

Module 0

Introduction to the Global Goals for Cities Learning Kit



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About URBACT and the Global Goals for Cities Network

Global Goals for Cities – in short GG4C – is a pilot network proposed and funded by URBACT III in partnership with the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) to support cities in the process of localising the UN 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in their respective local contexts.

The GG4C network has supported partner cities to plan for integrated and participative sustainable urban development – exchanging experiences, learning methodologies and tools – and thus enhance the process of SDG localisation. With 19 partner cities from 19 EU member states, the pilot network responded to a growing interest and need among European cities in implementing the 2030 Agenda and was larger than any other URBACT network in terms of number of partners. Its duration was from 9 March 2021 to 31 December 2022. In this period, all partner cities developed their own Integrated Action Plans (IAPs), focussing on prioritised areas of the SDGs framework and localisation process. For more information:

[URBACT website](#)

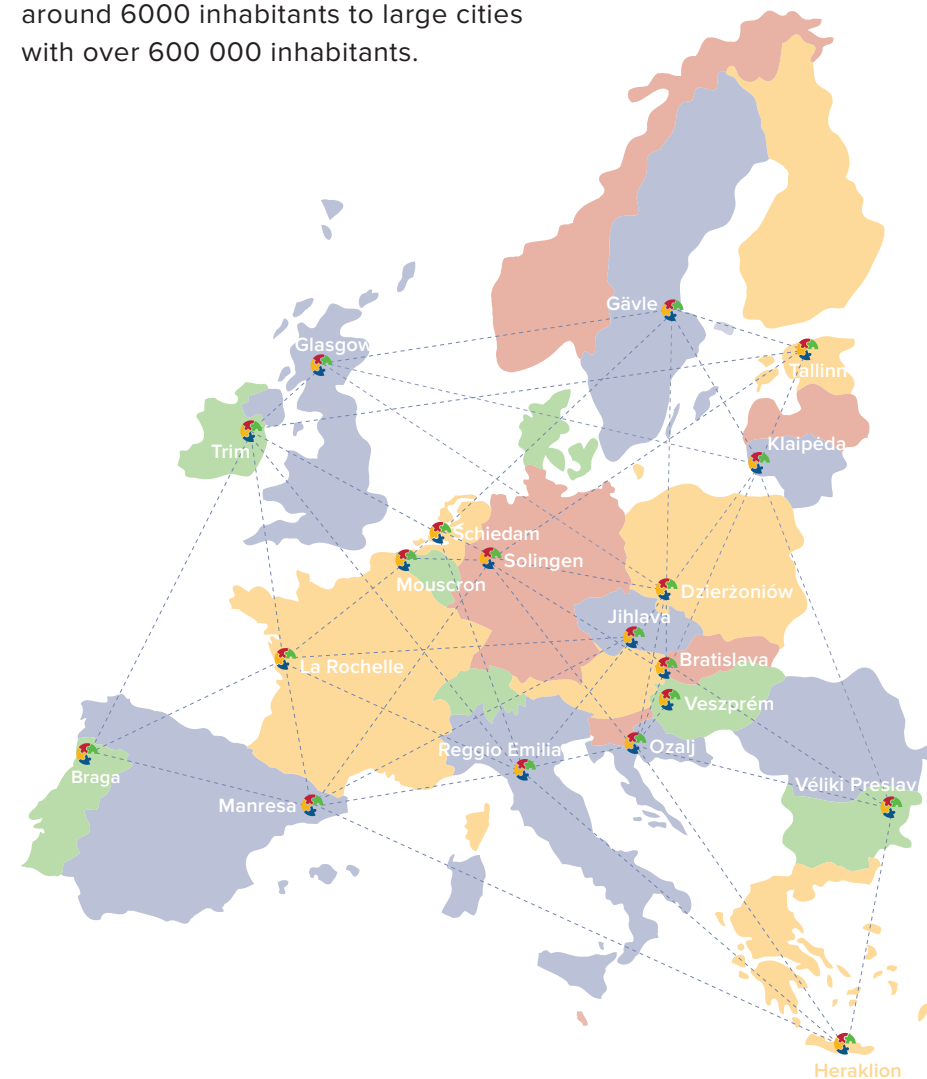


[GG4C network page](#)



The GG4C partner cities

Led by the city of Tallinn (Estonia), Global Goals for Cities partners are from 19 countries and range from small towns with around 6000 inhabitants to large cities with over 600 000 inhabitants.





