

**SDG report**

**of the Flemish provinces,**

**cities and municipalities.**



## About the VVSG and the VVP

The Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities vzw (VVSG) is the umbrella association of all 300 local governments (municipalities and public social welfare centres) in Flanders are members, in addition to many police zones and intermunicipal partnerships. A house of trust that provides its members with advice and guidance, training and education, and advocates for its members interests toward other government levels. More than 10,000 councillors and officials attend a study day or training at the VVSG every year.

The Association of Flemish Provinces (VVP) is the advocate of the Flemish provincial government level. The VVP develops common positions on matters of direct or indirect common provincial interests. It organises the joint action of the provincial governments in their contacts with other authorities and organisations. The VVP also constitutes the platform for cooperation between the 5 Flemish provincial governments, regarding the development of, for example, new initiatives, consultation and experience and knowledge exchange.

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# Colofon

It is May 2023 at the time of writing. We have less than 7 years to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda. The time has come for action. At present, we are not on track to achieve the SDGs on time. In the light of societal challenges such as climate change, crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, war on the European mainland and increasing pressure on the capacities and budgets of local and supra-local governments, it is more important than ever that we now work towards sustainable development.

Provinces, cities and municipalities are crucial in this regard. The Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) estimates that 65% of the SDGs' success depends on the immediate and active involvement of (supra) local governments.

Our Flemish provincial and local governments work daily to achieve the SDGs. They develop and implement targeted water and drought policies, combat poverty, stimulate local and sustainable food production, ensure sustainable nature management, provide quality and accessible education for all, ensure a beautiful and safe environment to live in and work towards global solidarity.

The important role played by (supra) local governments has also been recognised. The Belgian Voluntary National Review 2023 rightly includes a separate chapter on the achievements, challenges and strategies of Belgian provinces, cities and municipalities.

Flemish provincial and local governments have emerged in recent years as global pioneers in the localisation of the 2030 Agenda. Two of the five Flemish provinces are 'SDG Pioneers'. Some 120 local governments have signed the SDG commitment statement, more than half participated in the Sustainable Community Week and two thirds of our local governments use the SDGs as a policy instrument. We are also seeing numerous collaborations on the achievement of the SDGs between provinces and municipalities.

But there is even more that we can do. For that reason, the Association of Flemish Provinces (VVP) and the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG) joined forces to prepare this SDG report. We discuss, on the basis of figures and practical examples, the achievement of the SDGs in Flemish provinces, cities and municipalities, taking geographical distribution and differing types of municipality into consideration and citing positive and negative trends.

The aim of our report is not merely to identify trends but to emphasise the crucial role played by the provincial and local governments. The report supports our (supra) local advocacy of sustainable development and is also a tool to encourage, nurture and strengthen the SDG story in the provinces, cities and municipalities.

Let this report inspire you to an even greater commitment to the SDGs in your work and in your life! We will certainly continue to work on them for the next seven years.

**Wim Dries**  
Chairman of the VVSG

**Kris Snijkers**  
General Manager  
of the VVSG

**Tom Dehaene**  
Chairman of the VVP

**Anton De Ryckere**  
General Manager  
of the VVP





**“The SDGs will  
be local or they  
won’t be”**

– Wim Dries, Chairman of the VVSG



# Reader guide

On 25 September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It contains 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), clarified in 169 targets and monitored by 244 indicators. This universal, inclusive and transformative agenda responds to the most pressing global challenges and aims to set the world on the path to a sustainable future by 2030.

Provincial and local governments are crucial to achieving the 2030 Agenda. In the recent crises, they showed this once again. They were reliable and flexible partners during the coronavirus pandemic. They made every effort to guarantee optimal service and a good flow of information to the public. Local governments supported local hospitality businesses and markets in the implementation of the strict coronavirus measures and initiated digital platforms in support of the local economy. They took additional measures to counter loneliness and organise COVID-proof activities for children and young people. They set up additional care capacity in hotels, for example, to relieve the hospitals, and coordinated and organised vaccination centres in the local infrastructure. Provinces run green estates, and they kept them open to the public as much as possible during the coronavirus period. More recently, provinces, cities and municipalities are playing a key role in sheltering Ukrainian refugees by arranging screening and contact with (prospective) reception families.

The Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG) and the Association of Flemish Provinces (VVP) wish to act as umbrella organisations in helping their members achieve the SDGs. The Voluntary Subnational Review (VSR) before us is a means to:

- Show the progress made by provinces, cities and municipalities towards achieving the SDGs.
- Inspire local actors to take action on the SDGs.
- Create a more coherent approach to the SDGs between different governments and government levels.

This VSR or SDG report by the Flemish provinces, cities and municipalities ties in perfectly with the Voluntary National Review (VNR) that Belgium will propose to the United Nations in July 2023. The VVSG and the VVP received support from IDEA Consult and the United Nations University Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies (UNU-CRIS) on the collection and analysis of data for the present report.

The report discusses how Flemish provinces, cities and municipalities deploy the 2030 Agenda as a strategic and moral framework for their policies and gives an understanding of the achievement of the 17 SDGs through an extensive data analysis and practical examples. Finally, the report gives recommendations on how local, provincial and other governments can promote the local anchoring and implementation of the SDGs.



Before you delve into the report, we would like to give you the most important points. The analysis of progress towards the 17 SDGs is largely based on a dataset of over 200 indicators. These indicators are as close as possible to the international objectives framework, are available to all Flemish cities and municipalities, show a clear trend and are situated at the outcome level. The data analysis is designed to give a picture of SDG achievement at the (supra) local level, with room for municipal variation, and to stimulate dialogue.

- The focus on outcome implies that the data analysis gives an understanding of the provincial and municipal context but makes no evaluation of local or provincial policy. The choice of outcome indicators may appear counterintuitive. It would seem only logical to use the indicators to map government efforts. But this is very difficult, given the existing data and huge diversity of approaches.
- Furthermore, we were unable to find suitable indicators for all SDGs and SDG subgoals. The analysis of the indicators does not, therefore, give a complete picture for every SDG.
- Each indicator is attributed to only 1 SDG. Often, however, there are links to multiple SDGs.

Data monitoring and analysis are essential building blocks in the achievement of the SDGs, but quantitative information is needed to complete the picture. In our presentation of each SDG we discuss the role of local and provincial governments and some of the strategies they use, and we provide specific, practical examples. Wherever possible, we add to the data analysis (which focuses on outcome indicators) extra data that offer a better understanding of the efforts of local and provincial governments and may well tell us something about a government's policy.

For more information on these points we refer to the methodology chapter and the introductory text to the chapter covering progress towards the 17 SDGs.

Appended to this report you will find the full set of over 200 indicators. For each indicator you will see a description, the source used and the years in which the indicator was measured. Note: while we refer to provinces, cities and municipalities, we also mean the many supra-local partnerships (such as intermunicipal companies, primary care zones, police zones, etc.).

## Structure of the report

In the first chapter we give a brief description of the 2030 Agenda. The second chapter goes into how this international framework can be implemented locally. We then describe the methodology on which the insights from this report are based. Thereafter, we present the overarching trends, based on a broad selection of indicators for all cities and municipalities in Flanders. The most comprehensive chapter is devoted to the progress made by provinces, cities and municipalities in each of the 17 SDGs. After that, we list the success factors and shared challenges in a separate chapter. Finally, we get into the conclusions and recommendations.

Are you interested, as an umbrella organisation for subnational governments, in drawing up a VSR? Be sure to see annexes 3 and 4. There, we describe our approach and communication plan.

# Policies and enabling environment for the localisation of the 2030 Agenda

Provincial and local governments are ideally placed to localise the 2030 Agenda. The huge additional benefit of a local approach lies in the integrated approach to the basic principles of the SDGs. It is crucial here to engage stakeholders and firmly establish the link with other governments.

## Governance structure of Belgium

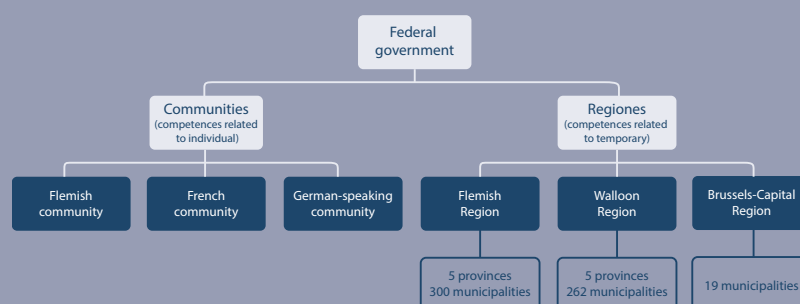


Figure: governance structure of Belgium

Belgium is a federal state with three official national languages: Dutch, French and German. Belgium is made up of a federal level, regional level (regions and communities), provinces, cities and municipalities. Each of these government levels has different competences. The federal government is competent for all things in the public interest. This is mainly finance, the armed forces, justice, social affairs and foreign affairs.

Many competences were transferred to the regional level through state reforms. The regions are divided into 3 communities and 3 regions. Communities are based on language and personal matters such as culture, education, health and immigrant reception. Regions are competent in area-related matters, such as economy and employment, agriculture, housing, transport, nature conservation, energy and public works. They also oversee the provinces and municipalities. Several aspects of these regional competences do, however, have a permanent federal link. The communities are competent for education, for example, but matters such as compulsory education and minimum certification requirements are controlled by the federal government. Every community and region has its own government. In Flanders, the Government of Flanders is competent for regional and community matters.

In 2023, at the time of writing, there are 10 provinces in Belgium (5 in Flanders and 5 in Wallonia) and 581 cities and municipalities (300 in Flanders, 262 in Wallonia and 19 in the Brussels-Capital Region).

This report is confined to the progress made towards achievement of the SDGs in Flanders.





@ Stefan Dewickere

## Tasks, responsibilities and means of implementation of local governments

Local and provincial governments have a large number of tasks which are closely related to the goals set for sustainable development. Sustainable development is one of the basic tasks of the cities, municipalities and provinces and is defined as follows:

- Local Government Decree, Article 2 (for cities and municipalities): The municipalities aim to contribute sustainably to the well-being of citizens at the local level and to ensure a citizen-friendly, democratic, transparent and efficient exercise of their competences.
- Provincial Decree, Article 2: The provinces aim to contribute at the provincial level to the sustainable development of the provincial territory.

Local governments (cities and municipalities) have tasks of self-governance, tasks of mixed importance and compulsory tasks. In tasks of self-governance, local governments have full control. These are areas such as sports facilities, culture, youth, tourism and international municipal cooperation. While tasks of mixed importance are imposed by central government, the municipality does have policy-making room in interpreting them. These are tasks such as household waste collection, spatial planning, education and nature development. Compulsory tasks such as the issue of identity cards and driving licences and the maintenance of a population register are imposed by central government and offer no policy-making room for local government.

The Flemish Provinces are competent in areas relating to the land, such as water management, mobility, agriculture, economy, licensing and spatial planning, education, tourism and heritage. In these areas they take on tasks that go beyond the local municipal interest (such as integral watercourse management), perform supporting tasks for other authorities and ensure cooperation on land issues between a region's governments. The province organises and coordinates cooperation between partners such as local governments, private organisations and the government of Flanders, and works with them to seek solutions to area-related problems.

Municipalities and provinces also arrange themselves into supra-local structures that are crucial to specific tasks, such as management of water or sewerage networks, gas, electricity, telecommunications, waste, regional development, primary care and fire and police zones. These intermunicipal partnerships are crucial to the elaboration and implementation of local policy and therefore the realisation of the SDGs.

In the chapter entitled 'progress towards the 17 SDGs', we go into more detail in the individual topics on the tasks of local and provincial governments and how they interpret those tasks.

Municipal and provincial governments have a number of resources at their disposal to implement their many responsibilities, the most important of which are taxes (property tax, personal income tax, various local taxes), regional finance funds (municipal and provincial funds), and regional, federal or European subsidies or income from their own businesses or investments.

The Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG), the Union des Villes et Communes de Wallonie (UVCW) and Brulocalis in the Brussels-Capital Region are the umbrella organisations for cities and municipalities. The Association of Flemish Provinces (VVP) and the Association of Walloon Provinces (APW) represent the provinces. These organisations defend their members' interests before other Belgian and foreign governments, build their members' know-how and set up networks between their members and with the relevant partners from civil society, academia, the private sector, etc.



## National strategies and coordination mechanisms for the implementation and localisation of the SDGs

The pursuit of sustainable development is constitutionally enshrined in Article 7bis: "In the exercise of their respective competences the federal state, communities and regions will pursue the social, economic and environmental aspects of the sustainable development objectives, with consideration for solidarity between generations."

Since the 2030 Agenda was signed, this has been the guidance used to fulfil that constitutional mandate. The latest version of the national strategy for sustainable development (2017) is based on the 5 dimensions of sustainable development. And in October 2021 the new federal plan for sustainable development was approved. This plan aims to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs and bring in greater policy coherence. Every two to three years the federal government prepares a federal report on sustainable development. The fourth Flemish strategy for sustainable development (2021) builds on *Vizier 2030*, the SDG objectives framework set out by the government of Flanders. The government of Flanders appoints local authorities as priority partners in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Finally the Walloon region has already published two sustainability reports based on the SDGs.

Furthermore, the ministers for sustainable development from the federal and regional governments come together in the Interministerial Conference on Sustainable Development. This body is responsible, among other things, for preparing the national reporting on progress towards the SDGs, of which the main product is the Voluntary National Review. Belgium drew up its first report in 2017 and is due to report again in 2023. The second version contains a separate chapter on the local level and information from sources such as the Flemish Voluntary Subnational Review.

More on this can be found in the Belgian Voluntary National Review for 2023.

At present, the federal and regional governments impose no obligations or requirements on provincial and local governments as regards the 2030 Agenda. They do, however, support the localisation of the SDGs, mainly through subsidies for the VVSG. This enables the VVSG to deploy personnel and resources for tools, training and tailored advice on the 2030 Agenda.



# Localising the 2030 Agenda in Flanders Agenda

## Integrating the 2030 Agenda as a strategic framework

The SDGs are linked closely to provincial and local competences and so provide the provincial and local governments a unique framework for qualitative, integrated, inclusive and ambitious policy. The SDGs encourage cross-cooperation across services and help the services transcend compartmentalisation.

Local and provincial governments can work on the SDGs at three levels:

- internal, within the organisation itself, for example, through HR policy, procurement policy and municipal buildings.
- external, in service delivery and in collaboration with the citizens and stakeholders.
- international, for example through own European and international partnerships (such as city-to-city partnership or twinning), subsidies to NGOs, or support for stakeholders with partnerships (such as schools who are linked to schools abroad or entrepreneurs contributing to projects in the Global South).

Local and provincial governments in Flanders are regarded around the world as pioneers in the localisation of the 2030 Agenda. They communicate and raise awareness about the 2030 Agenda, evaluate projects against the SDGs and focus on SDG monitoring and reporting. The city of Ghent has even published an annual Voluntary Local Review since 2020. Below, you can read about a number of inspiring practices by which local and provincial Flemish governments use the 2030 Agenda as a framework for their communication and policy. In the chapter entitled 'progress towards the 17 SDGs' you will see good practices per SDG topic.

## Support from the VVSG and VVP umbrella organisations

The Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG) and Association of Flemish Provinces (VVP) play an important role in localising the 2030 Agenda. This role is thematic and underpinned by the full set of local and provincial competences such as spatial planning, care and health, and climate policy. The VVSG and VVP also offer a wide range of support on the 2030 Agenda specifically.

In as far as possible, the VVSG aligns its support to its members with existing local processes to create a useful link between local policy and the 2030 Agenda. It develops materials on the SDGs in local party programmes and governance agreements, SDGs in context analysis, SDGs as guidelines for municipal multiannual policy plans, SDGs and their link to local policy monitoring and reporting, SDGs as a framework to improve project sustainability, SDGs as a framework for municipal international cooperation, etc.

By developing materials, tools and publications to make the SDGs easier to understand, the VVSG helps its members discuss the SDGs in the organisation and with stakeholders. The VVSG has also been responsible, since 2018, for the public campaign, 'Sustainable Municipality Week'. This action week primarily aims to raise awareness of the SDGs among the general public in Flanders. The VVSG also provides specific tools for sustainable and co-creative local policy in the long term. See also the practical example set out in the discussion of SDG 12 in this report.

The VVSG is also heavily committed to sharing knowledge between local governments through working groups, webinars, workshops and information exchanges. Additionally, the VVSG disseminates inspirational, local SDG practices to other governments in Belgium and at the European and international level. The most relevant materials and tools have been translated into English, French and Spanish. More information can be found at [www.vvsg.be/sdgs](http://www.vvsg.be/sdgs), which also contains a specific page on [SDG materials in foreign languages](#).

The VVP organises events for its members with the aim of setting up cross-provincial and cross-departmental exchanges and making it possible to learn from each other. The SDG masterclasses, for example, are an internal training programme for provinces that focuses on integrated collaboration. The VVP also has an interprovincial working group on SDGs that unites colleagues from different provinces to exchange inspiration and best practices and initiate or develop joint SDG pathways (such as the masterclasses or this VSR).

The VVP also informs the political administrations of the 5 provinces about the SDGs and motivates them to collaborate with them in their provincial government. The VVP shares knowledge internationally about best SDG practices in the 5 Flemish provinces.





## SDGs in practice

Multiple provincial and local authorities in Flanders use the 2030 Agenda as a strategic framework for policy and communication. We highlight 2 examples.

### The Ghent VLR

The city of Ghent was the first municipality in Belgium to create an SDG report as part of a broader SDG trajectory. In 2020, the city began with a data report for all SDGs. In 2021, 2022 and 2023, qualitative reports are created for each dimension of sustainable development - People in 2021, Prosperity and 2022 and Planet in 2023. The dimensions Peace (SDG 16) and Partnership (SDG 17) are covered in each report. The Pillar reports highlight good practices from Ghent, selected by stakeholders from the city. To this end, the city council engages with platforms and consultative bodies in the city. At the start of each new report, relevant city services are also consulted. This creates a wide network of dedicated colleagues within the administration. At the end of the current term (2024), the city will update the 2020 launch report to reflect changes and developments in the environment. In the context of international exchange and learning, Ghent translates its sustainability reports and offers them to the UN as a Voluntary Local Review.

The decision to produce a VLR is an expression of the political ambition to integrate the SDGs as a cross-cutting topic and take a pioneering role in this as a city. The choice to produce an annual VLR guarantees continuity and provides the opportunity to evaluate and adjust on a yearly basis. It also offers the chance to bring stakeholders together annually and link with the Sustainable Municipality Week. As a result, the SDGs remain a top priority on the agenda of both the administration and politics.

[More information on the Ghent VLR.](#)





SDG kick off Harelbeke

## SDGs as a framework for the strategic multiannual plan for Harelbeke

Wherever possible the city of Harelbeke incorporated the SDGs in its multiannual plan (MAP) 2020-2025. In as early as the spring of 2018, all employees in the City, Public Centre for Social Welfare, Zorgbedrijf and police zone received an explanation about Peace and Partnership at the launch, followed by brainstorming walks on the other three pillars of sustainable development (people, planet, prosperity). Employees walked past local organisations that embody an SDG (the social grocery store, for example) and were given figures on this SDG. They then formulated policy proposals on a digital participation platform, and comments and votes were invited. The end result was the inspiration note 'Good morning Harelbeke' that contained 16 widely supported policy proposals for the 2020-2025 term. In parallel with this internal process, the city rolled out a participation project for citizens. On the 'Tour of Harelbeke', the SDGs were introduced and 6 topics with links to the SDGs were discussed. In the next phase, the city council identified priority SDGs based on a document analysis, for example, and interviews with employees and stakeholders. To take maximum advantage of its own specific context and contribute as much as possible to the SDGs at the same time, Harelbeke decided to focus its MAP on SDGs with high and middling scores in the analysis. These SDGs (12 of 17) were translated into the city's own objectives. Finally, in 2021 and 2022, Harelbeke defined local SDG indicators for annual monitoring. The city sets specific targets, where 2025 (end of term) is the interim benchmark and 2030 the final horizon.

Watch this [practical video](#) or view this [web page](#) for more information on the SDGs in Harelbeke.



SDG circle exercise

## SDGs to evaluate projects and partnership in Lommel

The SDGs are a fixed value in the city of Lommel's policy planning thanks to a strong political commitment - the SDGs were explicitly cited as a mayoral competence - and the establishment of an internal cross-cutting SDG working group. In 2020, Lommel signed the Sustainable Enterprise Charter (VCDO) of the Flemish Network of Enterprises (VOKA). The city council also evaluates larger urban projects against the 17 SDGs systematically. In the initial phase, projects are placed in the 'SDG circle' to see, through an interactive exercise, those objectives to which the project already contributes and, above all, where even greater sustainability might be possible. It was decided, for example, to set up a slow counter for senior citizens after the local customer contact centre was evaluated against SDG 10. When renewing the 5-year city-to-city programmes with its Namibian and Nicaraguan partner municipalities in 2022, Lommel used the SDGs as a guide to identify priority topics for cooperation.

## Use of the 2030 Agenda as a strategic compass: Province of Antwerp

The coalition agreement for the 2019–2024 term sets sustainability as a core value for the organisation’s culture and everyday operation. The Province of Antwerp endorses the SDGs. In every policy decision it makes, it checks which of the SDGs contribute specifically to that decision. All policy-cycle action plans and management-cycle plans were linked to the SDG targets. The University of Antwerp guided provincial employees through the process. The provincial services were given the challenge of formulating output and impact indicators to assess the extent to which provincial policy contributes to the achievement of the SDGs. For the next term (2025–2030), the SDGs are considered as inspirers of provincial policy.

A website is currently being prepared to report on progress towards the SDGs. While the website will present the figures in a dashboard, it will also contain good examples.

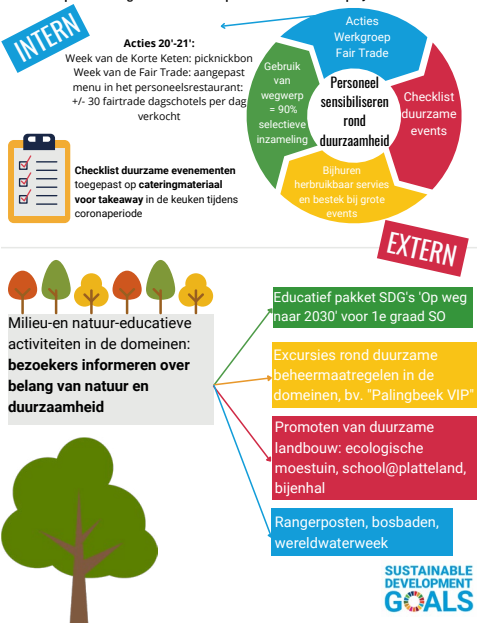
## Attractive SDG reporting: Province of West Flanders

The province of West Flanders converted the SDGs into a Provincial Objectives Framework. The conversion gives the SDGs meaning within the local reality and the organisation itself, making it easier for colleagues to get started and realise that SDG reporting often requires nothing, or at least very little, in the way of additional effort. The Provincial Objectives Framework focuses on the areas in which the province has an impact, and it was defined specifically to avoid greenwashing through container concepts. The Framework consists of three tracks: what do we aim to achieve (thirteen spearheads), what actions are needed, and eighty or so principles by which those actions are achievable. The principles are both internal to the organisation itself and external to players on the provincial field. The Provincial Objectives Framework was approved by the Provincial Council. Read the [extended version of the POF](#) and the [concise version of the POF](#).

Key actions were linked to each spearhead. Key actions are actions from the multi-annual policy plan with a real impact on the achievement of the spearhead. By opting for actions from the multi-annual plan, the reporting workload for that action is minimal. An annual report on the multi-annual plan will be made in any case, and the SDG reporting will be included. Yet, the SDG report is a stand-alone document. The report focuses explicitly on matters concluded and has a contemporary design.

This gives the report a certain attraction, and services and agencies ask to be included. See the [SDG Report for 2020–2021](#).

