about the importance of access to drinking water. The water situation in Berlare and Ecuador is highlighted during a 'water hike'. Berlare also organises 'water days' for the fourth grades of primary schools. The students complete a child-sized water hike and attend a workshop about Ecuador. The municipality also organises photo exhibits and lectures on the topic, and Berlare and Rio Verde exchange letters and videos.



Reading tip

Living with a big water footprint (Dutch)

- = a publication by the NGO Join for Water, about the relationship between consumption and water usage in a global perspective, with a number of proposals for reducing our water footprint, and the role of governments, producers, and consumers.



Goal 7.

Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

Everyone must have access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy. Energy must be produced and used more efficiently, and be increasingly generated by renewable sources.

The levers for energy policy are mainly located at the European, national, and Flemish levels of government, but local authorities can create the conditions for a transition towards sustainable energy, for example by investing in the line infrastructure. Local authorities can also contribute directly to SDG 7 and lead by example by making their buildings energy-efficient and using sustainability criteria in their procurement policy. They can achieve significant efficiency gains and reduce the emission of greenhouse gases through smart technologies in their spatial and mobility policy. Local authorities are also essential for detecting energy poverty and offering solutions to citizens having difficulty paying their energy bills.



Did you know that...?

- 1 out of 5 households in Flanders is affected by energy poverty? The average electricity invoice increased by € 519.10 between 2007 and 2019 and now amounts to approximately € 1000 per household per year. Together with Germany, Flanders has the highest electricity bills in the EU.
- Belgium is at the back of the European pack in terms of renewable electricity? Only 9.1 percent of the energy used in 2017 was produced by renewable sources, while the average in the European Union was 17.5 percent.



Which UN sub-goals are relevant for Flemish local authorities?

- 7.1 By 2030, ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services
- 7.2 By 2030, increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix
- 7.3 By 2030, double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency



STEFAN DEWICKERE

What can my municipality do?



quick wins

- Invest in sustainable, energy-efficient measures in the own municipal buildings (including cultural centres, youth centres, etc.) such as solar panels, heat pumps, insulation, green roofs, collecting energy from waste, etc.
- Install a local energy store or (temporary) service point to inform citizens about ways to reduce their energy bill and about subsidies for energy-saving measures.
- Actively detect energy poverty, starting with the clients of the public social welfare centre.
- Offer a local renovation subsidy and free renovation assistance.
- Encourage the purchase of solar panels among citizens by means of financial contributions or support with group purchases.
- Make the conformity certificate mandatory using a municipal decree to ensure rental housing also meets minimum quality requirements with regard to energy efficiency.
- Conduct a heat check at new construction projects to study which forms of renewable heat are possible.
- Actively participate in campaigns like [Sweater Day](#) and encourage your citizens to join.

What can my municipality do?



big wins

- Identify the local (and regional) potential for generating renewable energy (e.g. space for wind turbines or a district heat grid) together with stakeholders.
- Support citizen cooperatives for renewable energy, in which citizens can invest in collective solar plants and wind turbines, make their roof available for solar panels, adapt their energy usage to the most sun-productive times, etc.
- Ensure the sustainable design and management of residential areas and real estate, together with citizens, companies, housing corporations, and others stakeholders. Develop a heat zoning plan which indicates where renewable heat generation is preferred.
- Encourage the use of biomass (e.g. roadside clippings as green energy to heat schools).
- Require the bank or the asset manager of the municipality to no longer invest the reserves of pension funds in fossil fuel companies.

IN PRACTICE



Eeklo on land and in the air

The city of Eeklo decided to focus on a sustainable energy policy back around the turn of the century. It chose for wind energy as the driver of renewable energy projects. The city succeeded in convincing the citizens of this story through a visit to the Middelkerke wind turbine plant and clear communication about the project. Citizens were also given the option of direct financial participation. This increased the commitment of the participants, who considered the wind turbines as something they owned, and encouraged them to take a better look at their own electricity use. Eeklo has kept expanding its view on sustainable energy over the course of years. The city focussed on solar energy, the production of rapeseed oil, and the use of residual wood, for example. Making the own buildings more sustainable was an important step. Eeklo placed solar panels on the city buildings and invested in renewable energy and energy-saving technology in the city offices, among other measures. Eeklo is currently working on a heat grid. This grid uses the residual heat of a combustion oven to heat buildings, thereby reusing energy which would otherwise be lost. The city again aims for direct financial citizen participation in this project.



Geel reduces electricity usage by 45%

The city of Geel looked for ways to reduce its energy invoice with assistance of the Vlaams Energiebedrijf [Flemish Energy Company]. The city is currently paying an electricity invoice of almost 400,000 euros for the buildings at the heart of the urban activities. Geel chose for a comprehensive approach in the form of an electricity performance contract with an electricity services company. The contract includes ten urban buildings. This was how the city of Geel started with the largest local energy-efficiency project in the region of the Kempen. The project does not only cover the municipal offices, but also the swimming pool, the sports hall, the library, the cultural centre, and a number of schools. The city will save no less than 45% on its electricity usage and 18% on its natural gas usage in these buildings. The energy services company is required to achieve these energy savings each year based on an energy savings contract. The set of energy-saving investments costs 1.7 million euros, but the city recoups these investments using part of the energy savings over a period of twelve years. That means the energy savings contract does not put any pressure on the budget and at the same time the city equips itself against the rising energy prices.



Reading tip

The 'urban energy pathfinder' tool

= a tool developed by the research partnership EnergyVille to identify scenarios for cities, municipalities, and regions that want to get a comprehensive overview of their potential roadmaps for an energy transition



Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Economic growth may never harm the environment and living conditions of people. Guaranteeing safe working conditions, protecting labour rights, reducing youth unemployment, encouraging entrepreneurship, and eradicating slavery, forced labour, and child labour are important fields of action. This goal also covers sustainable tourism which promotes regional products and the local culture and creates jobs.

The main levers for economic growth and employment are at the Flemish and federal levels. However, local governments can foster cooperation between local economic stakeholders and create a business-friendly environment. There are good arguments for investing in a well-developed local economic fabric. An attractive commercial centre gives your municipality a good reputation, while neighbourhood stores are important for social cohesion. Sufficient employment in the own region ensures that your citizens can find a job close to home and also attracts new inhabitants. The activity level of the citizens contributes to the municipal revenues and correspondingly increases the financial policy options and quality of life in your municipality.



Did you know that...?

