Regions4SDGs

Regions4SDGs Framework

A pratical guide to accelerate the 2030 Agenda

Regions4 Sustainable Development

Working together for impact

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Consult the web version of the **Regions4SDGs Framework**

Scan the QR Code to access the digital version of the Regions4SDGs Framework and additional resources.

About Regions4SDGs Framework

The Regions4SDGs Framework is a living tool, meant to evolve alongside regional practice. It is not a set of final guidelines, but a map that supports regions on their path towards sustainable development, connecting diverse experiences into a coherent picture.

The Framework is part of the Regions4SDGs Initiative, which bridges a decade of SDG localization with the future of the Goals. It draws on the many experiments carried out by regional governments to address the complexity of delivering the 2030 Agenda, and offers a platform to keep learning and scale impact, helping shape global development agendas.

Subnational governments have been recognized as indispensable actors for an effective transition. Not only are their competences necessary to meet over 60% of the Agenda 2030 targets: Regions and cities are also political actors able to drive momentum for the Goals and create space for new models of development.

Global decisions must be informed by territories. At the same time, resources must reach the ground – from skills to financing and technology.
As development finance embraces the systemic approach of the Bilbao Blueprint, regions need to be equipped to create conducive environments for innovation and impact. A strong governance framework is a condition for building trust and attracting investment. Just as importantly, it is what allows regions to decide, in full autonomy, which development model to pursue — one consistent with their natural, social, cultural and identity-based characteristics, rather than one defined elsewhere.

The Regions4SDGs Initiative is a shared effort to turn individual experience into collective knowledge, with technical assistance and peer learning built around this Framework. It offers a platform where regions can draw on expert support and connect with peers to strengthen their capacity for transformative action.

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SECTION 1

Why create an SDG Framework for regions

...Regional authorities are on the frontlines of SDG action, taking important initiatives on their own account, and implementing national decisions ”

António Guterres
Secretary - General of the United Nations

The crucial role of regions in delivering the SDGs

Leaders in the transition

In a context of **interconnected global crises** that jeopardize economic stability, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability, regions[1] play a unique role in tackling many of the challenges addressed by the SDGs, including climate change, poverty, social inequality and ensuring sustainable and inclusive economic development.

Given their strategic position between national and local government, their closeness to citizens, their competences, and their political leadership, regions are essential players in harnessing the transformative progress needed to speed up progress the SDGs.

Regions, in fact, are not only indispensable partners to implement the SDG transformation: they are **key political actors** able to mobilize territorial action and investments and to provide a critical contribution to the global advocacy supporting sustainable development.

Shaping sustainable territorial systems

Without urgent action at the regional and local levels, progress toward key development milestones could remain limited.

Regions are uniquely positioned to drive this acceleration.

They sit at the intersection of national policy and local implementation and are directly connected to citizens. In addition, regions are not only administrative or geographic entities – they are complex systems with distinct competencies and deep-rooted identities and play an important role in national development dynamics.

[1] For Regions4, a region (such as a state, province, or an autonomous community) is not merely a geographic area but a subnational governance entity with specific competencies and responsibilities in sustainable development.

The distinctive contribution of regions

Competences

Regions possess a wide range of responsibilities that often include planning, education, health, infrastructure, environmental management, and economic development. Their level of territorial complexity makes them critical actors in addressing the multi-dimensional nature of the SDGs.

Influence on productive systems

Regions play a central role in **structuring and adapting productive systems** – whether industrial, agricultural, or service-based – through strategic planning, investment, and innovation. Their close relationship with the private sector and labor markets enables them to foster inclusive and sustainable economic development that reflects and strengthens local capacities and priorities.

Identity

Many regions mirror centuries of historical development and are home to rich cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity. Mainstreaming the SDGs at regional level allows for the integration of diverse perspectives and traditions into development strategies, enhancing ownership and inclusiveness, and promoting social justice and cohesion.

The call for localization in the 2030 Agenda

The call for regions to mainstream the SDGs is strongly embedded in the 2030 Agenda. The agenda directly and indirectly refers to the importance of subnational efforts and **Local and Regional Governments** (LRGs). All the SDGs have targets that related to the efforts of LRGs, in terms of their role in basic service delivery as well as their ability to promote and integrate inclusive and sustainable territorial development. A total of 105 out of the 169 SDG targets (62%) will not be reached without the proper engagement and coordination of local and regional governments (LRGs). Moreover, the success of the 2030 Agenda relies on a **whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach** reflecting a holistic, coherent and integrated approach at global, national, regional and local levels. Regions play a crucial role in bridging levels of government, integrating policy sectors, and involving local stakeholders in planning for long-term territorial development.

Key Principles underpinning the 2030 Agenda

Indivisibility

As the Sustainable Development Goals balance the three dimensions of sustainable development - economic, social and environmental - all 17 Goals are interconnected and must be addressed together.

Integration

Progress in one area affects progress in another, hence action on one SDG should not undermine another goal. The agenda calls for a coherent approach and cross-sector collaboration that takes into consideration the synergies and trade-offs between the goals.

Universality

The 2030 Agenda applies to all countries and territories, regardless of their income, development status or geographical position. Due to shared challenges, such as climate change, poverty and inequality, the agenda calls for action to be taken by all; however, while the goals are universal, implementation can differ based on national contexts, priorities and capacities.

Target 17.4

This approach has been emphasized in SDG 17, **target 17.4**, which calls for enhancing **policy coherence** by aligning actions across sectors and government levels. Achieving policy coherence requires that SDG-related efforts both recognize and incorporate regional and local contributions, and that LRGs, in turn, mainstream the SDGs.

What regions can bring to the localization process

Relevant solutions

Adapting global goals to regional realities helps ensure that strategies are practical, targeted and better suited to regional needs

Timely and focused action

With the 2030 deadline approaching, stepping up regional efforts is vital to bridging the implementation gaps and sustaining momentum for sustainability

Stronger crisis preparedness

Localizing the SDGs builds the capacity of regions to navigate complex, overlapping challenges that often hit communities hardes

Inclusive development

By focusing on those most at risk of being left behind, localization promotes greater equity and ensures that marginalized voices are part of the solution

Policy coherence

It supports greater coherence between local, regional, national, and global actions, enabling more coordinated and effective outcomes

Innovation and resource efficiency

Tapping into regional knowledge, creativity, and resources fosters more innovative and cost-effective solution

Opportunities for scaling up

Regional successes can be scaled up or adapted in other contexts contributing to broader national and global progress toward the SDGs

Regional leadership in the post-2030 commitments

Mainstreaming a sustainable development model entails a long-term transformation, spanning across decades. As 2030 approaches, global dialogues are taking place to update the Global Goals and define post-2030 commitments, regions can play a pivotal role in sustaining political momentum for a new agenda and shaping future governance frameworks.

The **Pact for the Future** has acknowledged the need for a stronger engagement of subnational governments in SDG implementation. As requested by Action 55 (e) of the Pact, the UN Secretary General has provided **recommendations on modalities for further engagement**, recognizing how territorial service delivery, local governance, and subnational advocacy provide a decisive contribution to building a sustainable future.

In addition to these elements, regions are improving their capacity to build strong governance models to accelerate SDG delivery and are integrating them into national frameworks, bridging the local and national dimensions in a multilevel governance perspective.

Progress is fostered by mutual learning and building of shared knowledge, in the context of strategic partnerships with UN agencies, national and local governments, governments' networks and research partners.

Building on these elements, regions are setting the ground for new ambitious commitments and are ready to take responsibility in driving its implementation.

Purpose of the Regions4SDGs Framework

While many regions have already embarked on the SDG journey, a large number can't rely yet on a strong system of initiatives to localize the SDGs. To enhance the role of regions in achieving the 2030 Agenda, the **Regions4SDG Framework** serves as a tool for mainstreaming and localizing the SDGs at the regional level.

It supports regions in **designing and implementing effective actions** that drive sustainable and impactful development across their territories. By using a tailored framework, regions around the world can more effectively pinpoint shared priorities and work together on common challenges.

Guidance for a tailored process

Mainstreaming the SDGs in regions is **not a one size-fits-all process**. It is a strategic approach that recognizes the region's unique capabilities, its socio-economic and cultural specificities, and its critical role in sharing sustainable futures. By embedding the SDGs into regional planning and governance structures, regions can become powerful drivers of transformative change. The Regions4SDGs Framework is meant to support regional governments in building a **systemic approach** to mainstreaming the SDGs into regional governance structures, strategies, practices and policies.

The framework recognizes that regions differ by institutional configuration, that each is unique as a context, and that regions may be at different stages in their efforts to mainstream the SDGs. Guidance considers and builds on existing structures, processes and measures that work well and support the SDG mainstreaming process. Through Regions4, regions can also engage in **peer-to-peer exchange and learning**, sharing practical experiences and solutions to accelerate SDG localization.

Reference for territorial stakeholders and investors

The Regions4SDGs Framework defines an experience-based model of regional action for SDG implementation. Besides offering a guiding tool, it aims to provide the stakeholders of regional governments, including investors, with a reference to **recognize the value and impact of regional initiatives**. The Framework highlights the key elements supporting each action's effectiveness and the correlations that create compound effects. It also promotes spaces for participatory policymaking and strong governance and monitoring practices, which increase the ability to manage funds in a reliable and impactful way.

Target Users

The framework is intended as a tool for **regional government officials** that are responsible for the development, coordination and monitoring of sustainability efforts and seek to integrate the SDGs in regional action. The framework can also be of use to national governments coordinating SDG localization, to local governments interacting with regions, and to (regional) stakeholders involved in SDG implementation.

The benefits of implementing the Regions4SDGs Framework

- Develop an **effective, inclusive and participatory governance** with an interdisciplinary and stakeholder-oriented approach
- Address long-term sustainability challenges with a **consistent strategy**, shared with local actors
- Voice regional priorities nationally and improve collaboration with national and local governments, fostering a **multilevel governance approach**
- Increase **transparency and accountability** of policymaking by strengthening the role of data
- **Learn from and collaborate with peer regions** around the world to keep improving solutions
- Increase **eligibility for funding** and get in touch with potential investors and donors

The lead organizations

Regions4 for Sustainable Development

Regions4 for Sustainable Development is an international non-profit association, which promotes sustainable development at the level of subnational state/regional government around the world, acting as the voice and representative of regional governments at a global level in the fields of biodiversity, climate action and Agenda 2030. Regions4 leads the way on capacity building for SDG implementation at the subnational level and is currently the main global network of state and regional governments focusing on sustainable development. Since the approval of Agenda 2030, the Regions4 Sustainable Development Programme has companioned Regions4 Members in developing tools, methods, and practices for the implementation of Agenda 2030 and advocated for the recognition of the pivotal role of subnational governments for reaching the Goals. Consultations at political level were followed by the creation of the Regions4 SDG Community of Practice in 2019, which hosted experts' meetings and facilitated peer learning among governments. Best practices were channeled into the Regions4 Case Study Database in the form of detailed reports that remain available as reference for replicable actions.

UN-Habitat

UN-Habitat is the focal point for urbanization and human settlement matters and custodian of SDG 11 and the New Urban Agenda within the UN system. The UN-Habitat Strategic Plan 2026-2029 places access to adequate housing, land, and basic services at the centre of sustainable urban transformation, framing them as the key enablers for tackling poverty and inequality, advancing climate action, and strengthening crisis preparedness and recovery. UN-Habitat leads on knowledge development, a global network and cutting-edge operational support on SDG Localization and multilevel governance through key initiatives such as the Partnership Platform on Localizing the SDGs (in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and Energy Security of Italy) and the SDG Cities Global Flagship, active since 2020 and gathering over 300 cities in the SDG Cities Global Community. UN-Habitat's work is anchored on its Strategic Plan 2026-2029 and the Local2030 Coalition of which it is the permanent co-chair, with UNECE. The Coalition is the UN system-wide platform for accelerating SDG localization. Bringing together its 14 UN entities alongside Member States, local and regional governments, civil society, academia, the private sector and youth to deliver as one, the Coalition is enhancing the coherence, efficiency and impact of UN action, avoiding fragmentation and connecting global goals with local realities. Through its "Road to: The Local Way" engagement process, the Coalition has drawn over 2,000 local and regional stakeholders into major global policy forums, including the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4), the Second World Summit for Social Development, COP30 and WUF13. Working with the Joint SDG Fund, the Coalition invested USD 80 million in joint programmes across 40+ countries aiming to unlock up to USD 340 million in co-financing. Combined with the Localization Blueprint, the Local2030 Capacity Building Programme, these foundations are paving the way for an enhanced UN delivery at the country level centered on localization.