**Bewust verbruik:** Tegen 2030 is het mogelijk om in elke sector duurzame keuzes te maken. De provincie begeleidt en initieert piloot- en demonstratieprojecten.



SDG reporting Province of West Flanders





SDG pilot municipalities, VVSG trajectory 2017-2019

## SDG-monitoring and data availability

Any local or provincial government, irrespective of size or SDG maturity, can monitor and report SDGs at the different local policy-cycle stages (planning, implementation, evaluation and adjustment). In the [VVSG Inspiration Guide on SDG monitoring and reporting](#) you will find lots of ideas, practical examples, data sources, tips and points to watch.

Where indicators are concerned, much data is already available in Flanders. Local and provincial governments in Flanders can make use of publicly accessible data sources in addition to their own local data. The two best known and most frequently used are the Municipality-City Monitor and Provinces in Figures. They are also the two main data sources that were used to compose the SDG indicator set for the VSR.

- Municipality-City Monitor:** This online database is managed by the Agency of Local Government Affairs of the Government of Flanders. It contains data for more than 400 indicators relating to topics of local relevance such as poverty, mobility, environment and nature and local governance. The data is from registered statistics (recorded annually) and a three-yearly population survey. The data is available to all 300 Flemish cities and municipalities. The 13 largest cities have the City Monitor, the other municipalities the Municipalities Monitor. The two monitors have contained different indicators in the past. But since the 2021 edition the information has been aligned and the same data is monitored and queried by all 300 Flemish cities and municipalities. Each municipality can call up a data report for its municipality. The Municipality and City Monitor contains an SDG filter with 59 indicators.
- Provinces in Figures:** The website [provincies.incijfers.be](http://provincies.incijfers.be) is a collaboration between the 5 Flemish provinces, and it gives a visual and structured overview of figures and reports on numerous topics and policy areas. It also uses official data sources such as the Municipal-City Monitor. The provincial services, local governments and external partners have asked for the database to be expanded. Among other things, the website allows you to filter for a specific municipality and

compare it with another municipality, the municipalities in your province or all other Flemish municipalities.

For the SDGs specifically, the SDG monitor ([www.sdgmonitor.be](http://www.sdgmonitor.be)) is available to the Flemish municipalities, whereby each municipality can assess its progress on each indicator against other Flemish municipalities and see the data trend over time. This dataset of more than 200 indicators was also used to analyse the data for this VSR. **The VVSG also offers its own set of SDG indicators**<sup>1</sup>. As well as publicly accessible information, it contains suggested indicators for local governments to monitor themselves and describes the Flemish and federal government's relation to the SDG indicators.

Despite the data being widely available (as compared to many other countries), a number of challenges do still exist. We discuss this in more **detail in the concluding chapter**.

## Leave No One Behind, interlinkages and multi-stakeholder partnerships

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is not simply about achieving the 17 SDGs. The Agenda contains a few basic principles that must always be considered:

- **The 2030 Agenda is one and indivisible.** The various dimensions of sustainability and the SDGs are closely linked. While they can reinforce each other, there may be negative spill-overs to consider. A tourism project, for example, can affect waste production negatively or lead to more car traffic.
- **Leave No One Behind (LNOB).** The 2030 Agenda aims to bring everyone into the story. To achieve this, we need to pay special attention to the most vulnerable groups in society. This principle also highlights the importance of international solidarity. Local governments can work towards LNOB through policy choices like sustainable procurement policy, gender budgeting, inclusive and participatory services, the stimulation of global citizenship and support for and/or engagement with international cooperation.
- **Multi-stakeholder partnerships:** there is a need for cooperation within the organisation itself and with other organisations. It is essential for a provincial or local government to establish partnerships to achieve the SDGs through cooperation.

In the discussion of the 17 SDGs, several practical examples embody these basic principles. Wherever possible, the VVSG and the VVP also integrate these principles in their SDG tool-set and support for cities, municipalities and provinces. In 2022, for example, the VVSG created an SDG check (evaluation tool) for municipal projects, which rates commitment to the 3 principles as well as commitment to the 17 SDGs.

<sup>1</sup> The English version of this indicator set was produced in 2018 and does not offer the most recent information, unlike the Dutch version which was produced in 2023.



# Methodology for the development of the report

Through a process of participation the VVSG and the VVP prepared an SDG report on the Flemish provinces, cities and municipalities. Below, we trace the trajectory and describe the structure of the analysis. In the annexes you will find a methodology relating to the approach to the VSR and our communication plan, as inspiration for any subnational government umbrella organisations seeking to prepare a VSR.

## Trajectory of the SDG report of the Flemish provinces, cities and municipalities

The preparations for this report were coordinated by the VVSG and the VVP. They received support from two external organisations, IDEA Consult and the United Nations University Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies (UNU-CRIS), which handled the data collection and analysis and lent support for the overall editing of the report.

Two parallel trajectories were set up in April 2022, the first involving nine Flemish municipalities (Balen, Boechout, Bruges, Deinze, Evergem, Harelbeke, Hasselt, Sint-Niklaas, Zoersel), and the other involving all Flemish Provinces (West Flanders, East Flanders, Antwerp, Flemish Brabant and Limburg). The nine Flemish municipalities were selected through an open call to all municipal governments. Working groups at the provincial and municipal levels met three times between May and September 2022 with the aim of collecting relevant data and indicators on the progress made towards the SDGs by all Flemish cities, municipalities and provinces.

- Work session 1: The various participants spent the full day brainstorming. Working from the existing set of indicators for the Flemish SDG monitor (see below), the individual SDG's were queried in terms of what the SDG involved, whether the existing indicators covered the goal and what alternative sources might be relevant.
- Work session 2: Based on the findings from the first session, a list of outcome indicators was drawn up and an initial analysis was carried out. The analysis results provided the basis for an in-depth debate over how trends and the work towards the SDGs could be more accurately measured.
- Work session 3: At the last of the meetings, the final indicator set was discussed and data available from the provinces, cities and municipalities were added.

The data are supplemented by appropriate practical examples provided by VVSG and VVP staff and experts from the provincial and local governments.

In January 2023 we presented an initial set of results at a webinar for employees and councillors from the Flemish provinces, cities and municipalities. Their input is included in the final version of this report.

The UCLG Guidelines for VSRs were used to structure this report along with the UN Secretary General's Guiding Principles (UN Secretary-General, no date) to which the UCLG Guidelines for VSRs also refer.

## Structure of the analysis

The progress made towards the 17 SDGs is an essential part of this report. To achieve the highest level of objectivity in this, we selected just under 200 indicators for the comparative analysis. To allow comparison, they were standardised to a scale of 0 to 100. To gain as much understanding as possible of the trends without undue overlapping of the indicators, similar indicators were grouped and indexed. A statistical analysis was carried out on this dataset. Information on local efforts and good practices were added to the quantitative results. The full indicator set can be found in annex 2.

### Choice of indicators

The SDG local indicator set builds on previous work on the local monitoring of SDGs. In 2018, the VVSG produced an SDG indicator set which was also used as the basis for IDEA Consult's online **SDG Monitor**. With support from UNU-CRIS, the SDG monitor has been adapted and expanded over the years. Thanks to the input of the local and provincial working groups assembled for this report, the indicator set was honed to produce the current list of about 200 indicators. Most of the data are from two major sources, the **Municipality-City Monitor** and **Provincies.incijfers.be**. It was supplemented by data from more specific datasets such as those of **autodelen.net**, the **circulaire jobmonitor**, **klimaatportaal Vlaanderen** and the **Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational training**.

In selecting the indicators we gave maximum consideration to internationally set SDG subtargets and indicators. However, we did convert them to the Flemish context. In our dataset, SDG 2 (Zero hunger), for example, has had indicators on vegetarian food and organic agriculture added. Although these indicators are not used directly in the SDGs at international level, they are in line with the underlying objective of working towards sustainable food production.

To ascertain the final choice of indicators, 3 criteria were used:

- To guarantee comparability, the indicator must be available to all Flemish cities and municipalities.
- The indicator must be easy to interpret. In other words, we have selected indicators that clearly move in a particular direction.
- The indicator quantifies an outcome. In other words, it looks at the degree to which the goals are effectively achieved, independently of the government's efforts or specific context.

The choice of outcome indicators may appear counterintuitive. It would seem only logical to use indicators to gauge local and provincial government efforts. However, the existing data are unsuitable. Indicators that take accounts of effort made often fail to meet the first two criteria above. There is a huge diversity of measures at the local level, so that information is frequently unavailable to all governments. Also, when an indicator quantifies effort it is not always clear whether higher or lower figures are required for that indicator. Consider, for example, social measures such as food distribution. While we would like the greatest possible protection for vulnerable people and, therefore, a wide reach for food distribution, many beneficiaries also mean that there is a major challenge.

We have tried to map effort and context at the local level in other ways. By showing examples of good practices we illustrate what local and provincial governments are already doing today. We also try to consider context determinants, as a subtlety of the statistical analysis (see below). And, to the indicator set in the text, we add data gathered locally which may offer a better understanding.

The selection criteria above lead to the discovery of several strong indicators for almost every goal. The main exceptions are SDG 14 (Live below water) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals), for which no suitable indicators were available. It was decided, based on the work sessions, to group all indicators relating to water under SDG 6. Where SDGs 14 and 17 are concerned, we confine ourselves to outcomes from other sources but do not report a global trend based on the indicator set. In a few other SDGs, there is only a small number of good indicators (SDG 9, for example). We will return to this in the chapter entitled 'conclusions and recommendations'.

## Data comparability through scoring

The many indicators were placed on the same scale for comparability. Each municipality receives an annual score between 0 and 100 for each indicator. Higher values signify better results, lower values poorer.

The best and worst values across all municipalities in the last 12 years (2010-2021) are set as benchmarks. A score of 100 signifies that this municipality scored the highest value for this indicator among all other municipalities in the previous 12 years. A score of 0 signifies the reverse.

This standardisation method was chosen for consistency with similar international SDG datasets (Lafortune et al, 2019).





## Data grouping

To make the large number of indicators more comprehensible, selected indicators covering similar topics were grouped into indicator groups for each SDG. For SDG 11, for example, an indicator group termed 'sustainable mobility' was created, to include various indicators such as the number of cars, eco-scores, sharing systems, alternative means of transport and share of inhabitants travelling on foot or by public transport. In addition to sustainable mobility, other topics (i.e. groups of indicators) related to public cleanliness, culture, youth recreation, affordable housing, housing sustainability, air quality and greenery in the municipality were included under SDG 11.

The scores for each topic are aggregated to arrive at a score for each SDG at the municipality level. We do this by taking the average score for each topic.

We chose deliberately to place each indicator under only one SDG, even if the potential exists for connection to multiple SDGs. For example, sustainable food (which comes under SDG 2, but could also come under SDG 12) or safe cycling (now under SDG 11, but equally applicable under SDG 3). Although this methodology may not fully highlight the interrelationship between SDGs, it simplifies the interpretation of the results and prevents some indicators from skewing the results (being counted more than once).

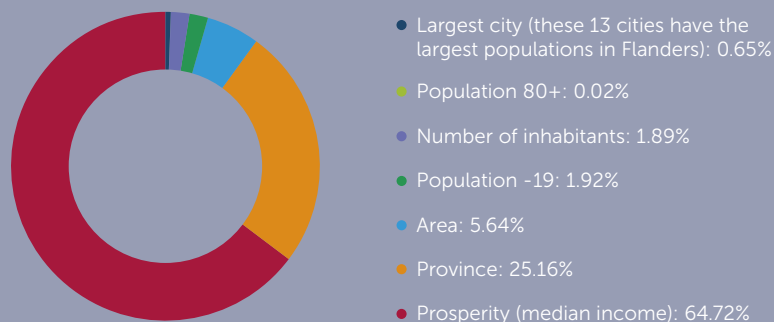
Merging the data presents a challenge as not all information is available for every year. For that reason, the most recent figure is always used during aggregation and projected to the years for which data is not yet available. The data collection began in 2010. For most indicators, data is available from 2014 to 2021. However, at the time of preparing the report, only a limited number of indicators had a complete dataset for 2022. Therefore, the analysis is based on the period between 2010 and 2021.