- Belgium has 230,000 working poor? Around 5% of the employees and independent professionals live in a household with a high risk of poverty. Belgium is doing a lot better than its neighbours France (7.1%) and Germany (9.4%) in this respect.
- the textile industry has spurred economic growth in countries like Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, and Pakistan, but that this is accompanied with extensive violations of labour rights? Textile workers often work in unhealthy conditions for more than 10 hours per day at meagre wages, without a contract, a fixed salary, health insurance, or a pension plan. Trade unions are often under pressure or even forbidden.



Which UN sub-goals are relevant for Flemish local authorities?

- 8.1 Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries
- 8.2 Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors
- 8.3 Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services
- 8.4 Improve progressively, through 2030, global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavour to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, in accordance with the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production, with developed countries taking the lead
- 8.5 By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value
- 8.6 By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training
- 8.7 Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms
- 8.8 Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment
- 8.9 By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products
- 8.10 Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all

What can my municipality do?



quick wins

- Opt for fair trade products and support the [Clean Clothes Campaign](#). Fair trade products guarantee honest wages, safe and legal working conditions, and environmentally-friendly production methods.
- Develop a sustainable restaurant guide that promotes restaurants that work with fair trade, local and organic products.
- Encourage (social) entrepreneurship, for example through grants for start-ups, renovation subsidies for (vacant) retail buildings, etc.



big wins

- Lead by example in your human resource policy: involve staff in decision-making, offer proper remuneration, a good work/life balance, and safe working conditions. Recruit without excluding candidates based on gender, ethnicity, age, limitations, sexual orientation, etc.
- Lead by example in your procurement policy: include (social and environmental) sustainability criteria in public contracts and facilitate participation by local producers. Assist restaurants, retailers, and other local entrepreneurs to make their procurement procedures more sustainable.
- Promote social economy: create employment opportunities for target groups within socially relevant services, start a new local social economy enterprise based on a local needs analysis (e.g. maintenance of playgrounds, neighbourhood-oriented childcare, additional home care, etc.), facilitate networking between regular and social economy actors, assist public social welfare centre clients with work experience processes, for example by employing them on the basis of Article 60 (social employment).
- Make business parks more sustainable: easy accessibility by public transport, greenery consisting of local, animal-friendly plants and, cradle to cradle, fewer CO₂ emissions using heat cogeneration and renewable energy, etc.
- Incorporate environmental and social criteria in your permit policy, but also in trade agreements, for example between the local business park or port and international players.
- Invest in regional development and promote sustainable tourism.





Leuven gives the creative industry a boost with Popstart

The city of Leuven hits two birds with one stone with Popstart: creative, innovative entrepreneurs are given space and the Leuven shopping streets become more attractive. The initiative was launched in the spring of 2017 with two buildings rented by the city itself, but private owners have now also joined. The city grants an exemption from vacancy taxes to encourage them to temporarily rent out vacant buildings at an affordable price. This enables starting entrepreneurs to test out a new idea or concept without major risks, as the hurdle of high rents is overcome. Popstart supports them with free advice, promotion, visibility, and an extensive network of entrepreneurs. Soon, everyone who dreams of starting a company can visit an innovative entrepreneurial café where creators, designers, and artists can meet. The city assisted a dozen start-ups over the course of a year. Some have now grown and moved to a new location. People Made, the newest pop-up store, sells products and services made or provided by social economy initiatives. Economic growth and decent work go hand in hand in this manner.



Reading tip

Socially responsible workwear toolbox

= guide developed by the VVSG and the city of Ghent, with tools for more socially responsible procurement (primarily for workwear)



Goal 9.

Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation, and foster innovation

A strong economy and social welfare rely on solid, resilient infrastructure. Internet for everyone, research and development, and a sustainable industry are important aspects of this goal. Both public and private investments are necessary to achieve the required ecological transition in the industry and to give everyone access to high-quality infrastructure, and basic goods and services.

Local authorities in Flanders are responsible for approximately half of the public investments in infrastructure. They play an important role in the construction and maintenance of infrastructure for transport, energy, IT, education, sports, culture, health care, (social) housing, sewer systems, industry, etc. In addition to investments, a smart organisation and connectivity of this infrastructure is necessary to advance SDG 9.



Did you know that...?

- 10 percent of the Belgian population has never used a computer? 14.9 percent does not have a computer, laptop, or tablet at home.
- 140 Flemish companies received the Voka Charter for Sustainable Entrepreneurship in 2019? Companies achieve this certificate by implementing specific sustainability actions, such as making their fleet more sustainable, reducing their CO₂ emissions, or screening the safety of their employees.



Which UN sub-goals are relevant for Flemish local authorities?

- 9.1 Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all
- 9.2 Promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and, by 2030, significantly raise industry's share of employment and gross domestic product, in line with national circumstances, and double its share in least developed countries
- 9.4 By 2030, upgrade infrastructure and retrofit industries to make them sustainable, with increased resource-use efficiency and greater adoption of clean and environmentally sound technologies and industrial processes, with all countries taking action in accordance with their respective capabilities
- 9.5 Enhance scientific research, upgrade the technological capabilities of industrial sectors in all countries, in particular developing countries, including, by 2030, encouraging innovation and substantially increasing the number of research and development workers per 1 million people and public and private research and development spending
- 9.c Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020

What can my municipality do?



quick wins

- Offer free Internet in the library and organise IT courses for all ages.
- Develop a digital platform on which associations, schools, and companies in the municipality can share their infrastructure with each other.
- Creative and sustainable use of vacant lots. For example, issue awards for creative redevelopment projects or cooperate with sustainable pop-up projects.
- Encourage innovation and research by providing young researchers and starting entrepreneurs with space, assistance, promotional campaigns and access to investors.
- Encourage the use of water-permeable concrete and the creation of green roofs, both in new constructions and renovation projects.

What can my municipality do?



big wins

- Pursue a core-enhancing urban planning policy which considers the consequences of climate change (e.g. greater density, sufficient unpaved surfaces, space for sustainable mobility, heat grids, and wind turbines).
- Invest in smart mobility (e.g. by setting up bicycle highways, smart intersections, share-system apps, gathering mobility data, etc.).
- Encourage local companies to install a sustainable logistics system by combining transport modes or choosing for electric transport.
- Encourage companies to make their infrastructure and sites more sustainable, for example by creating more greenery and more energy-efficient buildings.
- Work with universities (of applied sciences) to offer spin-off opportunities.
- Become a member of [Smart Cities Flanders](#). Start innovative trial projects for waste management or digital communication.
- Include (social and environmental) sustainability criteria in government contracts.
- Invest in public transport and bicycle infrastructure.
- Invest the capital of the municipality in sustainable financial products and companies.