The making of the Framework

The development of the Regions4SDGs Framework is the result of a collaborative process among Regions4, UN-Habitat and involved regions. The collaboration is framed by a Regions4 and UN-Habitat partnership agreement that was signed at the UN's Summit of the Future in 2024. As a core objective of the partnership, a joint agreement was made to create a framework for SDG implementation at regional level and provide technical assistance to help regions in accessing funding for sustainable development.

The aim of the framework is to have a comprehensive and consistent model to build SDG capacity among regions. The model was developed recognizing that different regions operate within varying legal and administrative frameworks, reflecting their unique constitutional status and degrees of autonomy. The Regions4SDGs Framework acknowledges this diversity by offering a flexible, adaptable model that respects each region's juridical configuration and institutional setup. This ensures that SDG mainstreaming is not only effective but also context-sensitive and grounded in existing governance structures.

The framework was developed based on the following elements:

Literature and Document Review

In developing the Framework an expert consultant reviewed a wide range of materials relevant for mainstreaming the SDGs at regional level and produced a first draft.

This included best practices, international frameworks, relevant research studies, policy briefs, articles and other reports. Additionally, literature on planning and general principle of SDG mainstreaming were examined.

Consultation

Regular updates and revised drafts of the Framework were shared with Regions4, UN-Habitat, and partners allowing for feedback throughout the development of the document

Consultations were held in the form of interviews to collect input on the zero-draft from a selected group of stakeholders and subject-matter experts. In addition, the outcome of a workshop that discussed the framework was carried out during the 2025 High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF).

Alignment with the SDG Cities Global Initiative

To stimulate a multi-level governance approach and support a coordinated and systemic engagement of all types of subnational governments, including cities, the Framework was developed in alignment with the SDG Cities Global Initiative led by UN-Habitat.

Recognition of the need for multi-level coordination was highlighted in the Ministerial Declarations of the High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development in 2023.

Best Practices, Projects and Frameworks, and Tools

Several types of sources were applied in developing the Regions4SDGs Framework. First, experiences of regions have been considered and presented as best practices. The best practices that are presented throughout the document were selected on the basis of criteria, including by their ability to exemplify specific actions suggested in the framework.

References to regions and examples featured are for illustrative purposes only and do not express any judgement, expert advice, evaluation or political views. Secondly, other projects and frameworks are considered, including UN-Habitat's SDG Cities Global Initiative.

The initiative has helped define the functional structure and make the framework fit for multilevel integration by design. Consideration is also given to other relevant frameworks such as the New Urban Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA), the Paris Climate Agreement and other international frameworks of relevance to the SDGs. Thirdly, as an integral part of the framework are the tools that are introduced throughout the document. Tools are featured to address specific topics supporting regions in the SDG mainstreaming process.

Principles based approach

The framework is built on the principles underpinning the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: indivisibility, integration and universality as well as the principles for effective governance for sustainable development that were adopted by UN ECOSOC in 2018 (See Annex I). As these principles help foster adaptability, flexibility and a deeper understanding by focusing on core values, which can support more effective decision-making.

SECTION 2

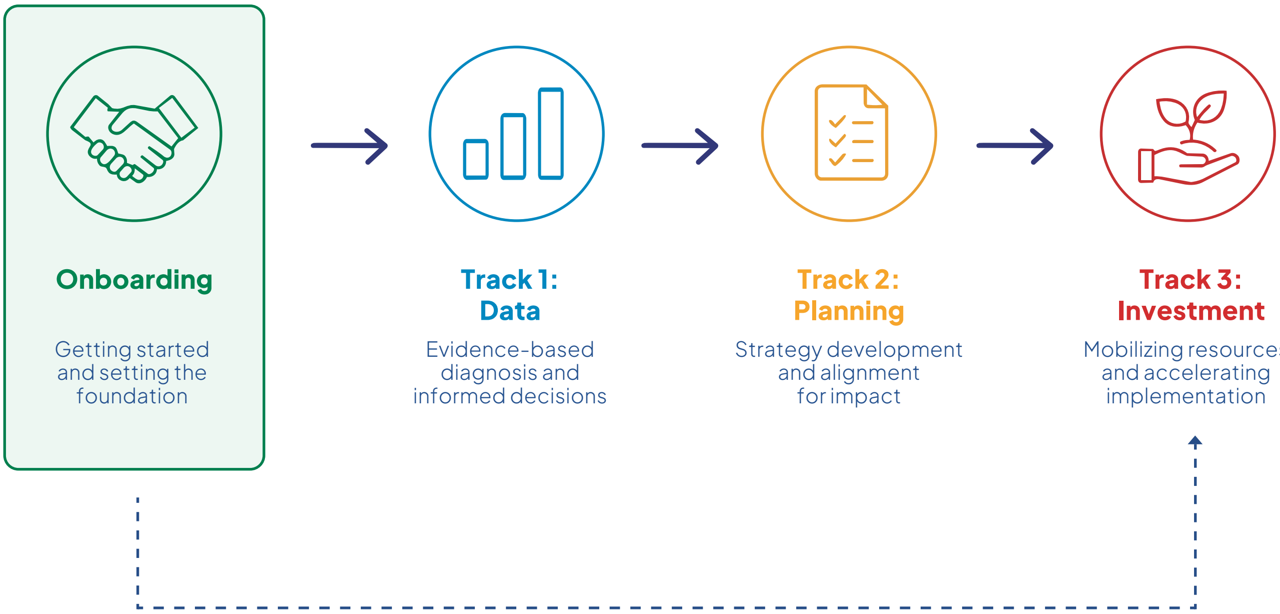
Establishing a Regional SDG Framework

Regions4SDGs outlines a model of action to support regions mainstream the SDGs. This means establishing a structured set of activities that, by working as a system, enable effective action by the regional government to accelerate SDG delivery.

The Framework identifies a series of key levers that need to be addressed, suggesting targeted action, tools, and real-life cases as reference. The Regions4 Network is available to facilitate peer-learning and training sessions for regional governments and other interested stakeholders.

The Structure of the Regions4SDGs Framework

The actions outlined by the Framework are organized into a linear process divided in an "Onboarding" phase and three "Tracks", meant to help regions proceed in a logical order. The process is meant to serve as a reference also in the likely case that a region already has several actions in place and is planning its next steps:



The Tracks

Onboarding

The onboarding process focuses on getting started by setting the ground for an effective regional SDG framework. Suggested activities include designing a governance structure, establishing a team to lead the framework to coordinate the mainstreaming of the SDGs, providing all regional departments with adequate capacity, and setting up a mechanism to engage territorial actors in decision-making and implementation.

Track 1: Data

The data track aims to enable evidence-based decisions through robust data and regional diagnostics. This track includes analyzing regional competences against the Agenda 2030 targets, mapping relevant policies, establishing an indicator framework and procedures to disclose data and report on the region's positioning.

Track 2: Planning

Track 2 aims to translate the data gathered in Track 1 into an evidence-based, sustainable, and actionable development strategy. Suggested activities include scenario planning, formulating a vision statement and defining regional goals. Other action includes the identification of activities that help achieve the agreed goals of the regional framework, which include multilevel coordination and communication efforts.

Track 3: Investment

This track aims to support regions in improving local revenues, attract investments, and align resources with impactful SDG action. Suggested activities relate to building capacity among regional officials, exploring investment pathways, identify funding sources and support the design of investment strategies that align with the SDGs.

The track-based scheme is to be **intended as cyclic**: after the investment-implementation phase, monitoring data is meant to be updated and measures to be reviewed, in a long-term development perspective.

Overview of the actions

Onboarding

- Political commitment
- Governance setting
- SDG Task Force
- Institutional capacity
- Stakeholder mapping
- SDG Council

Track 1: Data

- Competence analysis
- Policy Mapping
- Indicator framework
- Data visualization
- SDG positioning report/VLR

Track 2: Planning

- Scenarios and vision
- Consultation
- Regional SDG Strategy
- Policy coherence mechanisms
- Multilevel coordination
- Informed and aware society

Track 3: Investment

- Institutional capacity on finance
- Identification of key investments
- Enabling facilities and partnerships
- Leveraging diverse sources of funding

Timeframes

The four phases – Onboarding, Tracks 1, 2 and 3 - are designed to be implemented over the course of 18-24 months. During this timeframe, several activities are recommended, which will be elaborated on throughout the onboarding phase and the three tracks. Each phase is supported by tools and resources to help build capacity, support advocacy and partnership building.

Onboarding → Track 1: Data → Track 2: Planning → Track 3: Investment

18 - 24 months

18-24 months is an indicative timeframe. Regions can adapt the duration according to their context, capacities and priorities.

Onboarding

The starting point for a region's journey to SDG implementation is ensuring commitment at political level, which can be formalized in several ways, and should set the ground for a governance mechanism. At technical level, it is recommended to form a team dedicated to setting up an SDG framework.

Prerequisites to the process are also an enabling training on sustainable development across the administration and the engagement of territorial actors, with activities to ensure the capacity of all groups to effectively participate in the further steps.

Objective: To ensure political commitment and prepare the ground for developing a Regional SDG Framework

Output:

- Formalized political commitment
- Regional SDG governance set up
- SDG Task Force created
- Enabling capacity within the regional government
- Territorial engagement mechanism established

ONBOARDING

Actions

01. Political Commitment → **02.** Governance Setting → **03.** Capacity Assessment and Training → **04.** SDG Taskforce → **05.** Stakeholder Mapping

Political commitment

Political commitment provides the leadership, legitimacy, and momentum needed to turn the goals into action.

It enables an actual confrontation with territorial actors on a transformative process that by no means can be intended as merely technical.

The traction of a regional leadership committing to the SDGs, moreover, has an impact well beyond the region's borders and contributes to a global movement of subnational governments that play a growing role in advancing momentum for the Goals.

How to strengthen the case for an SDG mainstreaming process in the region:

- Opportunity to strengthen the relevance and effectiveness of public policy by ensuring an integrated approach between economic, social and environmental dimensions
- Acknowledging the diversity of the population and strengthening social cohesion
- Improving collaboration across policy sectors, levels of government and with stakeholders, leading to more coherent and integrated policy making
- Equipping regions with capacity to better anticipate and respond to short and long-term challenges related to e.g. climate change, demographic changes, geopolitical instability and inequality, ensuring policies remain sustainable and inclusive over time
- Set shared goals with stakeholders
- Show a consistent and long-sighted development plan for citizens, stakeholders, investors and others

Regions in Action

The Well-being of Future Generations Act, Wales, United Kingdom

The Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) is a legislative framework designed to improve the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales. It establishes a legal "well-being duty" for 48 listed public bodies, including the Welsh Ministers, local authorities, and national health boards, to carry out sustainable development. Under the Act, sustainable development is defined as the process of taking action in a manner that seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The Act identifies seven national well-being goals that translate the SDGs into local priorities. To fulfill their duty, Welsh public bodies must apply the "sustainable development principle" through five mandatory ways of working: long-term thinking, prevention, integration, collaboration, and involvement. These principles require organizations to balance short-term needs with long-term safeguards, act to prevent problems from occurring or worsening, and involve diverse groups of people in the decision-making process.

Under the Act, each public body is required to set and publish “well-being objectives” to maximize its contribution to the seven national goals, explaining why each objective is chosen and how the ways of working are applied. It must then take "all reasonable steps" to meet these objectives and produce annual reports to track their progress. At the local level, the Act establishes Public Services Boards (PSBs) for each local authority area. These boards are responsible for assessing the state of well-being in their territory and developing a five-year Local Well-being Plan.