## Data analysis

A statistical analysis was carried out on the entire dataset. This analysis gives us further insight into which contextual factors can account for the variations in SDG achievement.

Approximately half of the differences among the municipalities are attributable to the contextual factors that were tested. These are elements over which the local government has (very little or) no influence, but which play a role in the degree to which the SDGs have already been achieved. The graph below shows that prosperity (median income) is by far the most significant contextual factor. Location (such as being part of a specific province) is also a determining factor. We discuss this in more detail in the section titled 'general trend'.

Please note that as explained in the 'interlinkages' section below, this is about the concept of correlation rather than causation. We simply note that change in one of the contextual factors, such as prosperity, results in a change in the score of an indicator.



Relation results to contextual factors

When referring in the analysis to municipalities with a 'smaller/larger', 'younger/older', 'prosperous' population, this implies that there is a correlation between one of these characteristics on a specific indicator or topic. For instance, when analysing SDG 8, if we mention that municipalities with a larger population achieve higher scores on indicators related to the circular and social economy, it indicates that, on average, municipalities tend to score higher on the indicators for this topic.

## Deepening the insights

Despite the large dataset, we do not cover some SDGs as comprehensively as others. For example, there are no indicators for SDGs 14 and 17. Ideally, we would use indicators with an ecological approach (Planet), as well as social (People) and economic (Prosperity) approaches for each SDG. However, this was not always feasible. Thus, for SDG 2, we currently have only indicators with an ecological approach (agricultural emissions and share of organic agriculture). Ideally, we would supplement this with data on other aspects such as food distribution (People) and employment in local food production (Prosperity) in the future.

The analysis of the outcome indicators from the index also used other types of indicators to provide an insight into the results of actions or input and can therefore be considered as having a more direct insight into the impact of local or provincial policy. One example of this is the affordable housing target under SDG 11. It contains the 'housing ratio' outcome indicator (the ratio between a household's expenditure on housing and its total disposable income). To give added context to this outcome indicator, elements were added to the analysis such as the number of social housing units, the waiting time for social housing, and so on.

As data cannot represent everything, we offer context and inspiration in the shape of good practices. In this way we add qualitative data to our (at times incomplete) data.

However, there are inherent limitations to a broad indicator set. This data cannot offer depth compared to thematic scientific research. We cannot overemphasise that the analysis of the outcome indicators does not serve as a policy evaluation. When combined with good practices and other types of indicators, our analysis sheds light on ongoing efforts and areas where improvements can be made at the local level. Our data analysis is designed to give a picture of SDG achievement at the local level, with room for variation between Flemish provinces, cities and municipalities and to stimulate dialogue.

The report includes comparisons with international indicators. Particularly those from the **Sustainable Development report of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)**. The SDSN draws a line between a long-term objective for the indicator and a threshold value above which the SDG is achieved (SDG Achieved). While the long-term goal describes the optimal condition that countries should strive for, the threshold gives the specific value for countries to reach to achieve the SDG by 2030.

# Progress made in the implementation of the SDG goals and targets: general trends

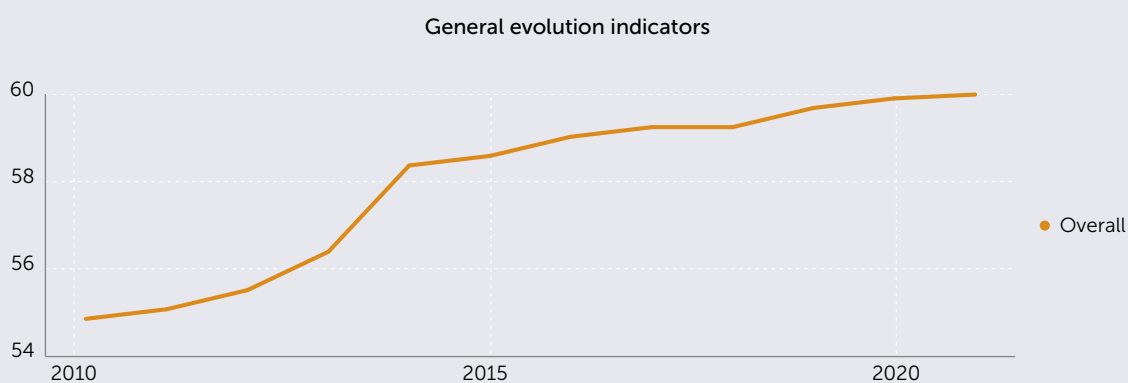
The analysis of over 200 local indicators, supplemented by specific data and good practices, provides important insights into the role played by provinces, cities and municipalities in achieving the SDGs.

In this chapter we describe the general trends, and in the next chapter we delve deeper into the progress made on each goal. We focus on the actual achievement of the SDGs, based on the outcome-indicators dataset. This also means that the results do not necessarily indicate whether a local government is working effectively with the 2030 Agenda as a structural framework. It is not an evaluation of the policy pursued but a quantification of the progress made and identification of the problems.

## Important steps taken

On the basis of our data analysis we observe clear progress towards the achievement of the SDGs in general. Collectively, municipalities have made significant progress since the first measurement of the indicators in 2010. In 2014 there was a huge leap forward, but this was mainly due to an improvement in the data quality. From that moment on, the government of Flanders took charge of the Flemish City Monitor, which provides more insight into numerous SDGs through survey data. After that, the quality of the data was more stable, meaning that we will mainly make comparisons from 2014 onwards.

The figure below shows the trend over time. On the vertical access you see the average score of the 300 Flemish municipalities on all indicators. This score increases over the years and indicates general progress.





## Stable front runners

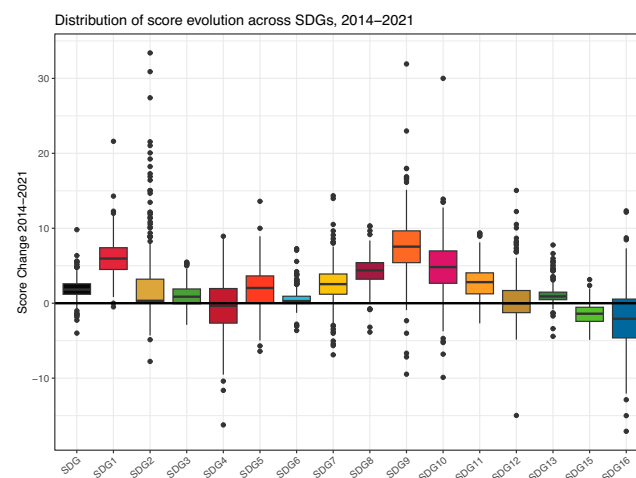
The municipalities with the highest overall scores have remained fairly consistent. In the table below we show the top 10. Please note that only the final outcome towards achieving the SDGs was considered in arriving at these scores. This does not always correlate with the efforts made. We see, for example, that a high median income for residents is one of the most important contextual factors associated with differences in SDG scores between municipalities: the richer a municipality's residents, the better the figures. However, these municipalities also struggle with a higher level of inequality.

Municipality	Province	SDG-Score
Hoeilaart	Flemish Brabant	69,0
De Pinte	East Flanders	68,7
Bierbeek	Flemish Brabant	68,1
Hove	Antwerp	67,5
Edegem	Antwerp	66,2
Oostkamp	West Flanders	65,4
Herent	Flemish Brabant	65,3
Bonheiden	Antwerp	65,3
Oud-Turnhout	Antwerp	65,3
Merelbeke	East Flanders	65,2

*Top 10 municipalities in SDG index*

## Four SDGs show the strongest improvement

This overall trend conceals the considerable diversity between cities and municipalities and between the SDGs themselves. The graph below provides more insight. For each of the 17 SDGs, the trend in score between 2014 and 2021 is shown. Each box shows the median for the municipalities by means of the middle line, along with the corresponding lower quartile (bottom of the box) and upper quartile (top of the box). The higher on the graph the median lies, the larger the number of municipalities that have seen progress towards this SDG. Values that fall below the zero line indicate a decline. The more compact the box, the less divergent the differences between the total group of municipalities.



*Boxplot 17 SDGs: trend in score SDGs between 2014 and 2021*



The conclusion is clear: for four SDGs we see collective and strong progress. These are:

- SDG 1 (No poverty). With the exception of two municipalities, we see overall progress on the indicators for this SDG. The strongest progress is in the lower proportion of people with income below the critical threshold<sup>2</sup>, but the proportion of people having difficulty meeting payments has also decreased.
- SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth). The collective improvement in the employment rate is mainly responsible for a positive trend. Municipalities with a lot of residents and a younger population mainly score well.
- SDG 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure). Progress here is largely determined by a positive trend in one of the few available indicators for this SDG, the percentage of employees in the knowledge-intensive economy.
- SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities). The positive trend towards greater equality is mainly due to the reduction of the gap in employment based on origin and the reduction of income inequality.

In SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy) and SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities) we also see progress, albeit slightly less pronounced. And so for SDG 7 we see a great many outliers that show a decline. For SDG 11, the main improvement is in indicators related to sustainable personal transportation, closely followed by indicators related to housing sustainability.

## A nuanced story

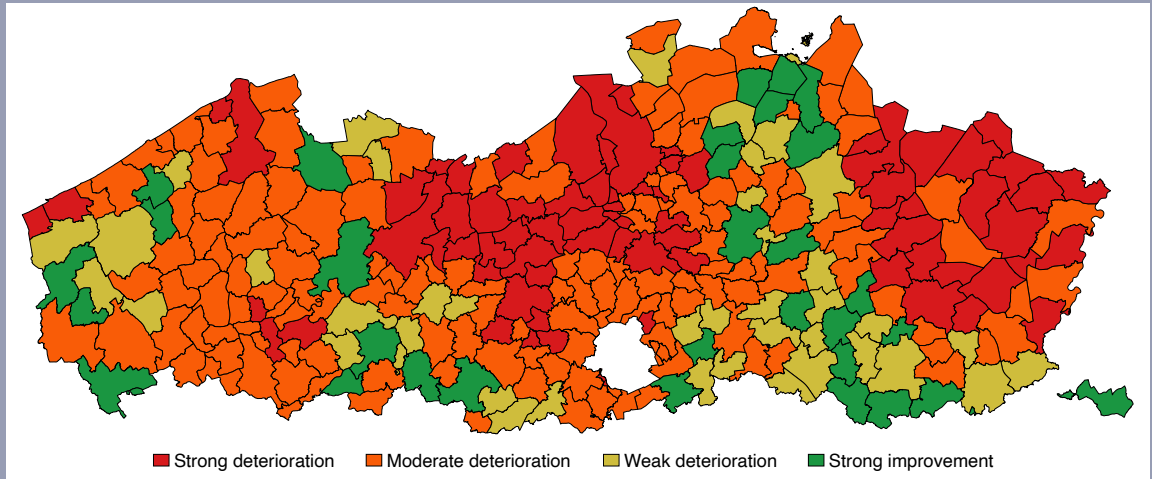
The picture is more diffuse for some SDGs. SDG 3 (Good health and well-being) for example, shows a slight net improvement. This is mainly due to better figures for prevention and road safety. However, there is also a decline in physical and mental health.

We also see big differences between cities and municipalities. The more extensive the box in the figure, the more diverse the values between the cities and municipalities. The outliers, represented as a dot on the figure, are particularly striking. For SDG 2 in particular (Zero hunger), we see very large differences between cities and municipalities. We see a large diversity in the share of organic agriculture, for example.

<sup>2</sup> Net taxable income below €10,000 for people living on their own, €20,000 for a joint return.

## Open space, education, responsible consumption and public services require additional efforts.

One SDG has consistently deteriorated since 2010, and that is SDG 15 (Life on land). This is mainly due to a constant reduction in open space (paving) and a reduction in green space in 87% of municipalities. The map below shows the situation for Flanders. With the exception of a number of municipalities that are improving, the majority are declining. In central Flanders and Limburg, we see clearly a cluster of municipalities that are strongly deteriorating.