The UN 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, the 193 UN member states unanimously adopted the 2030 Agenda and its 17 interlinked global goals, designed to be a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all: the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Under each SDG, there are several targets defining what is to be achieved. There are 169 targets in total.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



More information:



2030 Agenda core principles

The 2030 Agenda is based on five core principles that should be at the backbone of any efforts to achieve the goals.

- 1. Universality:** the 2030 Agenda applies to all countries, regardless of their stage of development.
- 2. Leave no one behind:** all people will be considered, despite their state of need and location.
- 3. Interconnectedness and indivisibility:** the 17 SDGs are interconnected and indivisible. Implementing the goals must treat them as such, rather than selecting a few and disregarding the rest.
- 4. Inclusiveness:** everyone should be acting to fulfil the 2030 Agenda, no matter their race, gender, ethnicity or identity.
- 5. Multi-stakeholder partnerships:** multi-stakeholder partnerships should be put in place to help spread knowledge, technology and financial resources as a means of enforcing the SDGs.

Five “Pillars” of sustainable development

The 2030 Agenda has been illustrated in five interdependent dimensions, or pillars, known as the “5 Ps”: People, Planet, Prosperity, Partnerships and Peace. The 5 Ps help to communicate the agenda in an easier way to stakeholders.





The SDG wedding cake model

A popular representation of the SDGs is the wedding cake model developed by the Stockholm Resilience Centre. It depicts the fundamental importance of protecting the biosphere as a foundation for our societies and economies, as shown below:

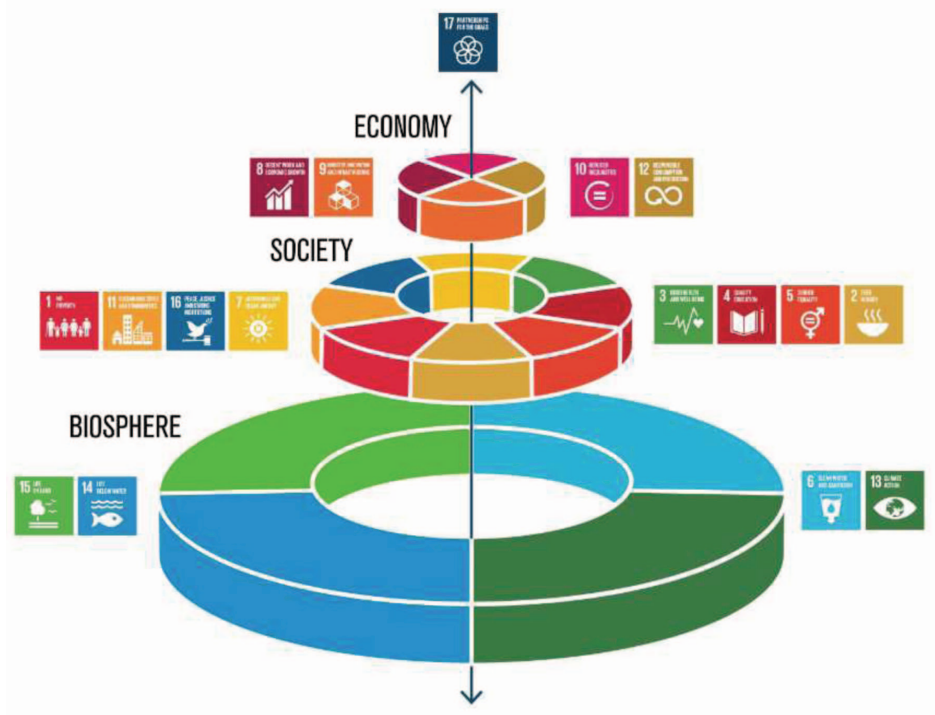


Image credit: Azote for Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University
CC BY-ND 3.0.