The governance model adopted by the Act encompasses institutional oversight by two entities. The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales acts as a guardian for the interests of future generations, providing advice to public bodies, conducting reviews into how they account for long-term impacts, and publishing a comprehensive Future Generations Report every five years.

Public bodies are legally required to provide a published response to any recommendations made by the Commissioner. Complementing this, the Auditor General for Wales has the authority to examine public bodies to assess the extent to which they have acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when setting and meeting their objectives.

Monitoring progress relies on 46 indicators and milestones set by the Welsh Ministers and aligned with the SDGs. Following each election, Ministers are required to publish a Future Trends Report, which utilizes analytical data to predict likely future trends in economic, social, environmental, and cultural well-being.

The implementation of the Act has led to shifts in several policy areas. Examples include the redevelopment of the national school curriculum to prioritize ethically informed citizenship and eco-literacy, and the review of an impactful infrastructural project in favor of active travel and public transport. In health, the Act informed a 10-year strategy focused on prevention and long-term well-being rather than just treatment.

The functioning of the Act still faces some barriers. A complex landscape of partnership bodies and bureaucratic reporting, together with short-term budgeting cycles for some public authorities, are an obstacle to long-term planning. Current efforts to strengthen the practice include calls for a post-legislative review of the Act to enhance its impact ahead of the 2030 global targets and the potential introduction of a Culture Bill to make cultural well-being a statutory requirement.

Governance Setting

The governance structure is the engine of SDG implementation: it ensures that each actor has a clear role and responsibility, that decisions are transparent and legitimate, and that adequate resources are invested to carry out each activity.

The SDG governance of a region should be embedded in a broader multilevel framework.

Within the regional government, this encompasses actions to institutionalize the commitments towards sustainable development at the highest political level, make them enforceable through normative. measures, policy directions and institutional arrangements, and formalize the coordination, integration and synergies across governance levels, policy domains, and societal actors through official documents.

Creating a strong SDG governance setting:

- Set up an **internal SDG coordination mechanism**, involving representatives of all policy sectors. Both political and technical representatives should be involved.
- Establish a **formal process for the definition of regional SDG commitments**, ensuring equitable participation of all territorial actors.
- Formalize the **role of SDG commitments** in the region's decision making and policy planning processes. For instance, performance targets can be assigned to directors/managers.
- Coordinate with other levels of government to ensure **alignment of goals and actions**, with clarity on roles and competencies.

Capacity assessment and training

For the whole administration to be onboarded and participate in the mainstreaming of the SDGs, it is crucial to disseminate key information and enabling skills across the administration.

Effective actions include:

- Integrating **training on Agenda 2030** and SDG-oriented policymaking as a part of the overall training provided to public officials.
- Delivering **sessions on specific practices** such as strategic foresight for public policymaking, SDG budgeting etc.
- **Regularly engaging officials** from all departments in the activities related to the SDG strategy (update, stakeholder input integration), monitoring (data collection and analysis, policy evaluation), stakeholder engagement etc.

Regions4 can support defining a training program on sustainable development for regions and involve experts from academia, international organizations, and other regional governments.

Knowledge and skills to convey in SDG training to regional officials

Understanding of the principle of sustainable development, its evolution, potential, and critics	General knowledge of the SDGs, with a focus on targets and indicators of the respective areas of competence
Ability to identify relevant indicators to monitor topics of competence in a sustainable development perspective	Ability to align respective topics of competence to SDG targets
Ability to identify interconnections (synergies, trade-offs) with other policy areas	Ability to identify key territorial actors to involve in policymaking and engage in action implementation

SDG Taskforce

It is recommended that regions establish a task force of experts to guide the setting up of an institutional SDG framework. The SDG Task Force will be responsible to engage with representatives from relevant regional departments, regional councils, district bodies and key non-governmental stakeholders.

To be effective, the Task Force will need a clear work plan and endorsement from the highest political level. It is recommended that it is housed within the office of the head of the region. It can include staff from the government, technical support, and representatives of key stakeholder organizations.

Key characteristics and skills of a regional SDG Task Force

- Strong motivation to bring about a systemic change in the region and innovate governmental practices
- Deep understanding of the region's administrative processes
- Comprehensive knowledge of the cornerstone treaties and agreements defining sustainable development, from Agenda 2030 to local documents
- Ability to engage with all policy areas to promote transversal SDG integration
- Data analysis skills
- Project management skills
- Communication skills

ONBOARDING

Template: Workplan to implement the Regions4SDGs Framework

01	**Introduction**	Provide context to the envisaged work, describing the background to why the initiative is being carried out.
02	**Objectives/ Goals**	Describe the purpose and expected outcome of the workplan e.g. 'to mainstream the SDGs in the region'.
03	**Scope of work**	Describe of the initiative, providing information about what is included/excluded from the plan.
04	**Responsibilities**	Describe the team involved and add information on the key stakeholders involved.
05	**Tasks and Activities**	Provide a breakdown of the initiative, consisting of the tasks to be carried out – and assign tasks to the responsible entity.
06	**Timeline**	Add start and expected end date, including deadlines for each task.

Stakeholder Mapping

Governmental action is crucial, but not sufficient, to achieve a systemic transformation. The commitment, mobilization and participation of all actors of society is needed to support SDG implementation and to shape collective decisions and policies.
A comprehensive stakeholder mapping and analysis can be carried out to identify those who should be involved in developing the SDG Framework.

Mapping stakeholders

In line with the 'whole-of-government' and 'whole-of-society' approach, the mapping and analysis should consider both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.
As an initial step, it is helpful to map stakeholders engaged in sustainable development across government, academia, civil society and the private sector. This can include preparing an organigramme of units and focal points in departments.
The mapping can help assess the current level of coordination on sustainability efforts and clarify how stakeholders are connected across sectors.

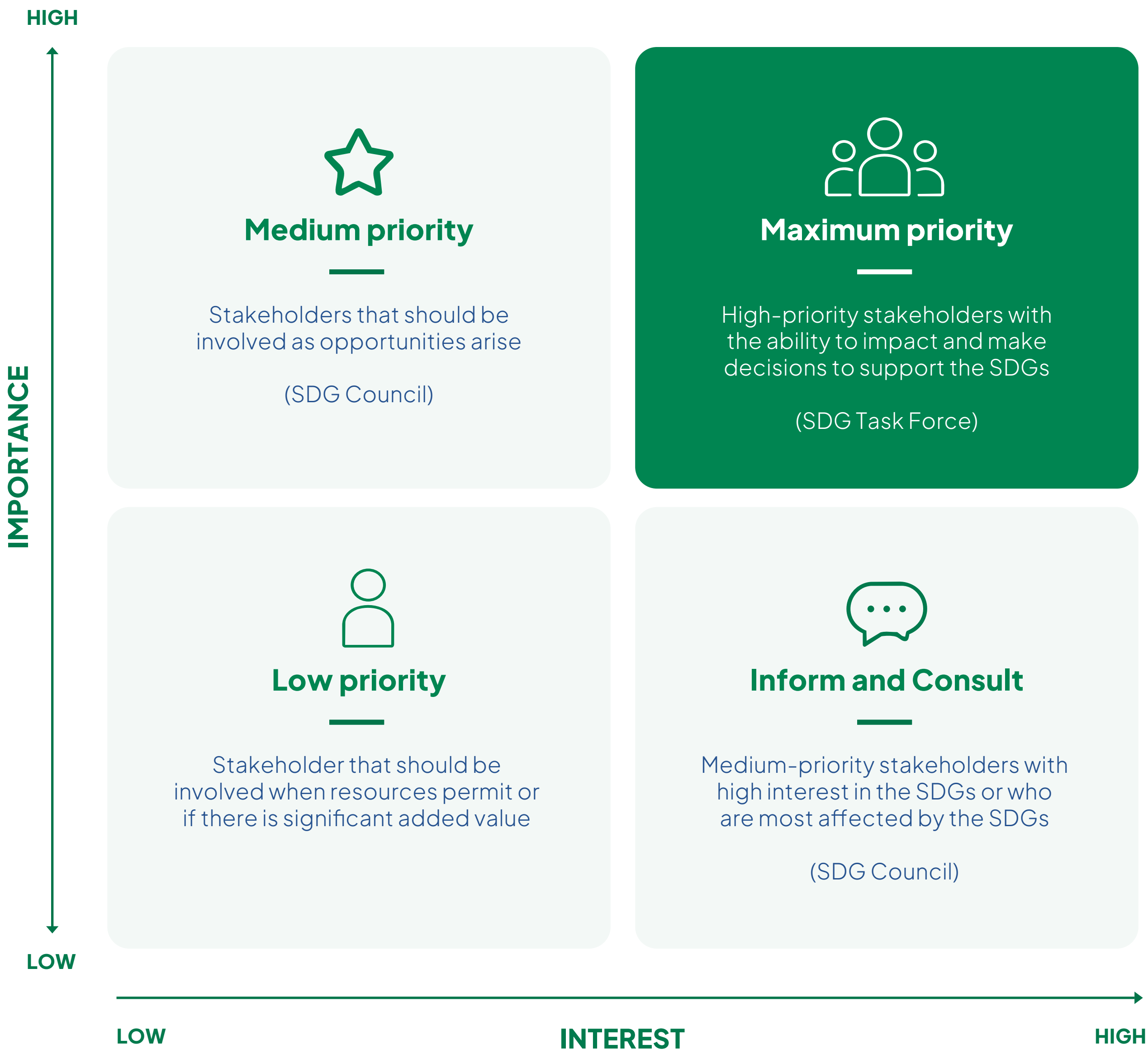
A guiding table for stakeholder mapping:

Internal stakeholders		Role in SDG implementation action
	Representatives from regional departments	• Participate in SDG Task Force • Support policy mapping • Contribute to data collection and reporting • Input and review regional SDG Strategy • Align policies to the regional SDG Strategy • Involve external stakeholders • Mobilize and align resources for SDG implementation
	Local governments & LG associations	• Contribute to localized monitoring and reporting • Input and review regional SDG Strategy • Align local policymaking to the regional SDG Strategy • Involve local stakeholders
	Civil Society Groups	• Contribute to data collection and reporting • Input and review regional SDG Strategy • Mobilize action • Raise awareness
	Academia and Research Institutions	• Contribute to data collection and reporting • Input and review regional SDG Strategy • Provide training to regional officials and stakeholders
	Private Sector	• Contribute to data collection and reporting • Input and review regional SDG Strategy • Mainstream sustainability as core-business pillar and competitive factor • Mobilize private resources • Raise awareness
	Media	• Facilitate stakeholder dialogue • Raise awareness

Stakeholder analysis

Following the completion of the mapping, a stakeholder analysis should be conducted to assess the influence, interests and relevance of the stakeholders in relation to the SDGs.

The following grid can be used to group the stakeholders according to their influence and their relevance in relation to the SDGs:



Source: TAP Network. 2016. Goal 16 Advocacy Toolkit, New York/ tapnetwork2030.org/goal-16-advocacy-toolkit

SDG Council – territorial participation and engagement mechanism

After mapping regional stakeholders, an engagement mechanism can be built. The SDG Council serves as a platform to engage all the actors who must be represented in regional decision-making and who can contribute to action implementation and data collection. Engagement mechanisms vary widely depending on factors such as existing channels of representation, organized constituencies, and the objectives pursued. However, some elements of an effective engagement mechanism can be identified.

Role of an SDG Council:

- Facilitate consultations of regional stakeholders on sustainable development challenges, goals, and solutions in the region, enabling participatory policymaking
- Support monitoring and reporting on SDG implementation, involve stakeholders in VLRs
- Coordinate activities with and between local actors
- Raise awareness

Suggested Members:

- Local governments
- Youth organizations
- Women's groups
- Academia and Research institutes
- NGOs working on topics of relevance for sustainable development
- Foundations and other development promoting organizations
- Employer's organizations and trade unions
- Business representatives from various sectors
- Public and private utility providers
- Banks and financial service providers

Recommendations – an effective mechanism should include:

- A clear governance and transparent and equitable criteria for participation, with consideration for groups that for structural or historic reasons do not have structured representation (e.g. youth).
- Defined objectives and expected outcomes of the mechanism (e.g. defining an SDG Strategy, discussing sectoral policies, producing policy papers, facilitating territorial partnerships).
- A structured program of activities – regular meetings, defined agendas and follow-ups, formal outcomes – with a sizeable impact on the region's activities for SDG implementation.