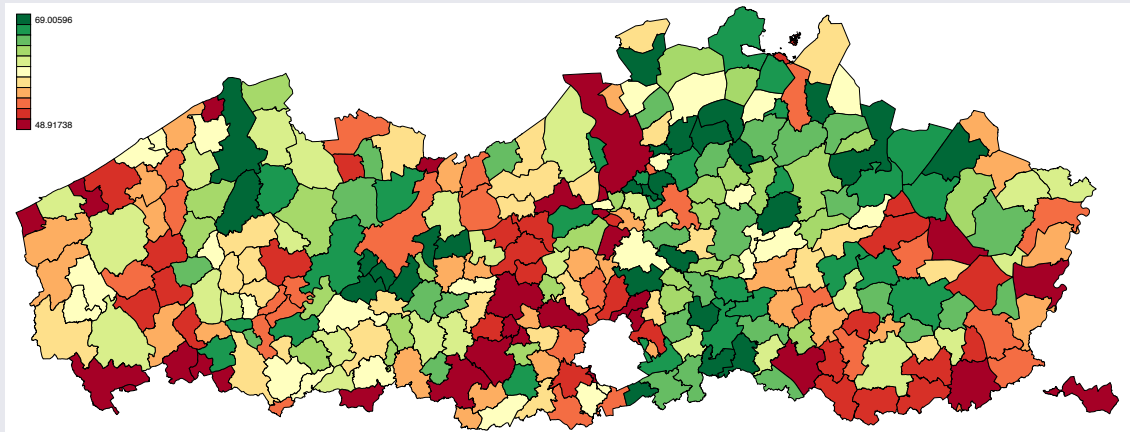
SDG 15: Map of change over time in all Flemish municipalities

Several other SDGs have improved since 2010 but have declined in recent years. In education (SDG 4) for example, there was a decline in satisfaction with childcare and participation in adult education. Responsible consumption and production (SDG 12) also experienced a small decrease due to an increase in waste. Public services (SDG 16) came under pressure due to COVID-19, which resulted in a decrease in satisfaction with counter services.

## Regional differences

The location of a municipality appears to be strongly related to the degree to which the SDGs have already been achieved. On the map below, you will quickly recognise several clusters of municipalities that are performing well collectively (green on the map). In the west of Flanders this is essentially the area around Bruges. This group of strong neighbours extends to the south-western edge of Ghent. The municipalities between Brussels and Leuven also perform well as a region. We see the same positive correlation north and east of the province of Antwerp.





Map SDG Scores

There are two notable exceptions to the regional coherence. For some municipalities, we can speak of a diamond in the rough, in which a municipality is surrounded by others with lower SDGs scores (red on the map) but performs remarkably well itself. The most striking on the map are Wevelgem (West Flanders) and Sint-Truiden (Limburg).

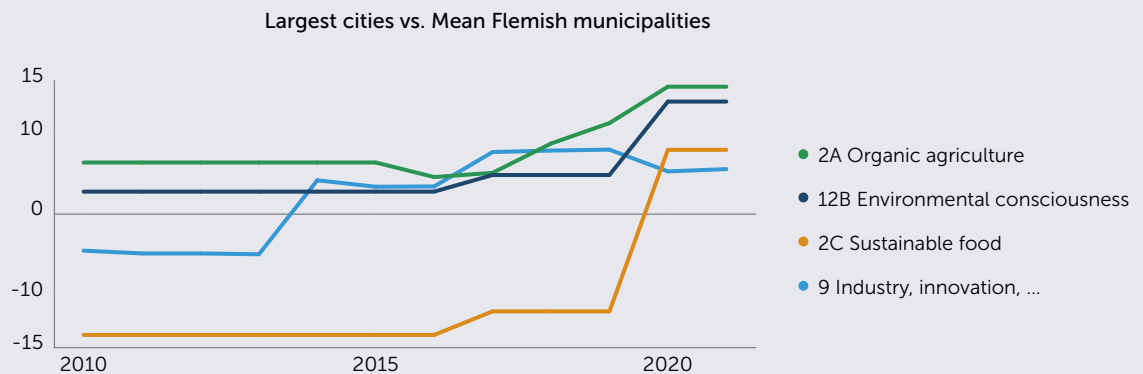
The second exception is the reverse, where a municipality or city in the centre of a high scoring region shows a remarkably poorer performance. This is especially the case for some largest cities.

## Largest cities face the biggest challenges but are also pioneers

The 13 Flemish cities with the largest populations are known as the largest cities. They are Aalst, Antwerp, Bruges, Genk, Ghent, Hasselt, Kortrijk, Leuven, Mechelen, Ostend, Roeselare and Turnhout.

Although the largest cities have made up a lot of ground in recent years, the figures show that they score significantly lower in terms of poverty, climate, safety and public services, and therefore face greater challenges than the average Flemish municipality in these areas.

At the same time, they are pioneers in certain areas, such as organic agriculture, sustainable food, environmental consciousness and innovation. The figure below illustrates this. The zero line is the average Flemish municipality score, and the line above it signifies that the larger cities score higher.



Largest cities vs. Mean Flemish municipalities

## Interlinkage

The SDGs are inherently interlinked. For example, focusing on the SDG related to climate can also have an impact on many other SDGs such as life below water, life on land, clean water and energy, as well as poverty and employment. We can deduce from our analysis not only which SDGs are most strongly linked for Flemish cities and municipalities, but also in which direction.

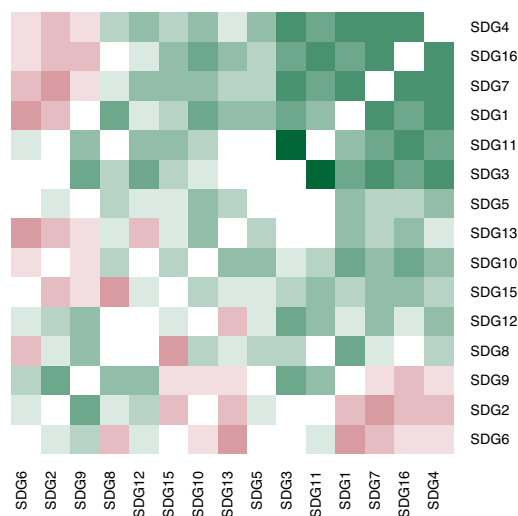
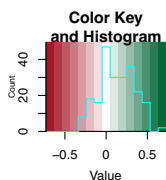
Note however, that correlation is not the same as causality. We simply note that a change in one SDG often results in a change in another. The figure below shows the relations. Green means that the SDGs are evolving in the same direction, red means an evolution in the opposite direction.

Some SDGs are strongly interlinked. Most notably, for example:

- SDG 3 (Good health and well-being) is strongly related to SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities). An improvement in health and well-being often goes hand-in-hand with a positive trend towards sustainable communities, and vice versa.
- There is a clear link between SDG 16 (Peace, justice, and strong institutions) and SDG 4 (Quality education).
- The improvements in SDG 1 (No poverty) and SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth) are closely related.

Between other SDGs there is a clear trade-off, for example:

- An increase in SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth) is accompanied by a decrease in SDG 15 (Life on land) and vice versa.
- There is strife for green space between SDG 15 (Life on land) and SDG 2 (Zero hunger).



Interlinkage between evolution SDGs

# Progress made in the implementation of the SDG goals and targets: progress towards the 17 SDGs

In this chapter we delve deeper into the trend in each of the 17 sustainable development goals in the Flemish provinces, cities and municipalities. For each we describe:

- The role of provincial and local governments, and examples of some of the existing strategies they use to make progress in the SDG concerned.
- The indicators analysed and the global trend in the cities and municipalities.
- The main trends and insights from the analysis. We also look at international comparisons and qualitative insights based on local cases.
- 2 to 3 practical examples, each providing a link to more information.

## Correct interpretation

The starting point for the analysis is the extensive indicator set. Therefore, for each SDG, we provide an overview of the selected indicators and how they have evolved. Green indicates that the average Flemish municipality has improved since 2014, while red indicates a decline. Sometimes, there is insufficient data available to make a statement, which is indicated by n.a. (not available).

There are, however, some considerations to be made as regards the chosen methodology (see also the previous chapter):

- The selected indicators are mainly to be found at the outcome level. They give insight into the current situation in the municipality but are not an evaluation of local policy.
- There are not enough reliable indicators available for every SDG topic within the SDG. For example, there is no general data included for SDG 14 (Life below water) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals). An analysis based solely on the indicators does not, therefore, give a complete picture for every SDG.
- Each indicator is only linked to 1 SDG. Often, however, there are links to multiple SDGs.

Monitoring and analysis of data are an essential part of achieving the SDGs, but must be supplemented with qualitative information for the reasons mentioned above. In this report, we supplement the data with information about the role of local and provincial governments, the strategies and mechanisms used and practical examples.

More detailed information on the indicators can be found in annex 2.









# SDG 1: No poverty

Poverty reduction is about realising basic rights and focuses on all areas of life. The levers for structural poverty reduction are employment, education, housing, health and social security. Cities and municipalities (and indirectly provinces) contribute to this and are also crucial for the accompanying poverty reduction policies. Through their public social welfare centres (PSWC), cities and municipalities significantly contribute to closing the poverty gap by directly intervening in people's income, providing financial leverage, guiding and referring people to employment opportunities, fighting energy poverty, providing emergency housing and more. Local governments are also increasingly seeking ways to implement integrated poverty reduction policies by means such as appointing policy coordinators to implement a strategic and horizontal poverty policy, exploring digital support for clients or experimenting with tools such as the poverty test to monitor policy actions.

Overview topics and indicators for SDG 1	
No poverty	↑
Fiscal income below critical threshold (relative poverty)	↑
Low work intensity	↑
Payment difficulties	↑
Residents with difficulty paying for basic needs	↑
Overdue on loan repayment	↑
Overdue on mortgage repayment	↑

## Hopeful trend

Almost all municipalities have seen an improvement in poverty indicators since 2014. The strongest progress is in the lower proportion of people with income below the critical threshold, but the proportion of people having difficulty meeting payments has also decreased since 2014. For example, there has been a decrease in overdue credit. But this is in need of nuancing. In 2017, for example, 9% of residents in Flanders were unable to pay a bill for basic needs (such as healthcare costs, school fees, internet, etc.) on time, and this increased slightly to 10% in 2020. In addition, in the COVID-19 pandemic, there were periods when payment deferrals were possible, such as on mortgage loans, which may result in a delayed effect.

## Largest cities make up ground

In the last 10 years the largest cities have had considerably worse scores on the poverty indicators than other municipalities, but they have, however, made the strongest progress. This improvement is largely to do with a strong reduction in the proportion of residents with payment difficulties.



## Persistent challenges

In 2021, 12.7% of children in Flanders were born to a **disadvantaged family**. The Agency for Child and Family (Agentschap Opgroeien) of the government of Flanders uses six criteria to estimate this risk: the monthly income of the family, the employment situation of the parents, the education level of the parents, housing, the development of the children and health. Over a period of some 10 years, the proportion of children in disadvantaged families has increased significantly: in 2010, it was just 8.6%. Children in the largest cities are at a higher risk of poverty: the median percentage of children born into a disadvantaged family is 17.4%.

The practical experience of local governments leads us to a few important notes. The figures are typically under-reported, partly because people who are in difficulty do not always take up their entitlements and not all payment problems are centrally registered. In other words, poverty is still an important societal challenge.

## SDG 1 in practice

### Transversal poverty reduction

It is clear from the data analysis above that poverty is still a common problem. With nearly 13% in (risk of) poverty, the city of Beringen makes poverty reduction a priority in its current multi-annual policy plan (MAP) for 2020-2025. The city has developed a transversely supported poverty policy in which both the department of community services and the public social welfare centre play a managing role. Beringen has appointed a poverty coordinator who acts as a bridge between various local and supralocal actors - such as the House of the Child, community workers, civil society - and coordinates the poverty forum that provides a platform for people in poverty. The **Beringen poverty reduction plan** is based on six hooks to which objectives and actions are attached. To obtain a shared vision and language on poverty reduction (hook 1) the city decided to introduce a poverty test that screens the impact of policy decisions on people in poverty. In the current test phase, the test is applied to policy proposals on priority topics such as energy poverty, housing, mobility and child-friendly cities. Specifically, an expert group, which includes representatives from the poverty forum, lived experience experts and civil society partners, is asked to provide advice on policy proposals. The policy always feeds back to the expert group. In 2024, the city wishes to roll the implementation out and standardise the poverty test in decision-making. Another hook is the creation of equal opportunities to participate. In that context, engaging lived-experience experts plays an important role in areas such as the extensive annual screening of accessibility to municipal services. The city also employed a full-time expert in poverty and social exclusion. A third hook is currently developing around the alignment of material assistance, which is often ad hoc and not structurally embedded. The city identifies needs (food aid, menstrual poverty, birthday parties, pamper banks, sports clothing, etc.) and organises dialogue tables for the players concerned.