SDG 11 – Putting cities at the heart of the 2030 Agenda through their own goal

One of the most significant SDGs for cities is SDG 11: *Sustainable cities and communities*. Its targets cover a wide range of topics relevant to sustainable urban development, such as affordable housing, access to public transport, and participatory urban planning. It was put in the agenda following a successful [#UrbanSDG advocacy campaign](#) launched by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network in 2013 together with key partners.



SDG 18 – recognizing the importance of culture

In Estonia and its capital city Tallinn, as well as among other cities and institutions around Europe, the importance of access to culture was not perceived as sufficiently highlighted in the SDGs framework. This led to the formulation of a 18th SDG dealing with the topic. It has been included in the [Tallinn 2035 Development Strategy](#) from the perspective of multiple strategic goals and the cultural field of action. The cultural field contributes to a very large extent to the achievement of the goal "Creative global city" and to a large extent to the achievement of the goals "Kind community" and "Friendly urban space".





Localising the SDGs

“Localising” the SDGs is a growing, multi-faceted process, which started taking shape in 2015 when cities were officially placed at the heart of the 2030 Agenda. When adopting the agenda, SDG 11 was singled out as its own distinct goal in a multi-lateral agreement.

But beyond SDG 11, cities have an important role to play in all the SDGs. **Localising the SDGs is about taking the 17 global goals and their 169 targets and translating them into local contexts**, designing actions that contribute to the goals and monitoring progress through relevant indicators suited for the local level. It has been estimated that **over 65% of the SDG targets need the involvement of local and regional governments to be achieved.**

A number of international organisations have been working to support SDG localisation and advocating for the role of cities in delivering the 2030 Agenda since its early days. A non-exclusive list include: UN-Habitat, the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (UN SDSN), United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and its regional chapters (such as CEMR), PLATFORMA, Organisations in the Global task Force, the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre (JRC), The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES), and the Brookings Institution.

The SDG localisation process

SDG localisation is typically summarised in four key steps:

1. **Raising awareness about the SDGs** and starting a participatory process.
2. **Setting a shared SDGs agenda** with local stakeholders.
3. **Conducting goal-based planning** to identify actions that can contribute to achieving the SDGs.
4. **Monitoring and evaluating progress**, through local monitoring systems that are relevant to the global framework of goals and targets, yet locally tailored.

Adapted from: Kanuri, Revi, Espey & Kuhle (2016). *Getting started with SDGs in Cities*.



These steps are dealt with thoroughly in this Learning Kit, with a focus on how to design an integrated action plan that contributes to the SDGs.





SDG localisation – a complex but rewarding challenge

Localising the SDGs is a demanding task which implies new ways of working for national governments and local authorities alike. Notably, achieving the SDGs requires:

- a **shared understanding** of key challenges and **trade-offs** between goals and targets when setting the local SDGs agenda;
- **significant ambition** on the part of both national, regional and local governments, aiming at transformative actions;
- **cross-departmental collaboration** and **alignment across government levels** to achieve policy coherence for sustainable development;
- meaningful **engagement and partnership with multiple stakeholders**, co-creating shared visions and actions;
- **well-informed citizens and an active civil society** to hold local governments accountable and be able to contribute to achieving long-term goals.

Localising the SDGs means breaking away from the status quo, making the 2030 Agenda a shared and transformative mission cutting across the political spectrum and sectors of society.

In this Learning Kit, we capture some of the most important aspects of this work, showcasing examples of how cities in the GG4C network (and beyond) have tackled SDG localisation.



Photo credit: GG4C partner city Braga, group photo of the GG4C network taken during its 8th transnational meeting in Braga (Portugal), September 2022.



Why a Learning Kit about SDG localisation and integrated action planning?

The important role of cities in achieving sustainable development can hardly be understated. Home to over half of the world's population and with a large environmental footprint, it is commonplace to claim that *“the battle for sustainability will be won or lost in cities”*.