Use an existing mechanism or build a new one? – criteria to decide:

01 Does the council have clear lines of accountability and strong leadership?

02 Are there formal inclusion and equitable participation of regional actors?

03 Does the council encompass "leaving no one behind?" (having representation of marginalized people)

04 Does the council lend itself to non-partisan agreement?

05 Is monitoring and review part of the structure?

Regions in Action

Aliança Catalunya 2030, Catalonia, Spain

The Aliança Catalunya 2030 is an **institutionalized multi-stakeholder coalition** that originated from the National Agreement for the 2030 Agenda, approved by the Government of Catalonia in February 2020. It operates as a decentralized, region-wide platform that integrates a wide array of actors - including the regional government, local administrations, universities, research centers, private companies, trade unions, and civil society organizations - into a unified strategic framework.

The operational backbone of the Alliance is the National Agreement, a foundational document that establishes a **shared vision** and defines the **roles and responsibilities** of the different local actors. To join the Alliance, organizations must formalize their adherence by defining **specific, concrete commitments**. Rather than following a rigid, standardized format, these commitments are tailored to the diversity of the participating entities but must comply with a set of **criteria to ensure institutional maturity and effectiveness**. These requirements include mandatory executive-level leadership, explicit integration into the organization's strategic planning, a clear communication strategy, and the allocation of adequate financial resources. Furthermore, every commitment must be supported by a monitoring system based on indicators and metrics that allow for rigorous evaluation and accountability.
The Governance of the Aliança is facilitated through a **Steering Group**, open to any entity that requests membership after formalizing its pledges. This structure allows the Alliance to function as a collaborative space for sharing best practices and technical information. Moreover, the Alliance promotes the integration of the sectoral SDG strategies of its members into the regional framework.

A key technical element of this practice is the National Plan for Implementation. Conceived as a dynamic instrument, the plan is subject to periodic updates through participatory workshops and multi-sector dialogues, ensuring that the regional strategy remains responsive to emerging challenges, such as the social and economic shifts caused by the pandemic. The Plan aims to foster a change in the way local actors interact with public administration, from merely aligning existing activities to the SDGs to **advancing together a systemic, transformative strategy.**

Link: https://cads.gencat.cat/ca/alianca/

ONBOARDING

Recommendations:

- Ensure political commitment to develop an SDG Framework.
- Consider the benefits and challenges of developing a framework for the region.
- To ensure a multi-stakeholder and inclusive approach to developing a framework, a mapping and stakeholder analysis should be carried out.
- Stakeholders should be analyzed from a policy coherence perspective i.e. how can they contribute to vertical and horizontal integration of the SDGs.
- Establish a Task Force and an SDG Council with clearly identified roles and responsibilities laid out in Terms of Reference.
- Develop a workplan that is endorsed by the highest political level in the region.
- Ongoing exchange between regions, including through mentoring and communities of practice, can support continuous improvement and scaling of solutions.

Tools and Resources

OECD Toolkit for a Territorial Approach to the SDGs

The Toolkit is a practical guide supporting policymakers at all levels in implementing a place-based approaches to the 2030 Agenda.
Drawing from the experiences of various territories, it features a step-by-step approach for SDG champions, localized data and indicators, and a self-assessment tool for regions pursuing SDG localization.
The toolkit can be helpful in gaining insight into the various elements the region can consider in mainstreaming the SDGs.

Multilevel Governance for SDG Localization

This report introduces a framework designed to capture: the core dimensions of Multilevel Governance processes as shaped by policy coherence and integration, as well as the principles and enabling conditions that transform these processes into concrete practices and the resulting outputs and outcomes, particularly in terms of strengthened capacities and improved mechanisms for localizing the SDGs. At the heart of the framework are the need for vertical and horizontal integration and stakeholder engagement, making it a useful tool to map, organize and analyze regional governance practices for localizing the SDGs.

Stakeholder Engagement & the 2030 Agenda– A Practical Guide

The 2030 Agenda's multistakeholder approach calls for an enabling environment that fosters inclusive participation and encourages innovative partnerships to mobilize and share knowledge, expertise and financial resources across all levels. This practical guide offers guidance for government officials and stakeholders seeking to strengthen participation and inclusion in the implementation and the follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda. It provides guidance on participatory approaches and presents practical tools and methods to support these efforts.

Stakeholder's Mapping Tool

The 2030 Agenda's multistakeholder approach calls for an enabling environment that fosters inclusive participation and encourages innovative partnerships to mobilize and share knowledge, expertise and financial resources across all levels. This practical guide offers guidance for government officials and stakeholders seeking to strengthen participation and inclusion in the implementation and the follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda. It provides guidance on participatory approaches and presents practical tools and methods to support these efforts.

Track 1: Data

To enable an evidence-based Regional SDG Strategy, robust data and regional diagnostics are needed. Track 1 is about creating an overview of the regions' **current state of play** on sustainability.

Many regions already have SDG-related measures in place, ranging from strategies, legislation, actions, programs and data. A comprehensive assessment is needed to evaluate these efforts, identify priorities and uncover gaps. This involves gathering and reviewing relevant information and data, mapping existing policies, and assessing the overall policy and enabling environment for mainstreaming the SDGs in the region.

Objective: To create an overview of existing SDG-related measures, including policy, data and programmes to inform the strategic priorities of, and laying the groundwork for an evidence-based Regional SDG Framework, including indicator framework and investment plan.

Output:

- Policy mapping
- SDG Monitoring system

TRACK 1: DATA

Actions

01. Competence Analysis →
02. Policy Mapping →
03. Indicator Framework →
04. Data Visualization Platform →
05. SDG Reporting (VLRs)

Competence analysis

As a first step, it is recommended to precisely map regional competences, at the highest possible level of granularity, against the targets of Agenda 2030. The outcome can be a table showing connections, targets that might not fall under the region's competence, and competences that do not relate to any SDG target. This helps clarify the scope of a regional SDG strategy and the focus of following activities. It is communicatively impactful to also produce a graphical overview of connections.

SDG Targets	Policy area/ sector	SDG 1 – No Poverty					SDG 2 – Zero Hunger					SDG 3 – Health					SDG 4 – Education				
		1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.5	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.5	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5
1	Economic growth																				
2	Health																				
3	Education																				
4	Inequality																				
5	Employment																				
6	Renewable natural resources																				
7	Tourism																				
	etc.																				

Source: UNDP. 2017. Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA) to facilitate mainstreaming of SDGs into national and local plans. New York

Policy mapping

It is now possible to start mapping existing policies, initiatives, available funding and data of relevance for sustainable development.
The exercise should provide a baseline for assessing how the region is currently addressing the SDGs. It is suggested to include broader national and local SDG efforts.

Before starting to plan, in fact, it is key to have a comprehensive overview of frameworks and initiatives that are external to the region but relevant for its SDG action and identify those to which the region's strategy actions should align.

Relevant data to be collected:

- Existing national, regional and local development plans
  Sectoral strategies and plans
- Legal and regulatory frameworks relevant to the SDGs
- Policies
- Information about the institutional and governance structures, including roles and responsibilities
- Availability of coordination mechanisms/multi-stakeholder platforms
- Data on sustainable development efforts, including availability of disaggregated data
- Stakeholder mapping and analysis (use from Onboarding phase)
- Budget allocations of relevance for sustainable development
- Information regarding financing and budgeting practices
- Any existing assessments and analysis available e.g. vulnerability assessments, environmental impact assessments
- Status of SDG localization process in the country
- Voluntary National Review processes and reports

Indicator Framework

To support evidence-based SDG-related action and monitoring, it is necessary to build a solid indicator framework. This process should be supported by the regional statistical office – if available – or of the National Statistics Office (NSO). The process should involve a comprehensive review of current data collection tools and sources across the statistical system, focusing on data sources, comparability, and frequency.

Engaging both data producers and users – as well as other relevant stakeholders – can help ensure mapping and build awareness of SDG data requirements. Regions should tailor the to their data collection capabilities, considering available human resources and 'data infrastructure'. Examples of regional indicators can be found **here**.

Criteria for selecting SDG indicators:

Relevance	Alignment with other levels	Presence of a legal quantitative target	Source	Collection frequency	Latest Update	Territorial level
indicators must be relevant to SDG-related phenomena.	if a national SDG monitoring system is available, it is recommended to include at least a core set of its indicators and to make sure that the regional set uses the same phrasing and unit for the same parameter.	indicators measuring a parameter for which legislation has set a binding target for the region shall be included.	priority should be given to more reliable data sources, such as official statistical systems, governmental agencies, and research institutions.	more frequently and regularly updated indicators should be preferred.	more frequently and regularly updated indicators should be preferred.	indicators with a higher level of geographical detail should be preferred.

A key challenge for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is the lack of data for the SDGs. Gaps remain significant in disaggregated data – by sex, age, disability etc. These data are essential in **identifying vulnerable groups** and shaping adequate policies to meet their needs. To address the data gaps and improve SDG monitoring efforts, governments are advised to consider alternative data sources.

Alternative indicator sources

Geospatial Data

Satellite imagery and location-based data offer powerful tools for identifying vulnerable groups and assessing environmental conditions, particularly in informal settlements where traditional data collection is difficult. This information can be gathered through participatory spatial mapping processes or focus group discussions.

Citizens-Generated Data (CGD)

Data generated by citizens, communities or organizations can provide critical insights into regional needs and priorities, serving as a valuable resource for shaping SDG related policies.

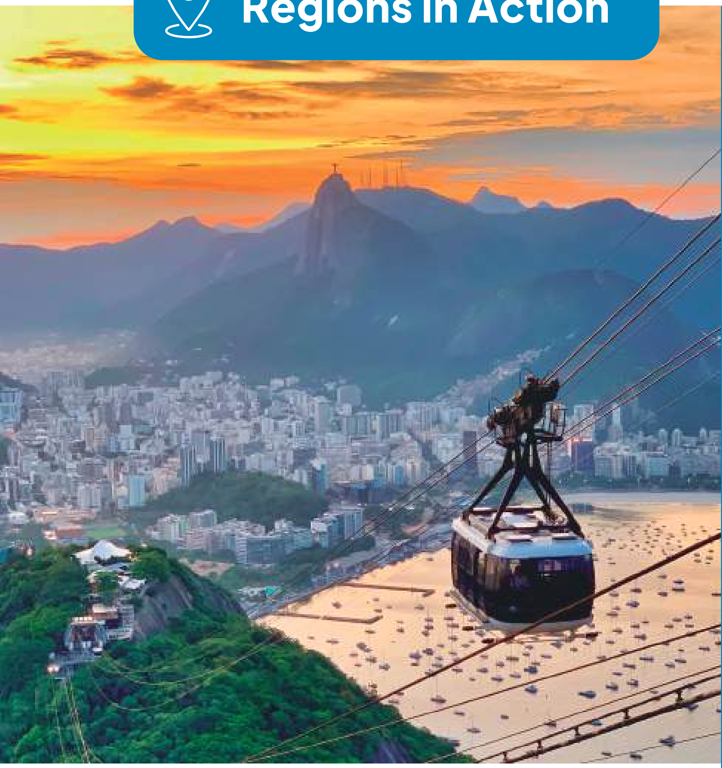
Privately held Data

Business-generated data, including from corporate sustainable development reporting, can shed light on a company's impact on marginalized groups and help reveal broader societal patterns and trends.

Administrative Data

Data gathered by government agencies and NGOs through routine operations can be leveraged to address gaps in official statistics..

Source: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) & the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data. 2020. The 2030 Agenda's Data Challenge – Approaches to Alternative and Digital Data Collection and Use, Eschborn.



Regions in Action

SDG Observatory,
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

The **SDG Observatory** in Rio de Janeiro operates as a specialized technical output within a broader urban resilience framework developed in cooperation with UN-Habitat.
The initiative follows a rigorous **six-stage lifecycle** that begins with strategic planning and proceeds through information technology architecture, graphic development, and content organization, culminating in a platform launch and a formal handover to the state government.