## SDG 2: Zero hunger

This goal aims to achieve food security and eradicate hunger and malnutrition around the globe. At the same time, it focuses on promoting sustainable agriculture that takes account of nature and the climate to achieve a global transition to agro-ecological food systems.

Local and provincial governments have many resources with which to strengthen this short food supply chain: they can facilitate good connections between cities as marketplaces and local producers from the surrounding rural municipalities. This increases access to affordable and healthy food and gives local (agricultural) producers a fair wage. Diverse and very broad partnerships with local actors are established around topics such as urban agriculture, short food supply chains, fair trade and food loss, with local (organic) farmers, supermarkets, schools, day care centres, residential care centres, social economy, civil society organisations and so on. Furthermore, local and provincial governments can take a management role in this network of local partners by developing their own food strategy, by which they identify food actors, make a land inventory, implement food policies in local schools and serve as a role model in sustainable procurement.

### Overview of topics and indicators for SDG 2

Zero hunger	↑
Organic agriculture	↑
Agricultural emissions	↓
Non-energy-related emissions N2O from soil	→
Non-energy-related emissions Livestock	→
Ammonia Emissions from agriculture	↓
CO2 emissions from agriculture	↓
Sustainable food	↑
Eating local vegetables or fruits	↑
Buying organic products	↑
Eating vegetarian	↑
Buying seasonal vegetables	↑

## Largest cities and municipalities with a more prosperous population perform best

The largest cities perform well as regards all elements under SDG 2, i.e. organic agriculture, agricultural emissions and sustainable food. Municipalities with a prosperous population tend to score better because the residents consume more healthy and sustainably produced food. Municipalities with a younger population also perform well in this regard.





## Organic agriculture is improving

Organic agriculture is experiencing substantial growth (Timmermans & Van Bellegem, 2022; Roels et al., 2021). Despite the growth, the share of organic agriculture remains small compared to total agriculture. The organic area now accounts for approximately 1.4% of the total agricultural land in Flanders (about 2600 ha in 2005, while in 2019 it was almost 7000 ha). The number of active producers has increased from 236 in 2005 to 562 businesses in 2019.

West Flanders has the most organic farming companies in absolute terms, but Flemish Brabant is the province with the highest percentage of organic farmers.

## Clear trend towards more sustainable food

There is a general trend towards more sustainable food in the largest cities, with a rise mostly in the share of vegetarian and organic food. This trend is less pronounced in the other municipalities.

## Young people choose vegetarian and organic, older people prefer local

Young and more prosperous residents consume more vegetarian and organic food. The same resident profile is also concerned with the consumption of seasonal vegetables but is less likely to choose local vegetables. This is in contrast to municipalities with an older population, where local vegetables are more popular but other aspects of sustainable food receive less attention.

## SDG 2 in practice

### Distribution of food surplus

SDG 2 also aims to address hunger. Although this issue is reflected less prominently in the data analysis due to a lack of suitable indicators, many cities, municipalities and provinces are taking action to tackle it. As is the case for Bruges, whose environmental and social economy services established the food distribution platform 'Flavour' in 2019 with European subsidies. The platform coordinates the collection and distribution of food surplus in Bruges, thereby connecting local players involved in social employment, reducing food waste and providing access to healthy food for people in poverty. Local welfare associations were enlisted for logistics, as were players such as the social grocery store, social restaurants and local meeting centres, activity centres and youth centres involved in distributing and processing surplus food (either for their own residents or target groups outside the city). In 2022, 170 tons of food were collected - primarily from supermarkets - and distributed. Meanwhile, the project has expanded and collaboration has been established with nine other municipalities under the name 'Werkkracht 10'.



Watch this [video](#) or see this [web page](#) for more information on the activities of the food distribution platform.











# SDG 3: Good health and well-being

Provinces, cities and municipalities do a lot for the well-being and health of their residents. The main challenge is to achieve an integrated approach in their collaborations with various actors such as local service centres, home care services, social housing companies, residential care facilities and schools. They play a role in the preventive detection of physical and mental problems, for example. This is because health is about well-being on a physical, mental, economic and social level and intersects with numerous policy domains such as energy, poverty, housing, climate, youth, education, leisure and inequality.

A well thought-out policy on spatial planning and public transport can reduce traffic accidents, improve air quality, improve access to care and welfare services and promote sustainable lifestyles. Provincial governments also focus on these issues through their responsibilities for bike routes, walking paths, spatial planning, environment and provincial parks providing green spaces nearby. Another example is the creation of caring neighbourhoods and action in primary care zones. These are tools for preventive health promotion and combating social isolation and loneliness.

The increasing health gap also drives local governments to provide extra support for vulnerable groups such as intervening in medical costs through public social welfare centres, working with community-based health guides and using innovative prevention methods in oral care, healthy living and healthy eating in schools.

Overview of topics and indicators for SDG 3	
<b>Good health and well-being</b>	↑
<b>Physical health</b>	↓
Excess mortality per municipality	/
Diabetes	↓
Chronic conditions	→
<b>Mental health</b>	↓
Use of psychoactive drugs	↓
Sense of happiness	/
<b>Road traffic safety</b>	↑
Traffic fatalities	↑
Traffic fatalities among vulnerable road users	↑
Safe routes to school	↑
<b>Health facilities</b>	→
Satisfaction with health facilities	↑
Availability of nearby general practitioners	↓
Financial difficulties accessing healthcare	↑
<b>Services for the elderly</b>	↑
Satisfaction with services for the elderly	↑
Availability of elderly care services	↓
<b>Preventive care</b>	↑



Cancer screening	↑
Preventive oral care	↑
COVID-19 percentage (%) fully vaccinated	/
<b>Exercise and sports</b>	↑
Availability of sports facilities	/
Active movement (daily walk, stepping, cycling)	↑
Sports participation (at least weekly)	↑

## Physical and mental health are deteriorating

Overall, we see a slight improvement in the indicators for good health and well-being over time. For one in four municipalities, however, there is a deterioration. The strongly negative trend in physical health across all municipalities is striking. Below, we present the indicators for excess mortality, diabetes and chronic conditions. The figure below shows the trend in these figures (except for excess mortality, for which only one measuring point is available). The scores for cities and municipalities that previously performed poorly on physical health continue to worsen.

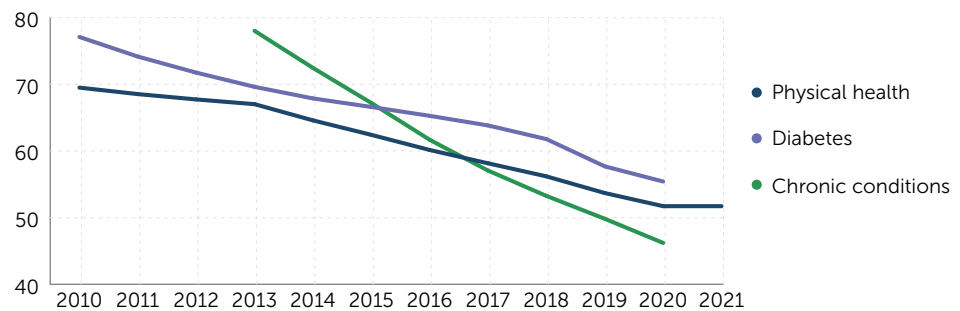


Figure 1: Trends in physical health (a falling line represents a deterioration in the situation)

In mental health we also see a decrease in some indicators. In half of the municipalities there is an increase in the use of medication for depression or alcohol addiction.



## Largest cities face specific challenges

The lowest score for SDG 3 in the largest cities is mainly due to three underlying topics. Residents show lower satisfaction with the number and quality of elderly care facilities. In addition, city dwellers are less likely to undergo preventive cancer screenings, less likely to visit the dentist and less likely to be vaccinated. Finally, city residents exercise less on average, participate in sports less frequently and are more often dissatisfied with the number of sports facilities in their neighbourhood.

However, there is hope with regard to physical and mental health. The largest cities show good progress in all aspects, the most notable being a decrease in the use of antidepressants.

## Fewer traffic fatalities in Flanders

In comparison with other countries, Flemish municipalities have fewer traffic fatalities on average. Just over half of the municipalities currently meet the SDSN's <sup>3</sup> **long-term goal for traffic fatalities** to achieve fewer than 3.2 traffic fatalities per 100 000 residents by 2030.

However, there is room for improvement: we have more traffic victims than neighbouring countries. We also see large differences in type of municipality; there are fewer traffic victims in municipalities with a more prosperous population. As regards traffic safety, we do not see municipalities moving towards each other.

## Positive results for colorectal cancer, oral care requires attention

Encouragingly, colorectal cancer screening and oral care show the strongest improvements in terms of preventive care. Colorectal cancer screening is particularly well established in less populated municipalities. In municipalities with a poorer population, oral care is an important area of attention.

<sup>3</sup> The Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) mobilises scientific and technical expertise from universities, society and the private sector to support the implementation of the SDGs on the local, national and global scale. The SDSN report titled "Indicators and a Monitoring Framework for the SDGs" gives 100 'global monitoring indicators' and a larger number of additional 'national indicators'.

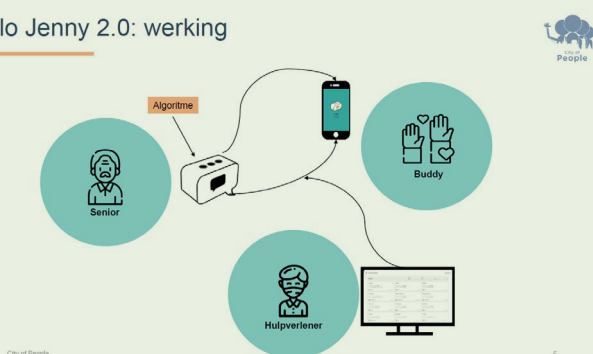
## SDG 3 in practice

### Smart technology versus loneliness in the elderly

The data analysis shows a deterioration in mental health. However, provincial and local governments are taking action, partly through the use of new technologies. In collaboration with UGent, Imec, Digipolis Gent and volunteers from civil society organisations in Ghent, the city of Ghent launched a pilot project in 2019 for senior citizens who experience a lack of social contact. A smart speaker asks the senior citizen daily questions about their mood and specific social needs and, if necessary, sends a message to their 'buddy' (students and volunteers). The buddy can then use the 'Hello Jenny' app to arrange to see the senior citizen. The fact that the buddy responds as and

when it suits him removes any reluctance the senior citizen may have to request contact. After each visit, the buddy provides information about the senior citizen in the app or forwards any requests for help to professional caregivers. The project connects smart technology with human sensors, not only addressing a lack of social contact but enabling the flow of existing support services for senior citizens to the target group.

#### Hello Jenny 2.0: working



How Hello Jenny 2.0 works

### Co-creation for an age friendly municipality

Also smaller municipalities can take undertake structural action to increase the well-being of their elderly residents. This is demonstrated by the municipality of Laakdal as a pilot municipality in the [European project 'Healthy Ageing through Innovation in Rural Europe' \(HAIRE\)](#). Based on a neighbourhood analysis and conversations with senior citizens of different ages and from different parts of the municipality, 100 action points were collected. From these, four priorities were filtered: leisure time, care planning, communication and mobility. In the context of communication, for example, the following have already been achieved: a newspaper written by senior citizens for senior citizens, a personalised dementia magazine and neighbour postcards. Solutions to other pain points are being sought in a co-creative way in collaboration with the Province of Antwerp, Welzijnzorg Kempen, senior citizens and volunteers.