IN PRACTICE



Duffel makes business parks more sustainable

The intermunicipal partnership for area development IGEMO was commissioned by the municipality of Duffel to make the Itterbeek SME park more sustainable. Companies that applied for a lot had to demonstrate that sustainability is essential to them, including in terms of mobility, buildings, waste management, and energy usage. Companies can take small sustainability measures, such as effective insulation, reuse of rainwater, and use of energy-efficient light bulbs and fair trade products. But they can also go one step further, by installing solar panels or a green roof. IGEMO also contributes. It took care of the installation of a separated sewer system and a small water treatment plant. It also equipped its business park with energy-efficient public lighting and underground water reservoirs for extinguishing water. Another striking characteristic of Itterbeek is the focus on green spaces. Despite the strict sustainability standards, the entrepreneurs are very enthusiastic.



Sint-Truiden app

Sint-Truiden believes in the digital future. This is why it developed an innovative city app to enhance the communication between the municipality, citizens, retailers, and associations. You can use it to easily book a table in a restaurant or remain informed of what is happening at your youth association. The communication with the city council is also a lot more efficient now. Citizens can file notices and documents such as a cohabitation certificate or request a birth certificate from the city departments. The app also facilitates the work of the civil servants. They can immediately follow up on and respond to notices or communicate rapidly if an issue arises. Sint-Truiden is also accelerating the digital transition by providing free Wi-Fi on the market square and by installing optic fibre connections in business parks.



Reading tip

Smart City, the practical guide (available in Dutch and French)

= publication by the Smart City Institute, on how to develop, implement, and assess a Smart City approach for a city or area



Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries

We must reduce inequality in and between countries. Important levers for structural reforms for a fairer distribution of wealth are situated at the federal, European, and international level: dignified incomes, strong social security, the fight against tax avoidance and evasion, safe and responsible migration, a greater say of the global south in international financial and economic institutions, etc.

By addressing inequality between the citizens in their territory, local authorities contribute to reducing inequality at a Belgian level. SDG 10 also concerns social, economic, and political inclusion and guaranteeing equal opportunities, in which local authorities play a critical role. Local authorities are service providers par excellence: they offer over 1,500 services to their citizens, ranging from the civil registry to libraries, sports infrastructure, permits, etc. By making these services fully accessible to vulnerable groups and minorities, local authorities do not only make an important contribution to SDG 10, but also specifically implement the basic principle of 'leave no one behind' of the 2030 Agenda.



Did you know that...?

- the 8 wealthiest men of the world together possess as much as the poorest half of all citizens of the world? Back in 2015, these were the 62 wealthiest people. Global inequality continues to increase.
- only 6% of the 65 million people fleeing their homes resettle in Europe? Many people are displaced within their own country or move to neighbouring countries. Nearly 1 out of 5 people in Lebanon is a Syrian refugee, for example.



Which UN sub-goals are relevant for Flemish local authorities?

- 10.1 By 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average
- 10.2 By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status
- 10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard
- 10.4 Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality
- 10.7 Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies
- 10.b Encourage official development assistance and financial flows, including foreign direct investment, to States where the need is greatest, in particular least developed countries, African countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries, in accordance with their national plans and programmes

What can my municipality do?



quick wins

- Present a clear and positive image of diversity in communication materials.
- Deploy awareness raising campaigns with regard to diversity and discrimination. Invite Unia to arrange a training course for your staff, for example.
- Offer contributions and social tariffs to disadvantaged groups.
- Arrange shelter and transition housing for people in need.
- Organise activities for children and adults who speak a different language to improve their Dutch.
- Inform newcomers about the social and cultural services in the municipality.
- Make sure that infrastructure is accessible for people with disabilities, for example in municipal buildings and when constructing footpaths and installing traffic lights.
- Take strict measures against 'slumlord' practices and dilapidation.
- Participate in the [Hospitable Municipality Campaign](#).

What can my municipality do?



big wins

- Recruit people without excluding them based on gender, origin, skin colour, age, disabilities, sexual orientation, etc. Strive for diversity among staff and advisory boards. This starts with broadly disseminating vacancies and diversity in selection juries.
- Assist vulnerable groups in the field of primary education and employment opportunities.
- Offer debt assistance and mediation for access to water and electricity in case of unpaid invoices.
- Encourage and support district work to promote social cohesion. Create meeting places.
- Ensure a diverse social mix in social housing projects.
- Support the integration process of newcomers in cooperation with other local authorities, civil society organisations, and volunteers. Set up a buddy system and local reception initiatives (LSI) (which can be financed by federal grants).
- Actively involve different population groups in your policy-making process and make sure that the services you provide are tailored to the diversity of the citizens. Reach out to vulnerable groups when organising events and setting up advisory boards, for example by visiting them at home, engaging key figures and cooperating with networks of minorities.
- Make use of the Local Integration Monitor (Flemish database).
- Promote inclusive education and broad schools.
- Take active measures against discrimination, intimidation, and violence against minorities.

IN PRACTICE



Bornem develops inclusive and caring neighbourhoods

Citizens are becoming lonelier, the elderly require more care, and tensions may arise due to superdiversity. To address this, Bornem set up the Neighbourhood Cart, a mobile neighbourhood shop which travels a fixed route in areas with people with reduced mobility. All residents can purchase all kinds of products, both fresh and dry goods, from the cart. It is also a mobile service centre for people with a questions about care and well-being or municipal services. The Neighbourhood Cart also offers opportunities for social employment, as people with difficulties on the regular labour market are responsible for preparing the cart.



Ambassadors in the welcome policy of Harelbeke and Bruges

The city of Harelbeke welcomes its newcomers with 77 different nationalities in the best possible manner, including by using the buddies of the Local Reception Initiative. Newcomers to the municipality will feel at home in the municipality faster thanks to the 8 ambassadors with Afghan, Congolese, Moroccan, Russian, and Indonesian roots. Their business card with contact details and the languages they speak are handed to newcomers looking for a social network, information about the services in Harelbeke, or who wish to learn how to take a bus or train. The ambassadors also have a signal function. As such, they informed the city that people wanted to learn how to ride a bicycle. The reception service in Bruges also worked with 'diversity guides' who identify needs in order for the city to be able to work on more accessible services. The city also supports 'education ambassadors': parents with a migration background who inform other parents in their native language about their knowledge of and experience with the education system in Bruges. Thanks to the success of the education ambassadors, Bruges also wants to start deploying health ambassadors who promote awareness about preventive health care among newcomers.