An increasing number of cities and municipalities have started to seize their role in delivering sustainable development by **using the SDGs as a holistic framework to shape and improve their strategies and plans**. The SDGs offer a common language for working across policy silos and with different stakeholders, with principles like Leave no one behind and Multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Localising the SDGs and planning integrated actions for sustainable urban development go hand-in-hand. Indeed, with seven years to 2030, impactful actions are urgently needed. In **the Global Goals for Cities Learning Kit – the GG4C Learning Kit** – we describe how cities can develop integrated action plans that truly contribute to the SDGs, using the well tested URBACT method adapted to the SDGs.

This GG4C Learning Kit aims to support cities working on co-creating actions to deliver on the SDGs, whether they are just starting the SDG localisation process, or wish to improve their current practice by learning from other cities' experiences.

The Learning Kit is the result of a pilot experience by 19 European cities of all sizes part of the URBACT GG4C network.

Over almost 2 years, **the GG4C partners have developed integrated action plans contributing to the SDGs**, using the Action Planning Toolbox and method offered by the URBACT programme, as well as other tools and Lighthouse city experiences adding to the learning journey.

We hope you will enjoy the approaches, methodologies, tools and examples provided in this learning kit!

[URBACT toolbox](#)



[Network page](#)














Who is the GG4C Learning Kit for?

The GG4C Learning Kit is developed *by cities for cities* but can be used by any organisation or institution working on making the SDGs relevant for their own local context.




Municipal staff leading SDG localisation work come from different backgrounds and typically include the following roles:

-  EU/international project managers / head of department
-  Strategic planning staff / head of department
-  Sustainable development staff / head of department
-  Participation and citizen engagement staff / head of department
-  Advisors to the Mayor's office
-  Deputy mayors responsible for different local priorities

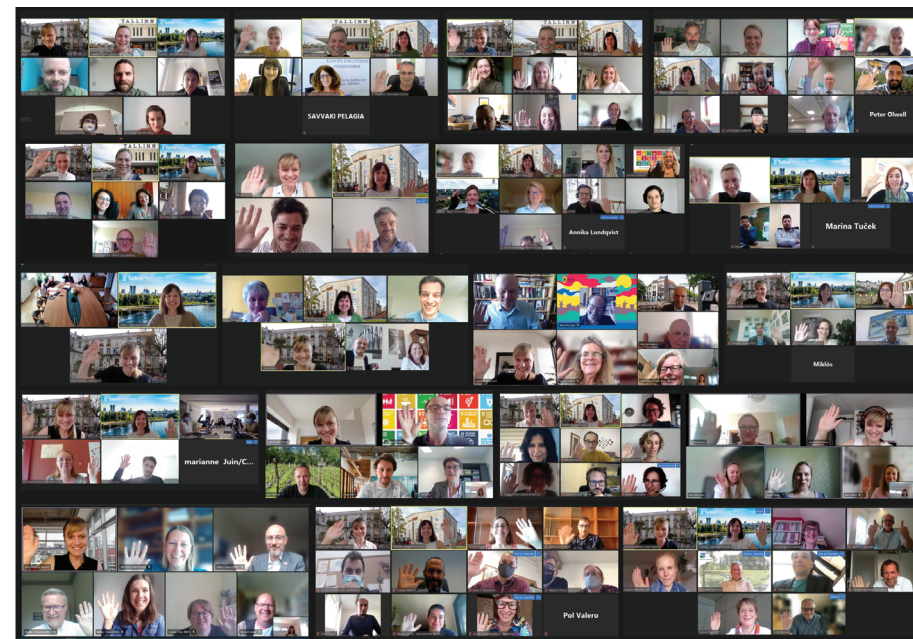
Stakeholders supporting SDG localisation typically include:

-  Urban planning advisory services (e.g. small consultancy firms)
-  Civil society organisations working on engaging citizens in sustainable development topics
-  Schools and other education players

Continued on next page

-  Universities and research institutes
-  Social innovation hubs and incubators
-  Social entrepreneurs

Both SDG localisation and integrated action planning are **participatory processes**. By using the SDGs as a shared language, the goal should always be to have as wide representation as possible among stakeholders involved. Modules 2 and 6 include advice on participatory, co-creation processes and local governance.