The operational heart of the Observatory is an **indicator monitoring system** that aggregates data from municipal, state, and national administrative records to provide a localized performance overview.
This technical foundation allows to produce **periodic thematic notebooks** and sector-specific analyses in areas such as healthy urban development, digital transformation, and security.

The interoperability of the platform with Rio de Janeiro's existing digital environment has been ensured through **auditing of the platform's source code** by PRODERJ, the state government's information technology authority.
To maintain data integrity and relevance, the system incorporates an **active listening process** that engages both civil society and diverse state secretariats represented in the State SDG Commission.

The project also includes a specialized **SDG Challenge**, which identifies and integrates local award-winning initiatives directly into the platform to showcase proven territorial solutions. Upon the completion of the implementation phase, the initiative transitions into a **legacy mode**, where the state government assumes full operational responsibility supported by a comprehensive suite of handover documentation.

This transition is facilitated by the preparation of **training materials** designed to standardize platform use across different governmental departments.

Data visualization platform

Once an indicator framework has been established, the region can consider developing an SDG Data platform or dashboard. These type of digital platforms or dashboards help visualize and track progress toward the SDGs. This is relevant to adopt a data-driven approach to the implementation and review of the SDGs, supporting evidence-based planning and policy making.

Data platforms are an important tool to support decision-making by identifying gaps, progress and challenges. They also increase transparency and accountability for stakeholders and citizens, facilitate participation, and provide a ready information base to produce a regional SDG report.

Source: The 2020 SDG Index for Flemish Cities Construction and Analysis, UNU-CRIS 2021

SDG reporting (VLRs)

Regions can impactfully contribute to global reporting by producing Voluntary local reviews (VLRs). Though not officially recognized by the UN, VLRs have become a cornerstone of SDG tracking and play a role that goes beyond accounting quantitative progress: they present replicable best practices and show how regions and cities have translated Agenda 2030 into a roadmap to address local needs and unfold local potential by setting up institutional frameworks and transformative solutions. Ensuring a strong connection between VLRs and VNRs is key to fostering multi-level cooperation and reinforcing the importance and effectiveness of SDG localization.

The Follow-up and Review Process

The 2030 Agenda outlines a robust, voluntary, effective, participatory, transparent and integrated follow-up and review framework. It encourages countries to regularly conduct Voluntary National Reviews. The reviews should be “inclusive reviews of the progress at national and subnational levels, which are country-led and country-driven”. The Agenda moreover calls for reviews to provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of relevant stakeholders.

The SDGs are tracked using a framework of 231 global indicators, many of which can be adapted for regional use by collecting data locally. National and subnational indicators are developed to complement the global indicator framework and to track progress on national and subnational strategies and plans.

At the national level, sub-national data should be taken into account in reviewing result of national SDG strategies and plans. Localizing the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda entails developing local indicator and carrying out review at the subnational level i.e. in the form of Voluntary Local Reviews.

In addition, it is vital to ensure data collected at the subnational level is included in national monitoring and reporting, enabling participation of the Local and Regional

Governments (LRGs) and stakeholders in review efforts, and ensuring regional and local achievements are recognized and part of the Voluntary National Reviews.

Sources: United Nations. 2015. Transforming our World the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, New York; Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, UNDP, UN-Habitat. 2016. Roadmap for Localizing the SDGs: Implementing and Monitoring at Subnational level. Barcelona.

Key benefits of conducting a Voluntary local review

Acting as a reporting and diagnostic tool, linking cross-sectoral and multi-level efforts supporting planning and policy coherence

Help identify, improve and create local data systems

Fostering stakeholder engagement and community participation

Providing an opportunity for open and transparent processes, strengthening accountability

Supporting multilevel governance by enabling dialogue, knowledge sharing and cooperation across levels of government

Elevate the position of regions internationally, as VLRs often are showcased during global events such as the High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF)

Offering a standardized approach, fostering comparability and coherence across various regions and jurisdictions

UN-Habitat's website presents key guidance and a broad repository of VLRs for reference: **https://unhabitat.org/topics/voluntary-local-reviews**

Regions in Action

A quantitative evaluation of regions' SDG impact, Manabí, Ecuador

The Manabí province has designed a methodology to evaluate objectively the effectiveness of policies in advancing the SDG in the territory, assigning a higher relevance to efforts in more critical areas.

The system uses a **multi-criteria matrix**, validated by UNDP, to link every item in its Annual Operating Plan (POA) and its Territorial Development Plan (PDOT) to the 169 targets of Agenda 2030. The individual contribution of each action is calculated by dividing the resources actually spent on that action by the total budget needed for its completion, ensuring that the results reflect real financial efforts rather than just planning intentions.

Actions are then grouped into **five core dimensions**: Social Cohesion and Equity, Environmental Sustainability and Resilience, Urban Economy and Municipal Finance, Infrastructure Development, and Planning and Urban/Territorial Governance. For each dimension, a **"development gap"** is calculated through the Territorial Prosperity Index (IPT) developed with UN-Habitat. The weight assigned to each dimension is determined by the size of its gap relative to the total sum of all gaps across the five dimensions; consequently, **the area with the greatest deficiency receives the highest statistical weight**.

Every SDG is then mapped to one of these five dimensions, and the dimension's total weight is distributed among its aligned goals. For transparency, all data is synthesized into an **interactive Power BI dashboard** and a geo-referenced map that displays the location of sustainable practices across the territory.

The methodology is institutionalized as a **"Provincial State Policy"** within the region's mandatory planning acts. This technical rigor has enabled the province to standardize its **Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs)**,
facilitating comparative analysis with other subnational governments.
Several elements of this methodology are deeply rooted in the specific administrative and legal landscape of **Manabí and Ecuador**.

The technical framework relies on the integration of local planning instruments such as
the **Plan Operativo Anual (POA)** for annual budgeting and the **Plan de Desarrollo y Ordenamiento Territorial (PDOT)** for long-term strategic vision. Furthermore, the methodology is designed to respect the specific "exclusive competencies" of provincial governments in Ecuador and uses data available in the country.

Despite these local specifics, the core logic of the Manabí Methodology is **highly replicable for any region**. The fundamental approach of **linking individual budget items directly to SDG targets** through a validated alignment matrix is a universal technical solution for financial transparency. Any region can adopt the mathematical formula that weighs an objective's fulfillment by its actual **budget execution**, transforming qualitative promises into quantifiable evidence.

Similarly, using a **gap-based weighting system** to prioritize resource allocation is a globally applicable governance principle. By aggregating these weighted contributions into a single, multi-criteria index like the ICA2030, any subnational government can produce a comparable and standardized report of its impact on the 2030 Agenda.

TRACK 1: DATA

Recommendations:

- Collect all necessary information and data that can give a sense of the current regional readiness to implement and review the SDGs
- Develop a regional indicator framework. Develop regional indicators that are identified through a multi-stakeholder approach. Ensure alignment with national and local indicators frameworks if they exist.
- Develop an action-oriented VLR. Use the VLR as a branding tool, ensuring a strong connection between VLRs and VNRs to foster multi-level cooperation and reinforcing the impact of SDG localization.

TRACK 1: DATA

Tools and Resources

Rapid Integrated Assessment

The Rapid Integrated Assessment supports governments in integrating the SDGs into national and sub-national planning processes by evaluating their preparedness for implementation. It provides clear steps and practical templates to help policy makers to assess the relevance of SDG targets to their specific regional contexts and identify key interlinkages between them. The RIA serves as an initial step in developing a strategic roadmap for SDG implementation.

E-Handbook on the Sustainable Development Goals

The E-Handbook on the SDGs Indicators supports the collection, calculation, and monitoring of the SDGs using data produced by national statistical systems. It focuses on the key aspects essential for measuring indicators, including definitions, sources and calculations. It also provides an overview of the global metadata as well as examples of how it has been implemented in countries.

Sustainable Development Goals – Monitoring Human Settlements

The 2030 Agenda includes a dedicated goal on human settlements – SDG 11- which aims to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. SDG 11 is a central entry point for SDG localization and is at the same time closely linked with all other SDGs - playing a foundational role in achieving them. Additionally, relevant indicators on human settlements are embedded across various other goals within the 2030 Agenda. This report sheds light on the indicators and the importance of monitoring SDG 11.

Global Urban Monitoring Framework

The Global Urban Monitoring Framework was endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission in March 2022 for implementation as part of the Harmonized Global UN Systemwide Strategy for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and New Urban Agenda (NUA) and other regional, national, and subnational urban programs. It harmonizes existing urban indices and tools, including the widely implemented City Prosperity Index (CPI). The framework aims at ensuring thematic integration and interlinkages among various dimensions of development, disaggregation of data, and inclusion of groups that are traditionally excluded. It promotes working at different scales and functional urban areas, including ecological functional areas, enabling city comparability, and the possibility of more in-depth policy analysis.

Guidelines for Voluntary Local Reviews Volume 1 – A Comparative Analysis of Existing VLRs

The guidelines are designed to provide technical assistance to LRGs that are approaching a local review of the SDGs. This volume presents the key concepts, potential components of a review's structure and outcomes, and a examples and practices that can inspire more local and regional governments to carry out a VLR.

Guidelines for Voluntary Local Reviews Volume 2 - Towards a New Generation of VLRs: Exploring the local–national link

These guidelines aim to support both national, regional and local governments in pursuing collective and mutually reinforcing approaches. They examine how different levels of government have cooperated to date in implementing and monitoring the SDGs, identify remaining challenges, and highlight the lessons that can be drawn from the interplay between VNRs and VLRs. The guidance promotes a fully integrated, inclusive, and multi-level approach to advancing the 2030 Agenda.

Track 2: Planning

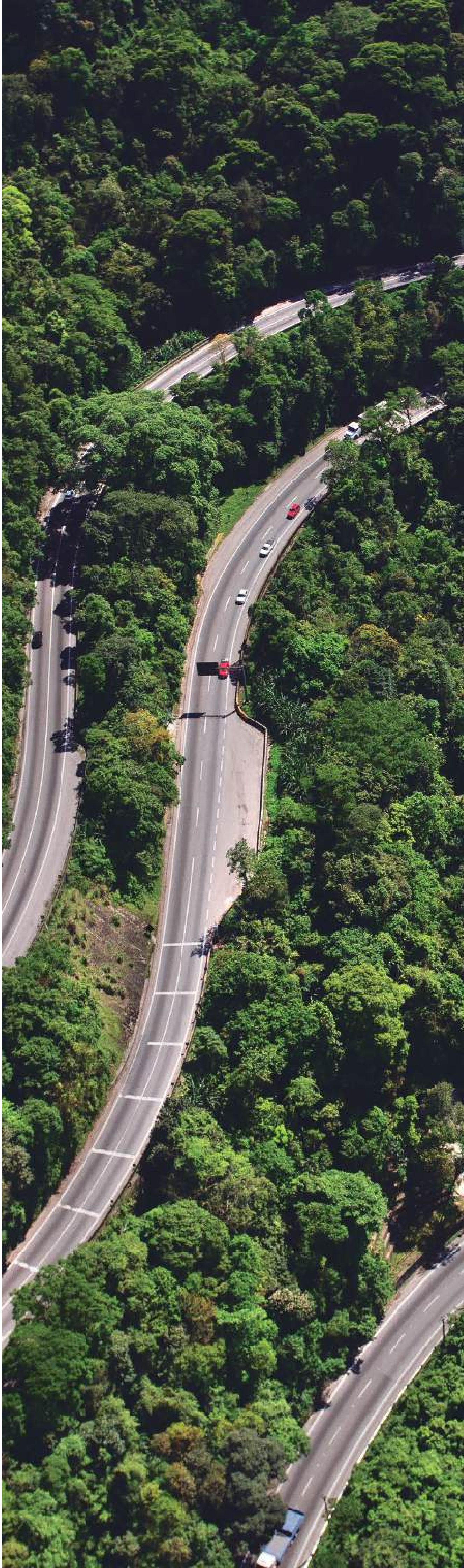
Track 2 guides the region in identifying the key priorities and an implementation strategy for a sustainable transition.