Reading tip

Working on diversity:
inspiration for a local integration policy (Dutch)

= publication by the VVSG and the Flemish Integration Agency on embedding an integration policy in all policy domains with many practical examples



Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

This goal directly addresses local governments with respect to their role in the 2030 Agenda and has ties to all other SDGs. Important fields of action are universal access to safe, qualitative, and affordable housing and basic facilities, green and public spaces, protection of cultural heritage, traffic safety and public transport, reducing urban emissions of greenhouse gases, and sustainable waste management. Rural municipalities have a number of specific challenges, such as keeping the village centre liveable, safeguarding open space, and arranging good connections with cities.



Did you know that...?

- 1 out of 5 Flemish households spends more than 30% of their income on housing expenses, and thus faces affordability risks? This group is much larger on the rental market: 52% of private tenants is above the 30% standard, compared to 27% of the owners with a mortgage.
- a green environment improves focus and reduces stress, anxiety, and depression? The vicinity of greenery is important to combat obesity, diabetes, depression, and burnout.





Which UN sub-goals are relevant for Flemish local authorities?

- 11.1 By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums
- 11.2 By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons
- 11.3 By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries
- 11.4 Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage
- 11.5 By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations
- 11.6 By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management
- 11.7 By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities
- 11.a Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning
- 11.b By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels

What can my municipality do?



quick wins

- Reinforce the connection between citizens and cultural heritage, for example through school projects.
- Promote the creation of roof gardens, façade greenery, etc. Award a prize for the 'greenest street', for example.
- Involve citizens in the (re)development of public spaces and ensure the sustainability of materials, the creation of sufficient greenery, and the accessibility of the space.
- Arrange sufficient waste bins, regular waste collection, and implement actions against illegal waste and litter. Consider smart waste containers and mobile recycling parks.
- Raise awareness among staff and citizens about sustainable mobility. Make use of the [Test Caravan](#), which gives citizens the opportunity to test electric bicycles and carrier cycles for a period of two weeks.
- Create a network of slow roads, with assistance of non-profit association [Trage Wegen](#). Focus on rezoning and redevelopment of vacant premises.
- Inform citizens about emergency situations and disaster response.



big wins

- Pursue an inclusive and sustainable **mobility policy**: invest in public transport and bicycle infrastructure, set up bicycle lanes and bicycle sites (bicycle rental and repair), facilitate share systems (and offer a social tariff for low income groups), install electric charging poles and parking sites for electric and shared vehicles, install low-traffic or car-free zones near schools or in neighbourhoods with many young families, set up a low emission zone.
- Pursue an inclusive and sustainable **housing policy**: promote affordable and sustainable social housing projects (e.g. through the land and building policy, local housing dialogue, formulas like leasehold or rights of superficies), safeguard the quality of the building stock and the living environment (e.g. sound accessibility, collective facilities, recreation options), pay special attention to groups like families in need of housing and single-person households, encourage co-housing, intergenerational housing, and living communities, provide tailored renovation advice.
- Study the air quality and noise nuisance in your municipality and draw up an action plan.
- Support local transition initiatives such as energy cooperatives, group purchasing, shared gardens, repair cafés, village councils, give-away squares, swap systems, etc. Combine all initiatives in a learning network.
- Redevelop cultural and historical heritage for living and working purposes.
- Avoid strip malls and peripheral campuses and business parks. Vicinity is the best mobility measure.
- Exchange expertise about urban planning with partner cities and organisations abroad.



Circular fleet management in Kortrijk

The city of Kortrijk chooses for environmentally-friendly end-of-life solutions for its fleet. What happens with vehicles that can no longer be used? The cars either have sufficient market value left and can be sold to citizens or companies on the second-hand market, provided that they meet the standards of the low-emission zone. If a car causes too much contamination or is too old, the proceeds of the sale do not outweigh the social and environmental costs when used. For this reason, Kortrijk concluded a contract with the acknowledged Galloo centre in Menen, following a recommendation by Febelauto, the management body for discarded cars in Belgium. Galloo takes care of the dismantling and processing of truck and van components to ensure they can be reused. They draw up a weight report for each dismantled vehicle to show the city how many of the components can be sold. Selling the car to the acknowledged centre creates a small profit, but less than on the second-hand market. A sustainable car yields more after its use, even if the initial purchase price is higher. Circular consumption covers the entire period during which a product keeps its economic value.



Edegem cooperates on waste management

Edegem and San Jerónimo (Peru) work on more efficient waste management in their city-to-city partnership. San Jerónimo encourages its citizens and market vendors to recycle their waste. Organic waste is brought to the compost plant after the separated waste collection. The compost is then used by the greenery department of the municipality and by local farmers. The employees at the compost plant keep developing new initiatives, such as the creation of a vegetable garden and a greenhouse. The ultimate goal is setting up a demonstration plant to show the composting process to visitors like schools and other municipalities. The waste management partnership also has a social component. Besides the municipal waste collection service, there are also 'independent' waste collectors in a very vulnerable position. An ecological park was created with the support of Edegem, where the waste collectors can return plastic bottles to be compacted and sold to purchasers in bales.



Reading tip

Housing and the sustainable development goals:
How Housing Europe members deliver their share

= publication by Housing Europe on how investing in affordable and inclusive housing contributes to sustainable development



Goal 12.

Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Everything we eat, drink, purchase, or do has an often unintended impact on our living environment. Here or elsewhere. People around the globe must be stimulated to adopt a more sustainable way of life: consuming less, better, and differently to reduce our ecological footprint. Sustainable management and efficient use of raw materials, combating contamination, reducing food waste, and producing less waste through prevention and reuse are the most important aspects of SDG 12.

Local authorities play a critical role in a number of these aspects. Waste management is one of their core competences and they are indispensable partners for the implementation of both European (e.g. EU Directive 2008/98/EEC) and Flemish (e.g. Materials Decree, VLAREMA) regulations on waste management. A total of 297 out of the 300 Flemish municipalities work together in so-called intermunicipal waste partnerships for the management of household waste. These intermunicipal partnerships encourage the reuse and prevention of waste among citizens, organise the collection and processing of waste, and operate recycling centres. Municipalities can also focus on sustainable procurement, support initiatives in the circular economy, or deploy a local food strategy.



Did you know that...?