# SDG 4:

## Quality education

SDG 4 aims to ensure that boys and girls have access to primary and secondary education and the opportunity to pursue further studies. Technical, vocational, artistic and higher education (including universities) should be freely accessible for young people and adults, irrespective of gender or background. All students acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes in the areas of sustainable development, human rights, cultural diversity and global citizenship. Educational facilities are child and disability friendly. For that reason we strive to make education accessible and therefore affordable. Only by in this way can we work towards the Leave No One Behind principal.

Local and provincial governments are relatively small players in the Flemish educational landscape but play an important role through the proximity of municipal primary schools and provincial adult education centres, the organisation of childcare, support for families with difficulty paying school fees and their connection of schools with the community, the labour market and freedom initiatives. Provincial secondary education also holds a very specific position in the Flemish educational landscape. It is strongly focused on technical and vocational education to match the needs of the provincial labour market as closely as possible and ensure a smooth transition.

Furthermore, education strengthens local welfare policy. Education should be a springboard for social equality, as it is the key to participation and emancipation. This applies to young people and adults alike. Lifelong learning is not a luxury but a requirement to complete a successful career in a rapidly changing world. Local and provincial governments also put accompanying educational measures in place, such as truancy prevention, language stimulation and the promotion of safe and sustainable home-school traffic.

Overview of topics and indicators for SDG 4	
Quality education	↓
General	↓
Satisfaction with educational facilities	↓
Difficulty in paying school fees	↑
Babies and toddlers	→
Preschool childcare places for babies and toddlers	↑
Preschool childcare places for babies and toddlers with income-based fees	↑
Satisfaction with childcare	↓
Difficulty in paying for childcare	↑
Early childhood and primary education	↓
Participation in early childhood education	→
Minimum attendance in early childhood education	↓
Educational disadvantage in primary education, by place of residence (>=2 years)	↑
After-school childcare places for 100 children	↑
Secondary education	↑
Early school leavers in secondary education	→
Early school leavers: females	→



Early school leavers: non-Belgians	↑
Early school leavers: non-EU	↑
Educational disadvantage in secondary education, by place of residence (>=2 years)	↑
<b>Higher and adult education</b>	↓
Higher education students, by place of residence	↑
Enrolment in adult education	↓

## High level of participation in preschool education

The goal of the SDSN is to ensure that by 2030 all girls and boys have access to quality development, care and education in early childhood prior to primary school to prepare them for basic education. Half of the Flemish municipalities already achieve the **SDSN long-term preschool education participation goal**, with the overwhelming majority falling in the 'SDG achieved' category. In particular, municipalities with a more prosperous population have strong scores in terms of early childhood and primary education due to higher participation in early childhood education and limited educational disadvantage.

## Childcare under pressure

The topic with the least positive figures in SDG 4 is childcare. According to the survey in the Municipality-City Monitor, overall satisfaction with childcare decreased. In municipalities with many young people in particular, satisfaction with the quality of childcare is lower. Nevertheless, a **survey by the VVSG on childcare in 2023** indicates that 4 out of 5 parents are satisfied with the care provided for their baby or toddler.

## Education challenges municipalities with a larger population and the largest cities

Municipalities with a larger population score less well on all aspects of this SDG, and the largest cities score much worse as regards educational disadvantage in secondary education and early school leaving. However, the largest cities have already seen significant improvement in this area.



## Early school leaving mainly among boys and non-Belgians

Early school leaving is a bigger problem among boys than girls. In 4 out of 5 cities and municipalities, there are more boys than girls with educational disadvantages. Early school leaving is much more frequent among people with a migration background. The rate is 4 times higher for non-Belgians and 5.5 times higher for non-Europeans.

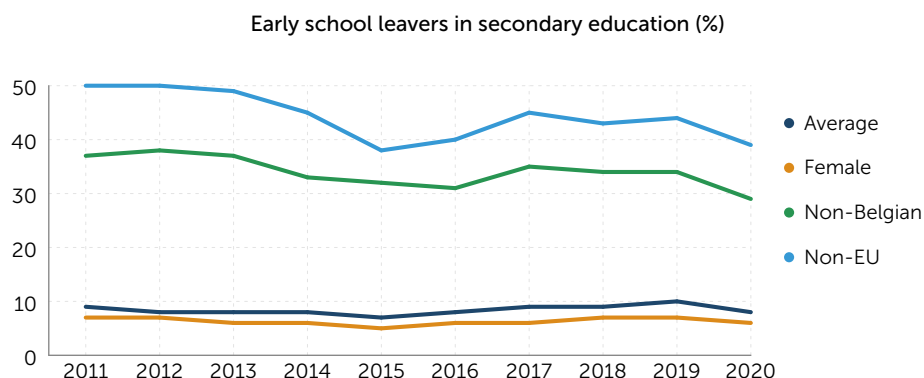


Figure 2: Early school leavers in secondary education (%)

The educational opportunity poverty indicator (OKI) has increased in recent years. Since 2018 in particular, we have seen a significant increase in the proportion of children living in the neighbourhood with a high degree of educational disadvantage, in receipt of a school allowance, having a mother with a low educational level or a language at home which is not Dutch. The proportion is much higher in the largest cities.

## SDG 4 in practice

### Inclusive childcare

The data shows that satisfaction with childcare can be improved. And cities and municipalities are strongly committed to this. The Flemish-Brabant municipality of Zemst, for example, together with various stakeholders on its territory, aims to achieve inclusive childcare through an intensive two-year process. The municipality appointed a coach to help crèches and childminders care for children with additional care needs. Specifically, the coach visits childcare facilities every 2 weeks to work together on matters such as the layout of the space, contact with parents and development of the childcare vision. Also, in collaboration with the CEGO research centre, the local government is setting up a learning network that meets 3 times a year and receives substantive support from the Centre for Inclusive Childcare (CIK). In this learning network the childcare facilities, together with the CIK, determine the topics in which they aim to improve. The municipality is also dedicated to profiling inclusive childcare in Zemst. Childcare facilities receive support for communication and are encouraged to collaborate with partners in inclusivity, such as home guidance services. All crèches and a number of childminders in Zemst have joined the project. By the end of the project in 2024, the municipality aims to develop a roadmap for use by childcare facilities when caring for children with additional needs.



## Affordable technical education

The numbers of early school leavers and educational disadvantages are worrying for certain groups in society, such as people with a migration background. Through a number of ambitions, the **Province of Antwerp** ensures that technical and specialised education in Antwerp remains affordable, and it focuses on disadvantaged groups.

The first ambition is to provide higher quality education by reducing the administrative burden on teachers and professionalising them. Provincial Education Antwerp (POA), for example, invests in classroom support to create smaller classes and allow for co-teaching, and invests in innovative didactic materials and modern and sustainable school buildings. The brand-new STEM building at PTS Mechelen with state-of-the-art STEM learning materials is a fine example of this.

The Province also aims for a higher qualified outflow by aligning education offerings as closely as possible with market needs. Workers from business and industry come and teach in the classroom.

Thirdly, the POA focuses on stronger knowledge of Dutch among students by, among other things, organising Reception Education for non-Dutch-speaking Newcomers. This enables newcomers to integrate more rapidly into regular education.

Finally, the POA focuses on cost-conscious and affordable education for all. 'Digisprong' was rolled out, for example, to provide financial support to students for the purchase of laptops.

In the other Flemish Provinces, education is also organised with the same emphasis on affordability combined with quality. Furthermore, the provinces organise highly specialised niche education programmes such as musical instrument building, agro techniques, bicycle technology and photo welding, where there is little or no offering in other educational networks. [Read more about provincial education.](#)



PITO Stabroek © Province of Antwerp





# SDG 5: Gender equality

We must put an end to gender inequality: the glass ceiling, the gender pay gap, traditional gender roles, gender-based violence, etc. Women have the right to good health, knowledge about sexuality and reproduction and full and effective participation at all levels of decision-making.

Local and provincial governments, as first-line authorities, have an important exemplary role to play. They can, as employers, for example, contribute to more gender balance in the care professions. Gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting are ways to make quick progress towards SDG 5. Monitoring gender-specific data in (local) policy planning and monitoring can expose obstacles and allow for adjustments. Spatial planning and police policies are important domains for reducing gender-related violence. Collaboration and dialogue with women's associations, neighbourhood committees, the police and public social welfare centres is key.

Overview of topics and indicators for SDG 5	
Gender equality	↑
Equality in employment	↑
Employment rate - Female/Male	↑
Gender gap in full-time employment	↑
Gender gap in part-time employment	↑
Gender gap in long-term unemployment	↑
Discrimination and violence	↑
Discrimination: sex	/
Domestic violence	↑

## Mostly growing equality in employment

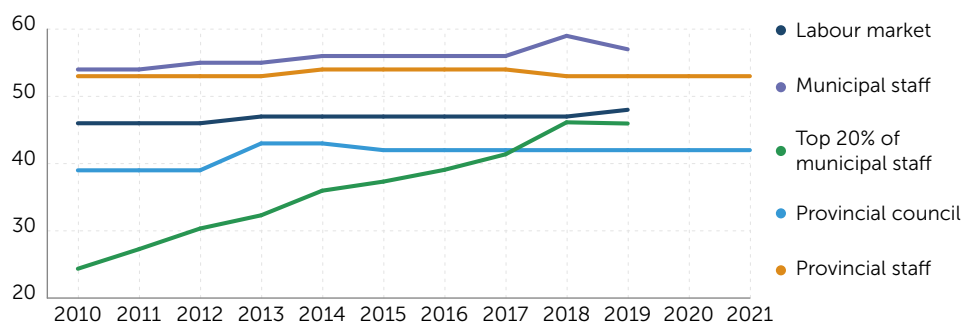
We see an improvement in equality between men and women in 5 out of 6 cities and municipalities. The gender gap is decreasing in terms of employment rate and long-term unemployment.

In terms of the male/female employment rate, Flemish cities and municipalities score very well by international comparison, despite the fact that only a handful of municipalities have currently achieved near to complete equality in employment between men and women.



## Women in local government leadership positions

In addition to the data included in the index, further data was included in the analysis of **employment in local governments** themselves. Women have made up more than half of the workforce in local governments for almost 10 years. In 2014, only 36% of the top 20% of earners in local governments were women. By 2019, this had increased to 46%. In provincial governments too, there are generally more women employed than men<sup>4</sup>. The figures are very consistent and have remained about the same since 2010. The figure below shows the ratio of women to men across the entire labour market and for municipal and provincial staff and council members specifically.



Figuur 3: proportion of women in employment

There is, however, inequality at the political level. While 58 or 47% of the members of the Flemish Parliament are women, the number is much lower at the local level. From a written question from the Flemish Parliament in 2022 (written question, 8 July 2022), it seems that only 4,761 or 41% of women are active in local politics. This breaks down to 2,845 women (38%) in the municipal council and only 648 (34%) women on the board of mayor and aldermen.

The number of female provincial councillors increased to 40% in 2018 compared to 30% in 2012. In 2022, the provincial councils in Antwerp, Flemish Brabant and East Flanders are more or less equally divided between men and women, with 47%, 44% and 41% women respectively. In Limburg, the proportion of women is slightly lower (38%) and in West Flanders it is just 25%.

<sup>4</sup> Data requested from the provinces themselves and not available online





## SDG 5 in practice

### A statement for gender

In 2010, the city council of **Mechelen** issued a **Mechelen Gender Statement** calling on all residents to live together in diversity, freedom and equality. The gender statement was updated in 2022. The city no longer speaks solely about equality between men and women, but between people. A new passage was added about being able to be yourself and feel safe in Mechelen, and the city firmly rejects the division of public space according to gender or sex.

The statement, along with a diversity clause, is included in all cooperation agreements with external partners and in subsidy regulations. In cooperation agreements with sports clubs, etc., the city asks for actions tailored to each organisation. The **city council itself promotes gender and sexual diversity**. For example, bystander training and coaching programmes for hospitality staff on sexual aggression in nightlife are provided, and rainbow packages are distributed to local businesses and restaurants annually on the occasion of International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia. The city of Mechelen also takes the gender dimension into consideration in its HR policy. All job vacancies are gender neutral (including language and images), there is a push for gender balance among the staff confidential advisers and there is a focus on work-life balance for staff at all levels. Management and supervisors set the tone and make use of parental leave.