The process starts from scenario planning and consultations to define a long-term vision, localized goals and specific activities to achieve them.

Objective: To develop an evidence-based and Regional SDG Strategy that is based on an inclusive and participatory multi-stakeholder approach

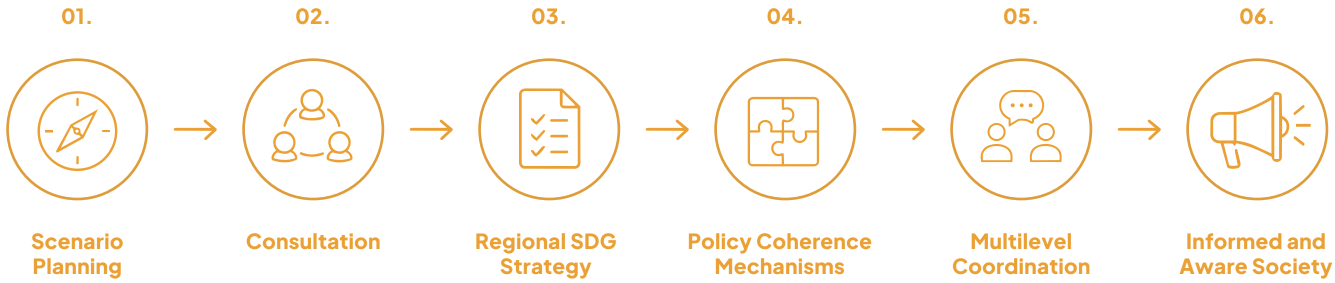
Output:

- Regional SDG Strategy, including:
  - Sustainable Development Vision
  - Strategic Goals and Objectives
- Action plan
- Connection with regional policy planning
- Actions for multilevel coordination
- Actions to disseminate, raise awareness, and engage citizens



TRACK 2: PLANNING

Actions



Scenario Planning

Scenario planning is a strategic tool to design forward-looking strategies developing narrative-based future scenarios with a multi-stakeholder approach. It involves a structured analysis of how different uncertainties might unfold and affect key issues - urgent and evolving challenges related to megatrends such as climate change, demographic shifts, urbanization, digitalization etc.
Each scenario therefore considers likely trends, areas of uncertainty, and potential shocks – both positive and negative.

Using strategic foresight for scenario planning:

To help the scenario building process, strategic foresight is recommended. As a first step in the process, the drivers – or pathways – of long-term change should be detected. These are then used to explore possible futures or scenarios that can help guide the region's policy and investment needs on the SDGs. Participatory approaches – such as convening a workshop – should be used to carry out scenario planning.

Regions in Action

Strategic Foresight System, Flanders, Belgium

The **Flanders Strategic Foresight System** is an anticipatory intelligence framework co-developed with OECD to integrate long-term thinking into the regional policy cycle. The system is built upon **seven specialized** roles for foresight, ranging from stress-testing existing policies and identifying strategic insights to fostering policy innovation and multi-level dialogue. Operationally, teams within the administration utilize **four practical functions** - discover, map, explore, and create - to transform data into actionable future-oriented intelligence. This work is centralized within the **Strategic Insights and Analyses unit** of the Chancellery and Foreign Office, ensuring that foresight activities have a direct line to the center of government.

The implementation follows a **five-year roadmap** that prioritizes capacity building through regular training and the establishment of clear institutional mandates. To enhance the system's robustness, the methodology incorporates **shared scans and scenario-building exercises** conducted in collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders, including academia and the private sector. The practice emphasizes the use of **stress-tests** to evaluate how current policies might perform under different future conditions, thereby improving overall policy resilience. This technical approach is supported by **high-level administrative sponsorship**, which is identified as a necessary enabler for moving foresight from an ad-hoc activity to a systematic institutional practice. By positioning foresight as a core element of **public administration reform**, the system creates a structured feedback loop that informs both strategic planning and daily management.

Consultation

Integrating the SDGs in regional policymaking and promoting a systemic change is an inherently political process that affects all parts of society. Therefore, it is crucial to embed participation in each step, to ensure all actors' voice is listened to in the definition of regional goals and actions. Moreover, participation is essential to create ownership of the transformation, necessary to turn commitments into concrete, systemic action.

Forms of consultation

Various forms of consultations can be considered: workshops, roundtables or policy dialogues, focus groups, surveys or questionnaires, social media chats, radio or online platforms. The core infrastructure enabling consultations is meant to be the SDG Council established during the Onboarding track. This process can be further strengthened through exchange with other regions undertaking similar SDG localization efforts within the Regions4 network.

Regional SDG Strategy

While Agenda 2030 provides a global framework and a common language on sustainable development, each territory has very specific characteristics, from its morphology and ecosystems to its social and economic setting, that need to be considered to effectively localize the SDGs. To systematically transpose the SDGs to the territory, regions can develop a regional SDG strategy.

Shape a vision

Using the scenarios identified in the scenario planning workshop can help define a long-term regional vision of the future. The vision captures the "big picture" of what the region wants to achieve through SDG mainstreaming.

A vision statement serves to build a shared understanding of the overarching purpose of mainstreaming the SDGs in the region. To foster ownership, the vision statement should be formulated with the help of stakeholders e.g. based on the consultation and/or the involvement of the SDG Council.

Define regional strategic goals and objectives

In partnership with the SDG Council and informed by the outcome of the data track, scenario planning and consultation processes, strategic goals and objectives should be defined. These goals may be broad and cross-cutting and should be aligned with the vision statement. Each strategic goal should be supported by clearly defined objectives and expected outcome necessary for its achievement. Using the policy mapping carried out in the Data Track, it is also recommended to connect objectives with relevant policies. Blank cells will highlight policy gaps.

Strategic Goal: Empower enterprises to turn sustainability in a driver of value creation and business development

Objectives	Expected Outcomes	Corresponding SDG/target
Increase sustainability competencies in the private sector	1.1 X% of businesses in the region have at least one employee with certified training on sustainability	SDG 12, Target 6: Encourage companies, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle."
1.2 Increase the share of enterprises that embed sustainability in their business model	1.2 X% of businesses in the region have undergone a sustainability process	
1.3 Increase the availability and skillset of local sustainability professionals	1.3 X sustainability professionals are active in the region	
Etc.	Etc.	Etc.

Strategic synergies

In the strategy, consideration for the synergies between the SDGs should be given. This can be achieved by structuring the strategy around key clusters e.g. people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships:

People
Social inclusion and Human Development

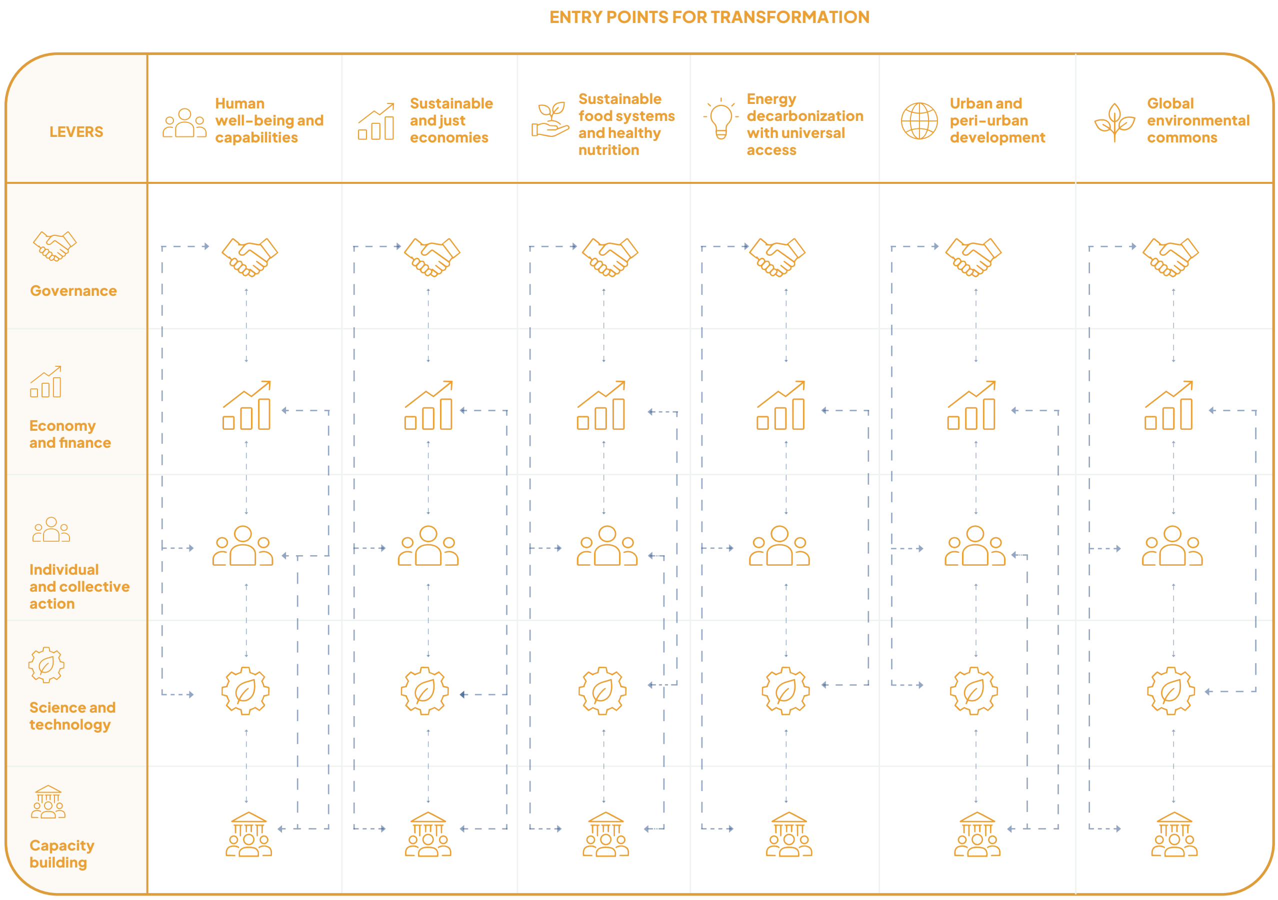
Planet
Environmental Sustainability and Climate Action

Prosperity
Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Development

Peace
Governance, Rule of Law and Participation

Partnerships
Means of implementation

Another option is using the entry points and levers identified by the Global Sustainable Development Report 2023:



United Nations. 2023. Global Sustainable Development Report 2023 Times of Crisis, Times of Change, New York

Identify key policy instruments and implementation actions

To achieve the chosen goals, regions need to identify the main policy instruments through which implementation actions can be planned, and the key actions they plan to carry out. The implementation section of the SDG Strategy should include assigned responsibilities, the actors leading and supporting each action, and the most relevant and impacted stakeholders. The stakeholder mapping conducted during Onboarding and the policy mapping carried out in the Data Track should provide a strong enabling background for this process.

Estimate costs

Estimating the cost of each action is required to identify resources from the regional budget and to create an investment pipeline for external financing, as explained in more detail in Track 3.

Monitor and review

The monitoring system and review processes described in Track 1 on Data provide key tools to establish a regular monitoring mechanism, providing transparency and allowing the region to keep updating goals and actions of the SDG Strategy.

Key elements for an effective SDG Strategy

A Regional SDG strategy should be intended as a process rather than as a still document. Its value depends on its impact on regional policymaking, on citizen and stakeholder engagement, and on its capacity to integrate individual projects and policies in a systemic vision – thus increasing public acceptance and trust by stakeholders, including financial actors. A key element to achieve such effects is co-creating the Regional SDG strategy with citizens and stakeholder groups, with a strong participatory approach. In addition, specific mechanisms can increase the alignment of policies to the SDGs and their consistency with each other, such as strategic sustainability evaluations and green budgeting practices. Finally, the impact of SDG Strategies is highly dependent of the effectiveness of the governance model adopted by the region.