- you save 170 kg CO₂ if you skip eating meat one day per week? This is the equivalent of not using any electrical devices for a year.
- Earth Overshoot Day, the symbolic day on which the raw materials of the Earth for the year are exhausted occurs sooner every year? The Earth is exhausted around 1.7 times faster than the ecosystem of the planet can restore itself. We will need 2 Earths to be able to handle our growing footprint before 2050.



Which UN sub-goals are relevant for Flemish local authorities?

- 12.2 By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources
- 12.3 By 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses
- 12.4 By 2020, achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks, and significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil in order to minimize their adverse impacts on human health and the environment
- 12.5 By 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse
- 12.6 Encourage companies, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle
- 12.7 Promote public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities
- 12.8 By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature

What can my municipality do?



quick wins

- Organise a fixed vegetarian day at work and potentially throughout the municipality.
- Inform citizens about [sustainable labels](#).
- Ban the free provision of single-use plastic bags.
- Organise a repair café in the municipal library.
- Promote the training of citizens into [compost masters](#).
- Donate second-hand desks, IT, and other materials to schools, youth associations, or other local organisations.
- Ask staff not to print documents unnecessarily. Use ECOFONT in the communication and brand style of the municipality, it is the font which uses the least ink.
- Reduce food waste within the municipality and the own organisation: encourage restaurants to spontaneously provide doggybags to customers or to cook with leftover food, choose for the potluck concept at meetings and staff festivities (everyone brings something to jointly create a buffet), sign the '[Flanders in action: fighting food waste together](#)' engagement statement'.

What can my municipality do?



big wins

- Pursue a sustainable procurement policy (e.g. workwear, food and catering, office materials, IT, cleaning products, sports mats, construction materials).
- Deploy a [local food strategy](#).
- Promote a short food chain in your municipality. Support [Food Teams](#) and [Buurderijen](#), or organise actions in the context of the [Week of the Short Chain](#). Distribute free 'season calendars' with information about the local products available each month.
- Promote the use of reusable cups (e.g. at local festivals), reusable water bottles (e.g. in the workplace and at schools), and other reusable materials (e.g. in local shops).
- Encourage associations and youth centres to use sustainable products (such as food and cleaning agents) and to recycle their waste. Make them aware of the issues of litter.
- Support companies that focus on the [circular economy](#). Organise exchanges about this theme with companies or local authorities from other countries.
- Support local (organic) farmers (e.g. farmer markets, urban farming, land for farmers). This gives them a fair rate for their products and enables them to pursue organic farming.

IN PRACTICE



Redistribution of more fresh food surpluses through regional cooperation

In the autumn of 2018, W13 – the association of the 14 public social welfare centres in South-West Flanders – launched a regional distribution platform for food surpluses in cooperation with a range of partners like the Food Bank, VIVES, Imog, Colruyt, and Aldi: Food Act 13. An energetic arsenal of wins arises where poverty, food surpluses, and activation meet. The name gives it away: 'Food' refers to food surpluses, 'Act' to activating people living in poverty, and '13' to the cooperation which raises this project to a higher level. Food Act 13 actively looks for 200,000 kg in food surpluses per year to redistribute it to people living in poverty through 50 social organisations. These are mainly fresh products such as surpluses of warehouses, local retailers, and farmers. This gives people living in poverty access to a more varied and balanced consumption pattern. Food Act 13 is also an activation project which employs 8 people who will move to the regular labour market after a period of training and work.



Bruges and its chocolate partnership

The city of Bruges is a true chocolate city. It has its own chocolate bar called Sjökla and has been a proud fair trade city since 2008. Bruges wants to contribute to making the chocolate chain more sustainable through an international partnership with a municipality in a cacao producing country. Bruges found the South-Cameroon city of Ebolowa in 2019. Just like Bruges, Ebolowa is a fair trade city, one of the only ones in Africa. They also have their own city chocolate called 'Keka Wongan', created based on the principles of fair trade. After an exploratory visit in 2019, the outlines of the partnership are being developed. The partnership uses the sustainable development goals as a guideline and will have three pillars. The first is to make the cacao and chocolate chain more sustainable, involving the chocolatiers and chocolate stores in the partnership. This makes the cacao chain shorter and guarantees a fair price for the cacao farmers. Secondly, the partners want to organise exchanges between the educational institutions, like the universities of applied sciences in Bruges and the agricultural school in Ebolowa. Thirdly, the programme also includes colleague-to-colleague exchange and cooperation between the two cities with regards to the themes of local economy and administrative organisation.



Reading tip

Circular procurement fact sheets (Dutch)

= publication by Vlaanderen Circulair, BBL, The Shift, and the VVSG in which 40 suppliers present their circular range of, inter alia, office furniture, IT, and lighting.



Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Climate change affects every country on all continents. For this reason, the policy must include measures on reducing CO₂ emissions, providing climate-resilient urban planning, and measures to combat floods, draught, and heat stress. Civilians must also become aware of ways of climate adaptation, and vulnerable nations must be made more resilient to natural disasters. Local authorities can make an important contribution to all these domains, even though many structural measures have to be taken at the European, national, and regional levels. International frameworks like the European covenant of mayors offer a guideline for developing a local climate policy.



Did you know that...?

- Belgium is in the top 5 of countries in the European Union with the highest CO₂ emissions per citizen?
- more than 4 out of 5 Flemish cities and municipalities signed the European covenant of mayors? This means they commit themselves to strongly reduce the CO₂ emissions in their territory.





Which UN sub-goals are relevant for Flemish local authorities?

- 13.1 Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries
- 13.2 Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning
- 13.3 Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning



Flemish mayors clap for the climate

What can my municipality do?



quick wins

- Inform your citizens about fuel-efficient cars, economical driving, or the climate impact of plane and boat journeys and meat consumption.
- Compensate the flights of municipal staff. The contribution will be invested in renewable energy, planting trees, etc.
- Make your municipality greener: green roofs, urban woods, and façade gardens lead to fewer floods and dissipate heat.
- Organise car-free days.