The GG4C virtual Road show organised in May and June 2021 to kick-start the network.



What will I learn?

This GG4C Learning Kit allows users to learn about different aspects of SDG localisation, with the main focus on planning or improving local actions contributing to the goals.

Each module offers a brief, practical guide to the topic / action planning step and provides illustrative examples of how different cities have tackled the issue. Additional resources and external links are provided to allow readers to explore topics more in-depth.

Using the GG4C Learning Kit from start to end provides a step-by-step guide to developing an integrated action plan that contributes to local SDG priorities for the city or organisation using the kit.

The modules can be used in the sequence laid out or independently. The aim is to allow cities with different amount of experience with SDG localisation to choose aspects that are most relevant for what they want to achieve.

Overview of the learning kit modules:

-  Module 1: Understanding your starting point for integrated action planning using the SDGs
-  Module 2: Raising awareness about the SDGs and starting a participatory process
-  Module 3: Developing a shared vision for the SDGs through #SDGStories
-  Module 4: Building an integrated action plan contributing to the SDGs
-  Module 5: Monitoring and reporting results on the SDGs
-  Module 6: Strengthening governance for SDGs in cities



A brief guide to the six modules

Module 1: Understanding your starting point for integrated action planning using SDGs



Module 1 describes how to start localising and planning integrated actions contributing to the SDGs in different contexts and with different starting points. Approaches range from creating a comprehensive strategic plan for the SDGs to identifying and solving the most pressing SDG challenges in the city, or improving governance mechanisms to achieve better policy coherence for sustainable development. Examples of analytical tools used to have a first SDG “diagnosis” by GG4C partners are illustrated and explained.

Module 2: Raising awareness about the SDGs and starting a participatory process



Module 2 focuses on methods and approaches for raising awareness among local stakeholders and citizens about the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. This is an essential step needed for starting a participatory process around SDG localisation and integrated action planning. Practical examples of awareness-raising activities and types of stakeholders participating in co-creating the integrated action plans contributing to the SDGs are provided.



Module 3: Developing a shared vision for the SDGs through #SDGStories



Module 3 provides some useful methodologies and resources for developing a shared vision for the SDGs together with stakeholders. It also explains the importance of having a vision that provides the basis for goal-based planning aligned with the SDGs. Among Global Goals for Cities partners, future visions were concretised in the form of #SDGStories, captured through videos, news paper articles, among other means.

Module 4: Building an integrated action plan contributing to the SDGs



Module 4 introduces the different building blocks of an integrated action plan and how to make sure that it truly contributes to the SDGs in a robust way. It goes into the details of how to localise the SDG targets and what that process means for setting objectives, identifying desired results and, finally, co-creating actions to reach the set objectives.

The “intervention logic” and results framework model used in all URBACT Action Planning networks is the main reference used, adapted to the SDG localisation process. We also introduce how to develop shared missions to set the direction of the action plan and motivate partners.

Examples of missions and actions designed to contribute to localised SDG targets are provided.



Module 5: Monitoring and reporting results on the SDGs



Module 5 introduces ways to select indicators to measure progress on the SDGs at local level. It draws on commonly used frameworks for measuring urban sustainability and introduces a few frameworks specifically designed for measuring the SDGs in cities.

The concept and global movement of “Voluntary Local Reviews” is introduced, explaining the importance of making the work done on SDGs visible locally, nationally and internationally.

Module 6: Strengthening governance for SDGs in cities



Module 6 is focussed on one of the learning priorities for the Global Goals for Cities partners: strengthening and developing new governance mechanisms and models for the SDGs and sustainable development work more generally in cities.

The module covers some different trends and examples of SDG and transition governance approaches and introduces some practical tools to help cities design forward-looking models for participatory governance.



Photo credit: GG4C partner city Solingen, taken during the network's 6th transnational meeting in Solingen, April 2022.