Benefits of an SDG Strategy

An SDG Strategy can provide the region with a:

Proof of political commitment towards Agenda 2030	Map of the areas of competence of the regional government against the SDG targets
Analysis the region's characteristics and SDG positioning in relation to global trends and future scenarios	Vision for territorial development, politically backed and legitimated by the collaboration of stakeholders
Long-term plan, spanning across the political programs of single mandates	Platform for policy coherence and cross-sector coordination

Recognition of territorial actors and their contribution to the region's sustainable development

Policy coherence mechanisms

Specific mechanisms can be adopted to ensure the coherence of all regional policies, actions, and investments with the SDG Strategy.

Strategic sustainability assessment

An evolution of the strategic environmental assessment already adopted by many regions, a sustainability assessment has a broader scope and uses the Regional SDG Strategy as a reference to check that a proposed plan, policy, initiative, or investment is consistent with the regional goals and does not impair other regional activities that benefit specific objectives.

SDG budgeting

SDG budgeting involves aligning the government's public financial management (PMF) systems – such as planning, budgeting, expenditure, and reporting – with the SDGs.
This helps to make sure that public funds are effectively directed toward achieving sustainable development.
Several methodologies are available to map the contribution of a regional budget to the SDGs and to assess the positive, neutral or negative impact of each budget item on SDG implementation.

Regions in Action

The Regional Sustainable Development Plan (PRSS), Lombardy, Italy

Until 2023, Legislatures of Lombardy used to adopt a Regional Development Plan as a guiding document for their five-year policy planning. The XII Legislature chose to adopt a Regional Sustainable Development Plan (PRSS) to send a clear political message: the intention to place sustainability at the core of all regional programming rather than treating it as a separate or purely environmental sector. about integrating the SDGs at the core of its planning. The
Plan translates the high-level, long-term vision of the Regional Sustainable Development Strategy (SRSvS, 2021) into concrete, actionable commitments for the five-year government mandate.
The plan operates through a structured framework of **seven thematic pillars**, each specifically mapped to the United Nations **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** to ensure a direct link between local initiatives and global targets.
The functioning of the PRSS is defined by its **transversality and strategic focus**, as it concentrates on high-impact objectives capable of generating public value. A key component of this tool is its **multidimensional monitoring system**, which evaluates strategic areas through four distinct lenses: user impact, economic-financial performance, regulatory simplification, and innovation/sustainability. This structure allows for a more nuanced evaluation of policy impacts compared to traditional binary success metrics.
To maintain technical coherence, the PRSS adopts approximately **seventy contextual indicators** directly from the long-term Regional Strategy, creating a technical bridge that ensures the mandate's activities remain aligned with the territory's broader sustainability path.
The PRSS is integrated into a **dynamic policy cycle**: it is updated annually via the Regional Economic and Financial Document (DEFR), allowing the administration to adapt its strategies to emerging crises or shifts in the socio-economic context.
Transparency and accountability are maintained through an open-access web platform titled **"Lombardia Infatti"**, which tracks progress against both strategic and output indicators. By weaving the SDGs into the mandatory financial and planning documents of the region, the PRSS ensures that sustainable development objectives are backed by the actual allocation of regional, national, and European resources.

Multilevel coordination

Public efforts for SDG implementation are more effective if data, agendas and consultation/engagement processes are well coordinated across levels of government. Supporting municipalities and intermediate institutions (provinces, counties etc.) is a strategic investment to enhance regional action.

Foster multilevel coordination:

- Engage local political leaders as drivers of local SDG implementation processes
- Provide guidelines and technical support to develop local SDG agendas and to guide their integration in local policymakin
- Scale down the regional SDG monitoring system to monitor local data
- Support local stakeholder engagement processes
- Facilitate practice exchange among local institutions
- Listen to local institutions and integrate their perspective in regional SDG action

Informed and aware society

Compelling narratives and decisive campaigns are essential to engage all actors of society by translating the SDGs in the respective contexts and communicative codes. They allow regions to inform citizens, share ownership of the transition process, foster participation and mobilize territorial action. Cultural action for the SDGs, however, should not be one-directional; rather, it should foster a multi-voiced dialogue that brings forward the perspectives, visions, and needs of all segments of society. Regions play a particularly important role in this regard, as they are well positioned to connect diverse communities and stakeholders within a clearly defined territorial context.

Key actions to raise awareness

01 Having identified the key actors of the transition in the region during Onboarding - their roles, needs, languages - shape targeted campaigns and messages to onboard each category of actors in the transition (e.g. civil society associations, enterprises, trade unions, universities, etc.).

02 Create space for dialogue and amplify the voice of society groups, with special attention to underrepresented ones. The SDG Council can provide a platform for this, but additional initiatives might be required to reach a broader audience.

TRACK 2: PLANNING

Recommendations:

- Develop a Regional SDG Strategy based on long-term planning efforts
- Ensure long-term planning factors in risks and crises by applying foresight and scenario planning
- Ensure ownership of the SDG planning by organizing a consultation with a broad group of stakeholders and/or among the population
- Develop a 'Sustainable Development Vision' that outlines the long-term ambitions of the region. Base the vision on the outcomes of the scenario planning workshop and consultations. Communicate the Vision to the public
- Identify strategic goals and objectives connected with monitoring indicators, policies and budget items
- Identify key actions that help to support the strategic goals and objectives of the strategy
- Consider organizing the Regional SDG Strategy around the GSDR entry points and levers
- Communicate the Regional SDG Strategy to the public

Tools and Resources

UN Strategic Foresight

This guide is a comprehensive resource designed to support individuals or teams at any stage of their foresight journey. It serves as a practical entry point into the world of foresight, helping users frame, design, and lead effective foresight initiatives.

Foresight Manual – Empowered Futures for the 2030

The manual introduces strategic foresight as a critical practice for anticipating and preparing for future uncertainties and opportunities. It emphasizes the importance of foresight in enabling public institutions to make informed, long-term decisions that align with the SDGs. The manual outlines various techniques, including scenario planning and offers concrete suggestions on how to incorporate foresight into different stages of policy planning highlighting participatory approaches to ensure diverse perspectives inform long-term future planning.

The Global Sustainable Development Report 2023

The Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) 2023 identifies critical sectoral transformations required to advance the SDGs. It highlights key insights and actionable tools, introducing a conceptual model that breaks down the transformation process overtime. It presents a model for understanding the transformation process over time and outlines the roles of different levers facilitating various stages of the transformations. The model can be applied as an organizational structure for national and regional SDG strategies, VNRs and VLRs.

Track 3: Investment

A consistent and detailed vision of regional development is a powerful way to foster trust and engagement of investors in the territory, enhance the value of individual projects, and allow a clear measurement of impact.

The territorial priorities identified through the Regional SDG Strategy, however, must be converted into finance-ready pipelines, capable of transforming the systems that shape a territory rather than focusing on individual projects.
This track offers recommendations as to how regions can approach meeting the financing needs associated with implementing the goals and objectives identified to meet the SDGs in the region.

Objective: To define an investment pipeline based on the regional SDG Strategy and find ways to meet the identified financing needs.

Output:

- Regional training plan on finance
- SDG investment plan
- Partnership and agreements with key actors
- Activation of localized finance tools

TRACK 3: INVESTMENT

Actions

01. Institutional Capacity on Finance →
02. Investment Plan →
03. Enabling Facilities and Partnerships →
04. Leveraging Diverse Sources of Funding

Institutional capacity on finance

The creation of a regional SDG investment framework requires adequate capacity to turn fiscal transfers into impactful investments, adopt innovative financing models, and build effective partnerships. Funds and technical assistance may need to be mobilized to strengthen the financial capacity and the legal mandate to allocate funds, enter contract, and make investments using borrowed capital.

Goals of capacity building on finance

- Increase ability to identify financing sources and tools, connect them to SDG priorities, and align projects accordingly
- Map and engage relevant actors to build an SDG finance ecosystem
- Strengthen institutional legitimacy and predictability

Regions4 can support designing training sessions and meeting experts from other regions.

Investment planning

A strong SDG investment plan can attract relevant resources from investors, mobilize private investments in the region, and orient the strategic choices of territorial actors – from the engagement in professional training to innovation within enterprises, to research plans in universities and decisions of financial institutions. By including ESG criteria in project selection and investment decisions, it can also provide an above-average risk profile and integrate different approaches to sustainable investing, from impact-driven to performance-oriented.

Key features of a regional SDG investment plan

- Address levers of systemic change (enterprises with the potential to scale, development of new value chains, service delivery, natural ecosystems, etc.)
- Identify the most suitable sources of funding for each initiative and align its design accordingly
- Leverage existing national or supranational financing frameworks
- Be clearly integrated and consistent with the region's general budget
- Integrate impact within performance criteria through clear indicators and measurement methodologies, leveraging ESG data and SDG alignment to guide decisions
- Be co-created with territorial actors through an equitable and transparent engagement, leveraging the SDG Council and adopting practices like **Participatory budgeting**

Structure of an SDG investment plan

01	Snapshot of the current financial landscape	• Overview of financial sources • Current policy and financial regulatory landscape • Information on government structures and stakeholders and their capacities
02	Cost estimates and investment needs	• List strategic goals and objectives of the Regional SDG strategy and indicate cost estimation for each • Overview of financing gaps: identification of areas that are underfunded
03	Sources for financing the Regional SDG Strategy	• Domestic Resources (national and regional) • Domestic private resources • International resources (Public and private) • Other
04	Financing strategy	• Regional Resource mobilization e.g. tax reforms, new revenue sources etc. • Private sector investment e.g. promoting public-private partnerships • International Cooperation e.g. partnerships, development aid etc. • Innovative financing e.g. green bonds
05	Enabling environment	• Building financial technical capacity • Raise awareness • Strengthening institutional frameworks
06	Monitoring and evaluation	• Tracking progress, including identifying key performance indicators • Produce annual SDG financing report

Aligning with an Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF)

In some cases, an Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) may have already been established by the national government. If an INNF is in place, efforts should be made to ensure alignment – or alternatively, the region can consider the development of a Regional Integrated Financing Framework.

The **Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA)** was adopted in 2015 and provides the roadmap and tools to finance and implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It details how to mobilize the means of implementation and expands on the financial policy commitments needed. It calls for countries to establish Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFF). INFFs provide a framework for financing national sustainable development priorities and goals. While a country's sustainable development strategy outlines what needs to be financed, INFFs focus on how the strategy will be funded and implemented.

They help policy-makers:

- Mobilize additional financing to support sustainable development priorities
- Improve alignment of different types of finance – domestic, international, public, private – with national priorities and needs, including development cooperation
- Enhance coherence across different financing policies, aligning them to medium and long-term sustainable development priorities
- Better manage risk and an increasingly complex financing landscape
- Better articulate the needs to external investors, donors and the international development community

While INFFs are primarily a national-level framework, they can also be considered at the regional level. These regional INFFs should focus on aligning financing with regional sustainable development priorities and goals, which at the same time, supporting national INFFs by strengthening regional financing and capacity. A regional INFF can contribute to the financing of the region's SDG-related activities, mobilize regional resources and align capital with the SDGs as well as enhance the effectiveness of the national INFF thereby promoting coherence at multiple levels of government.

INFFs are built around four key components:

Role of an SDG Council:

- Assessments and diagnostics
- A comprehensive financing strategy
- Systems for monitoring and review
- Governance and coordination mechanisms

For more information on INFFs click here.

Enabling financial frameworks, facilities and partnerships

Large-scale, long-term investments require enabling conditions and an ecosystem of actors to be designed and financed. Regions4 can support connections to partners and opportunities, helping regions align priorities with emerging financing and collaboration initiatives.