What can my municipality do?



big wins

- Develop a comprehensive long-term plan to make the municipality CO₂ neutral in close collaboration with policy domains like mobility, water, energy, waste, urban planning, housing, economy, and industry. Climate adaptation and mitigation demand a transversal approach. Ensure a structural budget for climate policy.
- Cooperate with companies, scientific institutions, organisations, and neighbouring municipalities to locally achieve the climate plans. Enter into a dialogue with citizens to **gain support** for the implementation of local climate plans.
- Pay attention to climate adaptation when restructuring the public space: type of tiles, small water units, water basins, heat-resistant measures, create flood areas, etc.
- Include environmental and climate criteria in the municipal subsidy rules.
- Create climate buffers (areas with unrestricted nature).
- Encourage bicycle use, create car-free districts and invest in a robust public transport network.
- Make use of the natural processes and structures (sandbanks, dunes, beaches, mudflats, and salt marshes) to equip our coast against a rising sea level.
- Enter into climate partnerships with regions in the global south to exchange on how to tackle climate change.

IN PRACTICE



Green-blue networks increase the quality of life

Due to climate change, we experience short but fierce downpours during summer. This leads to local floods in the smaller drainage systems, which are precisely the systems managed by the municipalities and sewer administrators. Solutions are reducing drainage volumes due to less pavement and above-ground storage of water in green zones with another destination during dry periods. Nature and water domains up to the heart of the city also offer relief from heat in a pleasant living environment. The municipality of Merelbeke works on a greenery experience plan in its districts. It works with its citizens to de-pave a significantly paved district and to create substantial green zones instead. Merelbeke also focuses on reforestation and pursues an active land purchase policy in order to connect the forests of Makegem and the Aelmoeseneibos. Other municipalities in the region like Lierde, Zottegem, and Lede join forces in Klimaatgezond Zuid-Oost-Vlaanderen, a partnership of municipalities, area development intermunicipal partnership SOLVA, and the province of East Flanders. They want to create green-blue networks in the public domain and open space that allow for additional water storage, but that also contribute to heat relief, nature, soft recreation, and increased quality of life.

Zoersel and Bohicon sign the Covenant of Mayors



The Antwerp municipality of Zoersel and its partner municipality Bohicon in Benin signed the Covenant of Mayors in 2016. They were the first partner cities in Europe to jointly take this step. Zoersel and Bohicon set out a climate action programme together, which perfectly ties in with their philosophy of peer-to-peer collaboration. The partners exchanged their experiences with stakeholder and citizen participation in the preparation of their climate plan and participated in joint training programmes on themes like energy cooperatives and the introduction of the sustainable development goals in the local policy. As Zoersel is a member of the European Climate Alliance, the town's Romanian and Hungarian colleagues are now also developing climate adaptation initiatives in Bohicon. Zoersel also successfully supported the province of Zou in Benin with its application for the EU 'Covenant of Mayors Sub-Saharan Africa' pilot project. The European funds are also used to promote climate actions in Bohicon.

Provinces in figures (Dutch)



Reading tip

= online database of the 5 Flemish provinces, Fluvius, and the Flemish government, which aims to help municipalities develop and monitor their climate policy more efficiently. The database provides figures on CO₂ emissions, mobility, and the generation of renewable energy for each municipality.



Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas and maritime resources for sustainable development

Seas and oceans are at risk and must be protected. Overfishing, waste, and illegal fishing are at odds with a sustainable policy. Our approach to water, wastewater, and waste on land plays a key role in protecting seas and oceans.

The ten coastal municipalities in cooperation with the Flemish (and federal) government are primarily responsible for maritime management. However, all other municipalities, together with the various actors responsible for water and waste management on land, play a key role in protecting seas and oceans.



Did you know that...?

- you can find around 64,000 kg of waste along our Belgian coast each year? Over 95% of the waste in the Belgian North Sea consists of plastic (mostly fishing nets, packaging, and bags).
- there is a waste island in the Pacific Ocean which is 50 times the size of Belgium?



ISABELLE PATEER



Which UN sub-goals are relevant for Flemish local authorities?

- 14.1 By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution
- 14.2 By 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans



What can a coastal municipality do?

- Encourage sustainable fishing in the North Sea.
- Reward fishing boats that retrieve waste from the sea.
- Facilitate actions to clean up waste from the beaches in cooperation with associations and volunteers.
- Protect the coast by widening the beach, reinforcing breakwaters, creating barriers, etc. Cooperate with other coastal municipalities, including through the partnership of coastal mayors.

What can all municipalities do?

- Raise awareness among citizens about the environmental impact of plastics and microplastics: encourage the use of reusable bags rather than plastic bags, do not use balloons at events, etc.
- Use ecologically degradable cleaning agents.
- Promote alternatives to pesticides among citizens.
- Raise awareness among citizens and restaurants about threatened fish species and the [MSC and ASC labels](#) for fish.
- Promote local fishery. Purchase fish through a Food Team or from the Flemish fair trade producer Pintafish, for example.
- Promote sustainable wastewater management in business parks.
- Develop school programmes on water and ocean management. Make use of the educational materials of Unicef or Join for Water, for example.
- Challenge local youth associations to clean up as much waste from the beaches as possible.
- Inform citizens and companies about the rules on separating wastewater and rainwater.
- Organise exchange programmes concerning sustainable wastewater management with (inter) national partners through a city-to-city partnership or civil society organisations.

IN PRACTICE



Bredene increases its fight against plastic

Awareness signs placed at the beach entrances in Bredene show how long it takes before waste decays. The 'Do you have 5 minutes?' campaign calls on beach visitors to clean up litter. The beach bars in Bredene have signed a charter in which they commit themselves to reduce the amount of beach waste, and the municipality provided 5000 reusable carrier bags to local retailers. Associations in Bredene can borrow reusable cups for events, and the municipality itself uses as little plastic as possible during activities. To top it all off, Bredene itself was rewarded with a cheque of € 10,000 in the context of the Eneco Clean Beach Cup 2018 competition for the originality of the 'Plastic Nightmare' project: a shipping container converted into a tunnel filled with waste through which visitors walk to experience how life looks like in a world surrounded by plastic.





Reading tip

Blue Flag and the sustainable development goals

= publication by Foundation for Environmental Education about the Blue Flag eco-label for beaches and maritime eco-tourism around the world that contribute to the sustainable development goals. With practical examples for each SDG.





Goal 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

Continental ecosystems such as forests, marshes, and mountains must be protected, and restored if they have already been affected. Preserving biodiversity is a priority. The fight against land degradation and desertification also demands urgent attention.

The nature and forest policy is located mainly at the Flemish level of government, but local authorities play an important role through the 'regional landscapes' (RL) – partnerships of at least three municipalities that work together with local associations on nature conservation and landscape development. The impact of local authorities on SDG 15 can vary, from enhancing local flora and fauna to assessing construction plans for environmental damage or implementing a local plan for preserving trees.