Photo Credit: Patrik Vamosi, Lead Exeprt Stina Heikkilä preparing for peer exchange during the GG4C Transnational Meeting in Veszprém, November 2022.



Acknowledgements and Credits

This Learning Kit has been compiled, edited and principally authored by Stina Heikkilä, Lead Expert for the Global Goals for Cities (GG4C) network.

It presents the key results achieved by the GG4C project partners and illustrates the URBACT method and toolbox applied to the context of localising SDGs. **See next page for the full list of partners and names of key contributors from each partner city.**

The City of Tallinn, lead partner of the GG4C network, has coordinated the production of the kit through Karin Luhaäär, communication officer, and Triin Sakermäe, project coordinator. Key inputs have been provided by Krista Kampus, Head of EU and International Cooperation at Tallinn Strategy Centre and the Executive Director of the Tallinn Green Capital 2023, and Mats-Laes Nuter and Maris Rahnu from the Strategic Management Office.

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Significant contributions have been provided by partner organisations (especially CEMR), GG4C Lighthouse Cities and other leading organisations contributing to SDG localisation. **Specific acknowledgements and credits are given in each of the modules according to the topic.**

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Design and layout by: Anu Lemsalu: anu@doubledesign.ee

For more information or questions about the Global Goals for Cities Learning Kit, contact Stina Heikkilä: stina.sdgs@gmail.com or Karin Luhaäär: Karin.Luhaaar@tallinnlv.ee





GG4C project partners

The results presented in this Learning Kit have been achieved thanks to the great efforts by all the local coordinators and URBACT Local Group coordinators involved in the project, as well as their colleagues and ULG members. Key contributors are listed by city, in alphabetical order.

GG4C Partner

Braga	Helder Costa, Carlos Santos, Emídio Meireles
Bratislava Metropolitan Institute	Zuzana Čupková, Rebeka Petrtylová
Dzierżoniów	Paulina Sierżant, Katarzyna Majchrzak, Aneta Błaszczuk, Sylwia Głogowska
Gävle	Keli Yen, Annika Lundqvist
Glasgow	Sonia Milne, Sally White
Heraklion	Zacharenia Drosou, Maria Giampoulaki, Konstantinos Manasakis, Pelagia Savaki
Jihlava	Zdeněk Ondrák, Anika Chalupská
Klaipėda	Jūratė Sokolova, Donatas Jeruševičius, Eugenijus Kaminskis
La Rochelle Urban Community	Delphine Gaudart-Brunet, Marianne Juin, Margaux Lambert
Manresa	Sònia Puyol, Mon Culleré, Judith Saus, Gisela Cebrián
Mouscron	Christophe Deneve, David Leroy

Ozalj	Marina Tuček, Marko Zlonoga
Reggio Emilia	Luca Colombo, Elena Fornaciari, Barbara Guarniero, Sara Magnani, Annalisa Pezzini
Schiedam	Erik Visscher, Johan Deijl, Lara Melkert
Solingen	Martin Hückeler, Dr. Franka Bindernagel, Ariane Bischoff
Tallinn	Triin Sakermäa, Karin Luhaäär, Krista Kampus, Maris Rahn, Anne Altermann, Mats-Laes Nuter, Reet Nõmmoja
Trim	Anne O'Brien, Alan Owens
Veliki Preslav	Kamen Dimitrov, Pepa Peneva
Veszprém	Renata Kiss, Anna Knauer, Miklós Toldy, Dr Endre Domokos, Dr Katalin Lőrincz, Tamás Köller, Judit Vajda, Béla Szarka



Ozalj	Marina Tuček, Marko Zlonoga
Reggio Emilia	Luca Colombo, Elena Fornaciari, Barbara Guarniero, Sara Magnani, Annalisa Pezzini
Schiedam	Erik Visscher, Johan Deijl, Lara Melkert
Solingen	Martin Hückeler, Dr.Franka Bindernagel, Ariane Bischoff
Tallinn	Triin Sakermäa, Karin Luhaäär, Krista Kampus, Maris Rahnü, Anne Altermann, Mats-Laes Nuter, Reet Nõmmoja
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