Building an enabling environment for SDG investment

Engage or establish project preparation and aggregation facilities, providing technical support for project preparation and turning fragmented local opportunities into investable portfolios

Engage local financing institutions and local development banks as pipeline builders

Activate co-financing schemes with national funds and multilateral development banks

Innovate regulatory and fiscal frameworks in collaboration with national governments and other institutional levels, in a multilevel governance perspective

Find or develop opportunities of technical assistance for the regional and local realities

Regions in Action

Ecological ICMS Program (Paraná, Brazil)

The **Ecological ICMS in Paraná** is a fiscal redistribution mechanism that utilizes environmental criteria to allocate a portion of the state-collected Tax on Circulation of Goods and Services (ICMS). The program is governed by a **legally established 5% quota** of the total tax revenue, which is divided into two equal components: 2.5% for municipalities managing protected areas or traditional community lands, and 2.5% for those protecting public water supply watersheds. This model is sustained by a **permanent technical inspection process** and continuous environmental monitoring, ensuring that financial transfers are tied to the actual quality of conservation management. To facilitate transparency, the state provides an **interactive dashboard and a transfer simulator**, allowing municipal managers to project revenue based on their environmental performance.
A key technical feature of the program is its **flexibility**; municipalities are not legally required to earmark these funds for environmental sectors and can instead integrate them into general budgets for health, education, or infrastructure. This autonomy incentivizes local governments to view natural resources as **strategic economic assets** rather than constraints on development. The system utilizes a specialized digital platform, the **CEUC system**, for georeferencing protected areas and managing the documentation required for technical evaluation.
Because the mechanism is embedded in the **state constitution and tax law**, it provides a self-sustaining financial stream that operates independently of external grants or donor funding. The program also promotes **biodiversity corridors** by rewarding municipalities that connect their vegetative fragments with those of neighboring territories.

Leveraging diverse sources of financing

Given the scale and complexity of the SDGs, achieving the objectives of the Regional SDG Strategy will require drawing on a diverse mix of resources. To mobilize the necessary funding and bridge financing gaps, a wide array of viable financing opportunities should be explored.

The Regions4SDGs Framework aims to help regions improve their capability of effectively allocating resources toward sustainable development of their territory, and to strengthen trust from all kinds of investors by showing a compelling vision, a concrete action plan, and a strong governance model.

Channeling public funds

Regional SDG budgeting

SDG budgeting involves aligning the government's public financial management (PMF) systems – such as planning, budgeting, expenditure, and reporting – with the SDGs. This helps to make sure that public funds are effectively directed toward achieving sustainable development and can support advocacy for increased investments from national governments towards local SDG implementation.

Regions in Action

Budget Alignment with the SDGs, Andalucía, Spain

The **Andalusian Budget Alignment Report** functions as an annual monitoring tool that quantifies the regional government's financial contribution to global targets. The methodology is structured around **four distinct analytical sections**: the estimation of aligned appropriations per goal, the determination of alignment across four dimensions of sustainability, the classification of impacts as either direct or indirect, and the identification of policies with high **multiplier effects**. This process is managed by the Ministry of Sustainability and Environment, which coordinates a **participatory validation cycle** involving 13 different ministries and their attached administrative agencies.
Each agency is responsible for reviewing and verifying the preliminary alignment results based on their specific knowledge of budgetary programs.

Technically, the report moves beyond simple tagging by linking a high volume of individual **budgetary records** to the 169 specific targets of the 2030 Agenda. The resulting data is processed into two primary outputs: a comprehensive digital report and an **interactive dashboard** that allows for the visualization of budgetary policies and synergies between different goals. To ensure the practice is embedded in the policy cycle, the findings are submitted to the **Delegated Commission for the 2030 Agenda**, a high-level collegiate body that provides political leadership and executive direction.

The system is designed for **iterative improvement**, with each annual cycle used to refine the mechanisms for incorporating report conclusions into the initial formulation of the next year's budget. This approach relies on a **legally mandated organizational structure** that explicitly assigns sustainable development competencies to the senior bodies of the administration.

International public finance

International public finance (IPF) can provide the resources, tools and legitimacy to implement the SDGs in the region. Using SDG-aligned indicators and reporting tools such as the VLRs are important tools for accessing the suggested financing opportunities.

To access IPFs the following steps can be considered:

01 **Target funding opportunities** specifically aligned with SDG priorities and sub-national development goals including grants, loans and technical assistance from UN agencies like UN-Habitat or UNDP; international financing institutions e.g., World Bank or regional development banks; bilateral donors e.g. national/subnational cooperation agencies (GIZ, SIDA, AICS…); other multi-lateral sources e.g. the European Union.

02 **Join international cooperation networks** to benefit from co-financing opportunities, receive technical assistance and policy guidance and share experiences and build peer learning relationships. Examples include the Local 2030 Coalition, OECD's Territorial Approach to the SDGs, Regions4 Sustainable Development.

03 **Advocate for national-level support** for fiscal decentralization, direct access to international SDG funds.

Mobilizing private capital

Private sector capital can give a decisive contribution to financing the SDG transition by providing the scale of financing and operational efficiency that regional governments often cannot achieve alone.

Some of the activities needed to leverage private sector investment include:

01 **Adopting new financial instruments** and partnerships to encourage private capital.

02 **Developing public-private partnerships** (PPPs).

03 **Mainstreaming sustainability awareness** and capacity across the productive system through campaigns, education, and incentives for ESG development processes that help to align business strategies to the SDGs.

04 **Collaborating with representatives of the main value chains** in the territory to identify strategic investments for an SDG transformation and define joint investment plans.

05 **Including data from corporate sustainability** reporting in regional SDG reporting/VLRs to recognize private action and give visibility to best practices.

Leveraging localized finance tools

Besides defining where to direct investments, regions can develop a set of tools to localize finance that leverage the features of local economy and financial landscape and address specific needs of the region. Below are listed some highlighted examples. Derisking and blended finance strategies to facilitate and support impact-oriented private investments.

Regional SDG Fund

To support the mobilization, allocation and management of resources for implementing the Regional SDG Strategy, establishing an SDG Fund can be considered. A fund is a dedicated financial mechanism that can serve as a centralized platform, allowing the government to scale financing for SDG priorities beyond regular budget allocations.

Key considerations in designing an SDGs Fund:

- What type of governance structure should be established to enable effective collaboration among government, business and financial institutions, civil society and international partners
- How to enable alignment with national and local SDG efforts
- What capacity is needed to manage different types of funding
- Installing monitoring and reporting structures

Financing partnerships

As another financing option, blended finance and co-financing strategies can be explored to reduce investment risk and mobilize additional resources by:

- Leveraging public funding alongside philanthropic contributions and impact investment
- Using international public finance to attract private sector investment
- Partnering with development banks to access specific instruments such as subnational finance facilities

Sustainable borrowing and investment alignment

Aligning public borrowing procedures with international sustainable investment criteria, allows regions to access reserved financing opportunities, e.g. from ESG, sustainability, and impact-oriented funds.

Issuing green, social and SDG Bonds

Through issuing bonds that are tied to the outcomes of the Regional SDG Strategy, capital can be raised for sustainable development. These bonds can be issued around the broader goals of the strategy or specific themes, e.g. health, climate change etc.

Regions in Action

Sustainable Bonds, the Basque Country, Spain

The Basque Sustainable Bonds, issued by the Basque Government since June 2018, illustrate how a subnational entity can connect territorial development goals to global capital markets. Nine annual issuances have raised €5.7 billion, as of early 2026. Where the strategic framework Bilbao Blueprint sets out a comprehensive, human-centered approach to reading territorial priorities and organizing them into a coherent strategy, the bonds are where that approach is put into practice, giving it a concrete channel through which projects can be identified, financed, and monitored over time.

The program rests on the fiscal architecture set out in the Basque Economic Agreement, which gives the region authority to manage, levy, and collect nearly all of its own taxes. That capacity for internal decision-making and resource management, combined with a governance model built around long-term strategic planning, monitoring systems, stakeholder dialogue, and democratic participation in setting priorities, allows the region to pursue two things simultaneously: an actual transformation of the territory, and a credible signal to markets about its stability over the long term. Roadmaps such as Klima 2050, the Industry Plan 2030, and the V Basque Inclusion Plan extend across multiple electoral cycles, giving continuity to policy commitments regardless of changes in government. The Basque Financial Alliance, established in 2025, extends this coordination further by bringing banks, cooperatives, industry, and institutional investors into a shared framework of strategic goals.

The bonds operate under a Sustainability Bond Framework aligned with the ICMA Green and Social Bond Principles. Proceeds are restricted to projects already included in the General Budgets of the Basque Government that meet defined green or social eligibility criteria. Project selection is handled by a Sustainability Bond Committee drawing on the departments of Treasury, Environment, Health, Education, and Economic Development, each of which carries out an ex-ante impact evaluation of its proposed projects. The government publishes allocation and impact reports within twelve months of each issuance, including metrics such as CO2 avoided and the number of beneficiaries reached, and the framework as a whole is reviewed independently by third parties.

Beyond the framework's governance mechanics, the bonds also embed a system for measuring their effects on the territory. Each issuance is tracked against a set of social and environmental indicators, such as housing support and scholarships reaching eligible households and students, healthcare assistance provided to vulnerable population groups, jobs generated, greenhouse gas emissions avoided, participation in environmental education programs, among others.

Taken together, the Basque experience shows how a region's consistent capacity to plan long-term sustainable development, underpinned by a strong governance model, can substantially increase a territory's attractiveness to investors. At the same time, this approach allows those resources to be managed in ways that remain closely aligned with the specific needs and characteristics of that territory.

TRACK 3: INVESTMENT

Recommendations:

- The usage of SDG-aligned indicators and reporting tools such as the VLRs are important tools for accessing the suggested financing opportunities
- The Regional SDG Strategy can be used to employ available resources
- Annual SDG financing reporting can help strengthen accountability and transparency to the SDG public spending practices and at the same time offer strategic insights in follow-up action

Tools and Resources

SDG Finance Academy

The SDG finance Academy is a global initiative by UNDP that shares its expertise in sustainable finance through both in-person and free online learning opportunities. It aims to build capacity for mobilizing public and private finance in support of the SDGs. The academy offers both in-person training as well as an online e-learning course.

Exploring the Role of Participatory Budgeting in Accelerating the SDGs

This report examines both the direct and indirect links between Participatory Budgeting (PB) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It provides background to PB, explaining why it is regarded as an impactful democratic innovation. A key focus is the multidimensional nature of PB, supporting an integrated approach to sustainable development and thereby positioning it as a useful tool in accelerating progress on the SDGs. The report introduces a theoretical framework and examines global case studies that illustrate how PB functions.

Budgeting for the SDGs – A Modular Handbook

This modular handbook provides technical guidance for practitioners to align SDGs in the budget cycle. This handbook has four modules:

- Entry points and sequence of budgeting for the SDGs reforms,
- Linking the SDGs to strategic budgeting processes,
- Tracking SDG budgets,
- Local budgeting for the SDGs.
- There is a companion piece on the Origins and Practices of SDG budgeting to provide further country studies and templates to design and implement SDGs reforms and budgeting process.

The Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) Facility

The Facility supports the development and implementation of Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFFs). It helps governments harness the transformative potential of the INFF approach to align financing systems with the SDGs in three areas: tailored technical assistance, collaboration among public, private, and civil society actors to design financing strategies and reforms and, lastly, facilitating peer learning and knowledge sharing. The platform offers guidance on five phases to develop an INFF:inception, assessment and diagnostics, financing strategy, monitoring and review, government and coordination.

Course: Own Source Revenue for Local Governments

The course provides guidance for subnational tax reforms and administration, enabling government officials to plan their own-source revenue reforms during the course. The focus is on factors within the control of local and regional governments and aspects of the administration that they can reform without advocating for legal changes through the national government. The course is meant to address especially common problems in low- and middle-income countries. However, the concepts in this course are meant to apply globally and the methods presented can be adapted to a variety of contexts. Exercises are designed to be interactive and assist with creating an action plan for the most important reforms.

The SDG Localization Marker 2.0

The SDG Localization Marker is a tool developed by the UN Joint SDG Fund in partnership with the Local 2030 Coalition. It serves to identify joint initiatives that effectively prioritize localization efforts; it thus ensures both policy coherence and transparent, accountable tracking of allocated financing for SDG localization, and facilitates rigorous monitoring and reporting on the progress achieved in localizing the SDGs. Accompanied by a guidance note, the SDG Localization Marker offers therefore a scalable, replicable model for donors and partners to strengthen the prioritization, management, and evaluation of SDG localization.

Working together to accelerate **SDG localization.**

Consult the web version of the Regions4SDGs Framework

Scan the QR Code to access the digital version of the Regions4SDGs Framework and additional resources.

Regions4
Sustainable Development