Did you know that...?

- only 10% of the Flemish territory consists of forest? This makes Flanders one of the most urbanized and tree-deprived areas of Western Europe.
- an average of 1000 animal and plant species per year disappeared in the last 500 years, while between 15,000 and 50,000 per year are going extinct in our time? This amounts to 3 extinct species every hour!



Which UN sub-goals are relevant for Flemish local authorities?

- 15.1 By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements
- 15.2 By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally
- 15.5 Take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and, by 2020, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species
- 15.8 By 2020, introduce measures to prevent the introduction and significantly reduce the impact of invasive alien species on land and water ecosystems and control or eradicate the priority species
- 15.9 By 2020, integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts

What can my municipality do?



quick wins

- Avoid the use of pesticides.
- Do not use balloons at events.
- Distribute free domestic flower seeds to citizens to attract butterflies and bees.
- Award a prize for the 'wildest garden': wild plants and flowers offer shelter to birds, bees, butterflies, insects, etc.
- Challenge schools and youth associations to participate in a litter campaign, to count birds, or to repair paths. Communicate about their experiences afterwards.
- Promote the educational materials of Bos+ at local schools.
- Draw up a well-considered, but reasonable winter plan to avoid salinisation of the environment. There is no need to salt roads on a large scale. Raise awareness among hikers and tourists about (not) picking certain plants, flowers, and mushrooms.

What can my municipality do?



big wins

- Preserve open landscapes.
- Create a tree management plan.
- Clearly demarcate recreational nature and protected nature areas.
- Pay attention to biodiversity in the municipal greenery management and spatial policy.
- Ensure balance between the water policy and, among others, agricultural policy and housing policy. Large-scale agriculture uses a lot of water. Construction in water-rich zones decreases the buffer against flooding.
- Create synergies between nature conservation and agricultural policies. Award grants for planting flowers along farmland, for example.
- Work with companies to make the greenery on their premises more sustainable with regional plants and animal-friendly flora.
- Create nature-friendly and sustainable outdoor spaces in schools, childcare centres, residential care centres, cultural centres, etc.
- Create a network of slow roads in your municipality (roads for non-motorised traffic).
- Support programmes of sustainable nature and forest management in the global south.

IN PRACTICE



Plant and animal-friendly renovation of parsonages in Boutersem

Fauna and flora improve the quality of the living environment and bring environmental education closer to the schools. Two birds with one stone, thought the Municipality of Boutersem. The redevelopment of the three local parsonage gardens in 2011 offered great opportunities. The local primary school created a vegetable and herb garden in the parsonage garden of Roosbeek with subsidies from the provincial Nature at School programme. Together with the church council and non-profit association Natu-urpunt, the municipality added a small fruit garden with an insect hotel, a fruit orchard, a flowery grassland, a pond, a coppice, and a pleasure garden with old trees. The main goal was converting the parsonage garden in Kerkom into a fruit garden with local tree varieties. Attention was also paid to the educational aspect: there are nameplates, information panels, practical assignments, and guided tours of the parsonages. Boutersem did not forget its dear animal inhabitants. When renovating the church, the brown long-eared bat was given its own entrance to the tower, and a colony of swifts was given a series of built-in nesting stones as a breeding ground.



Guaranda replanted to protect water sources

Access to drinking water is not self-evident. The Flemish municipality of Evergem and the Ecuadorian Guaranda, who have had a city-to-city partnership since 2003, are aware of this. Attention must be paid to nature and its ecosystems to protect the natural water sources. If there is not enough afforestation and vegetation, water will not be properly retained by the soil and dries up faster. This has a negative effect on the water supply of cities and villages. Evergem and Guaranda have, therefore, decided to better protect the areas in the mountains with high levels of rainfall or where water sources are located. They do this by replanting these areas with native species. Difficult choices must be made to protect the water sources. Wild animals, such as vicuñas (lama-like animals), often pose a threat to the natural vegetation around the water sources due to their grazing. Therefore, the replanted areas are fenced off to give the young plants the time and space to grow.



Reading tip

Green Plan Roadmap (Dutch)

= Publication by Ruimte Vlaanderen and the Nature and Forest Agency on the development of a local green plan (a long-term strategy for greenery in the municipality)



Goal 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.

Peace, safety, and legal certainty are essential for a better world. This includes protecting children against (sexual) abuse and the fight against corruption. People have the right to competent, transparent and fair governance at all levels.

Local authorities can make an important contribution to a safe, inclusive, and fair society by, inter alia, ensuring participative and representative decision-making, ensuring order and safety, monitoring the integrity of the administration, and optimising the (digital) access to information.



Did you know that...?

- the district of Antwerp has been using a citizen budget since 2014, based on which citizens may decide on 10% of the overall budget (around € 1.1 million)?
- more than 5.5 billion euros are spent on bribes around the globe each year?





Which UN sub-goals are relevant for Flemish local authorities?

- 16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere
- 16.4 By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime
- 16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels
- 16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels



What can my municipality do?



quick wins

- Organise a buddy system for new citizens.
- Involve diaspora associations in municipal advisory committees.
- Improve the digital access to information.
- Ask your citizens about their sense of safety.
- Take up societal issues in public speeches. Talk about the situation of refugees on November 11th, for example.
- Sign the [Mayors For Peace Campaign](#).

What can my municipality do?



big wins

- Choose for a diverse staff policy.
- Involve citizens in local policymaking through alternative methods of participation. Examples are a citizens jury, a debate competition, focus groups, dialogue cafés, e-participation, etc.
- Involve schools, companies, neighbouring municipalities, and others in spatial planning.
- Give minorities a say in local policymaking. Make sure to reach them, for example through home visits, key figures in the community or integration centres.
- Set up mobile services and care to reach citizens that live in remote areas, for example using a mobile municipal information site or a care network of volunteers.
- Pursue a sound integration policy by making use of the Local Integration Monitor (LIM) and by providing language courses.
- Contribute to peace, inclusion, transparency, and access to legal and public services in the global south through partnerships with local authorities.
- Incorporate international justice in the vision and mission of the municipality and in the goals and actions of the multi-annual strategic plan.
- Invest the capital of the municipality in sustainable financial products and companies.



Transparency of municipal income in Benin

A number of years ago, Dogbo, the Benin partner city of Roeselare, introduced a system to increase the transparency of the municipal income. Just like most local authorities in Benin, the various municipal departments in Dogbo handled their income individually. There was no central overview of fees paid by market vendors, revenues from the issuing of deeds (such as driving licenses), and other tax income for the city. Dogbo installed a digital one-counter system for this reason. All municipal revenues arrive at the municipal organisation through one digital counter and are managed using one software program. This enables the mayor of Dogbo to consult an overview of the municipal income and follow-up on the scheduled expenditure at any time. This increases the transparency of the resources, reduces corruption, and leads to better management of the municipal funds. According to the mayor, the municipal income has increased sixfold since Dogbo introduced the system. Dogbo is a pioneer in Benin in this field, but the Benin partner municipalities of Zoersel, Merelbeke, and Hoogstraten also have plans for introducing this digital one-counter system in the coming years.



The SDGs as a guideline for sustainable policy planning

A participative, sustainable policy planning is the foundation of strong public services. During the SDG pilot (2017-2019), VVSG worked with 20 municipalities to determine how the policy planning process could be based on the framework of the SDGs. Pilot municipality Harelbeke completed an impressive process and adopted the SDGs in an ambitious manner. The Harelbeke working group managed to introduce the 2030 Agenda to all levels of the city. The SDGs were the motivation and foundation for a very participative process for both the context analysis and the new multi-annual strategic plan. Cross-departmental workshops were organised to closely involve the city council and the administration, but Harelbeke also actively contacted its citizens and external stakeholders like companies, schools, and civil associations. Citizens were informed and questioned about the SDGs during six evening meetings during the 'Tour of Harelbeke'. The city created an SDG stakeholder inventory and determined the most important sustainability themes through meetings and with officials, municipal staff, police officers, and external partners. In the new multi-annual strategic plan, 11 out of the 17 SDGs make up the strategic policy goals which are broken down into action plans and actions tailored to the context of Harelbeke.



Reading tip

The SDGs in the policy and management cycle: multi-year strategic planning

= publication by VVSG in which various methods are offered for incorporating the SDGs into the municipal multi-year strategic plan



Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

The United Nations ask for greater cooperation between companies, governments, citizens, and organisations. Technology, exchanging knowledge, trading, finances, and data are very important. Cooperation is the key to further sustainable growth. The task to enhance implementation methods and enter into partnerships applies for all government levels, for civil society, companies, organisations, and institutions.

Local authorities can make resources available (e.g. 0.7% of the municipal budget) for their policy on international justice. They are also involved in a large number of (international) partnerships. The sustainable development goals are an excellent framework for focussed cooperation on specific themes and subjects in these partnerships. In an international context, municipalities can choose to set up a city-to-city cooperation with a view to mutually strengthening their governance and institutional capacity or to involve, for example, NGOs, social-cultural associations, diaspora organisations, hospitals, universities, companies, and the like in municipal programmes for sustainable development in the global south.



Did you know that...?

- about 1 out of 10 Flemish cities and municipalities has a city-to-city partnership with a municipality in the global south? These partnerships revolve around cooperation on a range of themes, such as waste management, tourism, local markets, birth registrations, and youth.
- Belgium only spent 0.43% of the GNI on official development aid in 2018, while the internationally agreed standard is 0.7%. The Belgian contribution amounted to 0.63% back in 2010.



Which UN sub-goals are relevant for Flemish local authorities?

- 17.2 Developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitments, including the commitment by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of ODA/GNI to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries; ODA providers are encouraged to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries
- 17.3 Mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources
- 17.9 Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the sustainable development goals, including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation
- 17.14 Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development
- 17.15 Respect each country's policy space and leadership to establish and implement policies for poverty eradication and sustainable development
- 17.16 Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries
- 17.17 Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships
- 17.19 By 2030, build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product, and support statistical capacity-building in developing countries

What can my municipality do?



quick wins

- Communicate about sustainability and sustainable policy actions in the municipal information channels.
- Embed sustainability as a fixed component in all internal training programmes and communication.
- Include sustainability criteria in local subsidy rules.



big wins

- Establish a network which revolves around sustainability with cities, municipalities, and other partners.
- Enter into climate partnerships, city-to-city partnerships or school partnerships with the sustainable development goals as a framework for the partnership programme.
- Give sustainable development a transversal position in the municipal policy. Check all projects and action plans based on the SDGs across departments and policy domains.
- Create a municipal sustainability fund and award grants for innovative projects, for example.
- Create meeting places: connect people, knowledge, and money.
- Actively participate in trials, pilots, and forums on sustainability, both in Flanders and internationally.
- Systematically check rules, decisions, and the procurement policy for their impact elsewhere in the world and on future generations.
- Embed sustainability reporting in the local policymaking and budget cycle.



The global strength of cycling in Wevelgem

Wevelgem is a true cycling municipality. This is also reflected in their global policy. The municipality collects unused bicycles from its citizens and has them repaired in cooperation with the adult education centres (CVO). The bicycles are then sold for the social cycling projects of the Coop Africa foundation. This project not only promotes sustainable consumption among the citizens in Wevelgem, it boosts sustainable mobility and access to income, education, and health care in Kenya and Uganda: students can cheaply purchase a bicycle from Coop Africa, thanks to which they no longer need to spend hours walking to school. Health care workers can also cheaply purchase a bike. This enables them to visit more patients faster, and comfortably bring ill people and pregnant women to health care centres using a bicycle ambulance. Local entrepreneurs can also receive a free loan to purchase a bike. This enables them to start working as a bicycle cab, street vendor, or waste collector. Wevelgem will expand this project in the future. The municipality will focus on cooperation with more partners in Wevelgem and will organise exchanges between bicycle repairers in Uganda and CVO students.



City-to-city partnerships embrace SDGs as a framework

Local authorities contribute to the SDGs with the policy in their own municipality, but also with their international partnerships. For these partnerships, they increasingly often use the SDGs as a framework. For example to look – together with their partner city – for themes for future cooperation, to make existing projects more sustainable, or to communicate about their achievements. Lommel and its partner city Ongwediwa (Namibia), for example, chose to focus on one SDG in their communication each year. They selected five prioritised goals in their five-year programme. A different SDG is highlighted and communicated about in both partner municipalities each year. This allows you to create a connection between local and global aspects: what are we doing in our own municipality with respect to this SDG, and what is our partner municipality doing, and what are we doing in the context of the city-to-city partnership?



Reading tip

The SDGs in municipal international cooperation:
40 inspirational examples

- = publication by VVSG with ideas and practical examples of how to incorporate the SDGs into city-to-city partnerships and other international partnerships



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