### Health and empowerment of socially vulnerable pregnant women

In the primary care zone of **South-West-Waasland**, pregnant women with a certain vulnerability go through a group process that strengthens them during pregnancy and the first weeks after the birth of their child. The project uses the 'centring pregnancy' methodology, a multidisciplinary approach that combines psychosocial support with strengthening the social network of women and providing medical monitoring. Groups of women from the region who are due to give birth in the same period come together monthly under the guidance of a midwife. The women themselves largely determine what they would like to learn more about. During the sessions, for example, Kind & Gezin, along with the local social worker and the physiotherapist from the neighbourhood health centre offer their services. Medical consultations with the general practitioner and gynaecologist are also linked to the workshop, so that the women only have to travel once. Participants are referred through various channels: the general practitioner, the neighbourhood health centre, the Houses of the Child, refugee centres, the public social welfare centres, the agency for Integration and Civic Integration or the pregnant woman herself. Communication between the workshops is through WhatsApp, which is accessible and can be easily translated with an app. Before or after each group session, someone from the municipality social service visits to record the participants' questions and concerns and provide further individual support wherever necessary. Evaluations show that the participants are very satisfied with the method. The network, the friendships formed and the knowledge transferred from the professionals are cited as the greatest advantages.

[More information on the pregnancy centre in South-West-Waasland](#)





# SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation

This goal aims for sustainable water management, through which everyone has access to drinking water and sanitation facilities and water quality improves. Sustainable water management requires an integrated approach to drinking water, river basin management and spatial planning in both urban and rural areas.

The responsibility for setting water quality standards lies mainly at the European level. However, local and provincial governments are important partners in the broad network of actors involved in water management. Provinces are responsible for second-category waterways, while cities and municipalities are responsible for third-category waterways and the management of public and municipal roadside ditches. Local governments or a sewerage manager appointed by them are responsible for the collection of household wastewater. Local and provincial governments also initiate the development of local erosion control plans and are responsible for granting environmental and urban planning permits and applying the **water test**. They can also take on a role in raising awareness and/or facilitating sustainable water use by providing subsidies, for example, for rainwater installations, signing the **tap water charter for municipalities** or requiring construction sites to provide their dewatering water for the neighbourhood.

Overzicht thema's en indicatoren SDG 6	
Clean water and sanitation	→
Drinking water	→
Access to water supply	/
Average water consumption	/
Sewerage	↑
Treatment rate	↑
Sewerage connection rate	↓
Protection of water resources	/
Weighted average water quality of surface water bodies	/
Biological average water quality of surface water bodies	/
Physicochemical average water quality of surface water bodies	/

## Final stages

In April 2022 the sewer connection rate in Flanders was 88%. About 400,000 homes in Flanders are still not connected to the sewage mains. Although the overall percentage has remained relatively stable since 2015, 40% of municipalities have seen a relative decline.



86% are effectively connected to a wastewater treatment plant. This 'treatment rate' has increased significantly in recent decades, from 45% in 2000 to 74% in 2010. Since then, progress has slowed considerably. The municipalities with the worst scores are making up ground, but for those that are performing well it is difficult to close the gap. It is a struggle for municipalities that cover a large area and have a smaller population. The wastewater treatment rate is highest in coastal municipalities, urban areas and the province of Limburg.

## Economical with tap water

The household consumption of tap water decreased slightly year on year to 2020. In 2020 and 2021, however, we saw a slight increase of about 1 m<sup>3</sup> per person per year. This was largely due to the COVID-19 lockdowns, which led families to consume more tap water at home.

The comparative table provided by the International Water Association, shows that tap water consumption in Belgium - across all regions - is lower than in any other European country. Therefore, Flemish families tend to be economical with tap water.

However, there are significant differences within Flanders. The average household consumption of tap water in a large part of West and East Flanders is lower than the Flemish average of 74 m<sup>3</sup> per year. The lowest average annual tap water consumption was recorded in Langemark-Poelkapelle (42.7 m<sup>3</sup> in 2021). The average household consumption of tap water in the Province of Antwerp is higher than the Flemish average. The map below illustrates this.

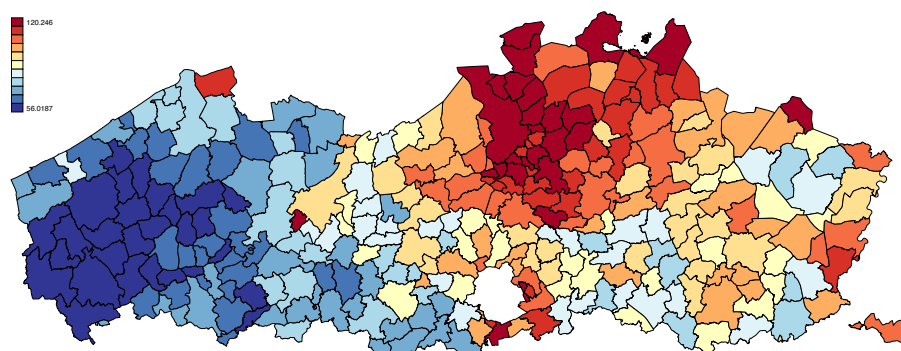


Figure 4: Average tap water consumption per municipality (in m<sup>3</sup> per resident for 2021)

## Significant reduction in pesticide use

A considerable reduction in pesticide use has been achieved at the municipal level, where a decrease in the average use by municipal services, from 31 kg of active substance (2010) to 1.5 kg in 2020, has been observed. One of the main explanations for this is the ban on pesticides for public services (VMM, 2020). This has also had a positive impact on water quality.



## SDG 6 in practice

### Towards a climate-resilient landscape in the Voerstreek

In 2022 the Regional Landscape of Haspengouw and Voeren (RLHV), together with the **Province of Limburg** and others developed an area programme for Voeren. The project measures include promoting the infiltration of rainwater and improving the landscape's sponge effect; slowing down water flow and storing water to protect downstream areas from flooding; improving the water quality of water courses; strengthening vulnerable nature, etc. The actions are implemented on a valley wide, integrated and participatory basis (collaboration between agriculture, nature, water, heritage, etc.). A number of specific actions in the area programme promote water quality by addressing agricultural pollution and flooding. The area-specific approach increases the efficiency of water use across different sectors and so protects the water quality. The integrated approach to water-related sources protects and restores unique ecosystems and improves liveability between humans and nature.

The Province of Limburg itself is also leading several measures within the area programme, such as improving stream structures, supporting fish migration and creating multifunctional and landscape integrated flood zones in the Voer drainage basin. Other partners in the project include the Flemish Environment Agency, the municipality of Voeren and Boerennatuur Vlaanderen.

Finally, the Province of Limburg is also focusing on water management outside project work through initiatives such as the Provincial Drought Action Plan.

### Natural purification of wastewater

Through the 'Ledegem wordt Leaudegem' project, **Ledegem** became the first rural location in Flanders to collect and purify household wastewater that previously ended up in nature via a roadside ditch. Their water treatment system is a sustainable alternative to sewerage and uses nature-based technology to purify wastewater naturally. The installation is not only of economic interest - the water does not have to travel a long distance - but it also has a very low energy consumption and ensures biodiversity in the surrounding area. Its modular design means that the installation is scalable and switchable as a source measure for other rural areas in Flanders. The construction and methodology are based on European and Flemish regulations (see, for example, the Water Framework Directive). In the first eight months, 1600 m<sup>3</sup> of wastewater were purified and re-infiltrated locally. Efforts to improve surface water quality are therefore connected to the fight against drought. A digital system of sensors and hourly discharge measurements means that the project monitoring is open to everyone at any time.









# SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy

Local and provincial governments can create the conditions for the transition to sustainable energy through their investments in infrastructure (for example, pipelines). By making their building stock energy efficient, maximising local renewable energy production and applying sustainability criteria in their procurement policy, they contribute directly to SDG 7 and set a good example. 294 Flemish municipalities have signed the **Local Energy and Climate Pact (LEKP)**, committing themselves to develop a local heat plan by 2030 and thereby outlining the guidelines for fossil-free heating and cooling. They can also achieve significant efficiency gains and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by using smart technologies in their buildings and implementing spatial and mobility policies (such as Energy Management Systems based on real-time data). Local governments are also crucial in detecting energy poverty and providing solutions. They already play a key role in this by installing energy desks and offering zero-interest renovation loans for the most vulnerable homeowners through the Public Social Welfare Centres. The Provinces offer free advice through their Sustainable Housing and Construction support centres.

Overview of topics and indicators for SDG 7	
<b>Affordable and sustainable energy</b>	↑
<b>Sustainable energy production</b>	↑
Local production of renewable electricity (% consumption)	↑
Photovoltaic (PV) utilisation rate on roofs (%)	↑
Installed wind turbine capacity [MW]	↑
Satisfaction with support for renewable energy	↔
<b>Energy intensity</b>	↑
Energy intensity of households per number of inhabitants	↓
Energy intensity of businesses per value-added	↓
Percentage (%) of LED street lighting	↑
<b>Affordable energy</b>	↓
Electricity budget meter	↑
Access to gas network (%)	↓
Affordability of energy and water	↑

## Front runners getting greener

The proportion of sustainable electricity production has increased in recent years. The municipalities that are making further progress are mostly those that have already invested in green energy. So, for example, residents of municipalities that have already invested in solar panels tend to continue doing so. The improvements are greatest in cities and municipalities with larger populations. We also see considerable differences between provinces. This is shown in the figure below. Limburg and, to a lesser extent, Antwerp are the front runners. However, the possibility of placing wind turbines, for example, differs from province to province. In Flemish Brabant, for example, less wind



energy is possible due to the influence of (radar installations for) Zaventem airport and Beauvechain military airport.

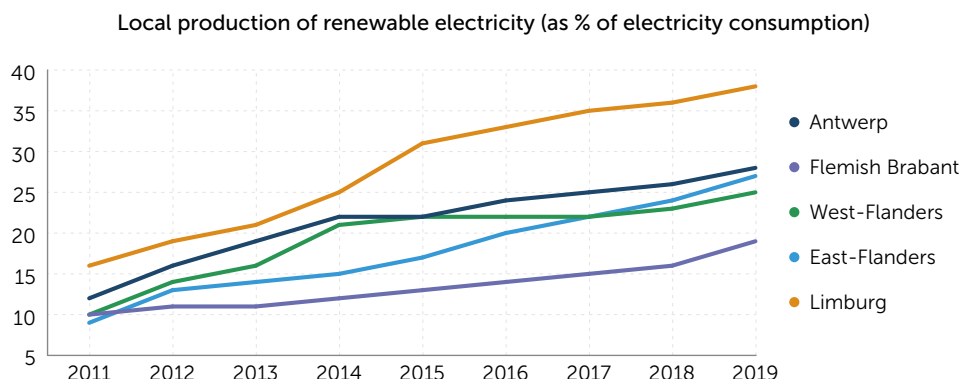


Figure 5: Local production of renewable electricity (as % of electricity consumption)

## Much untapped potential remains

Only one in ten municipalities has so far reached the SDSN's long-term goal in terms of **share of renewable energy** (51% renewable energy compared to total energy consumption). One in six municipalities falls into the category of 'SDG achieved' (39% renewable energy compared to total energy consumption), while one in three municipalities falls into the lowest category (less than 15% renewable energy compared to total energy consumption).

We do, however, see an improvement in four out of five Flemish municipalities in terms of energy intensity, but the main explanation for this is the improvement in the sustainability of street lighting. The energy consumption of households and businesses has since increased. Various research reports also forecast that electricity production in Belgium will have to double or even triple in the coming decades to continue to support the transition to renewable energy (Devogelaer et al., 2013; Paths 2050, no date). Renewable energy sources still account for only a small share of Flemish households' energy consumption for heating ("Analysis of Household Energy Consumption in Belgium in 2020", 2022). These include biomass (wooden pallets) (6%), solar heat (0.3%) and ambient heat through heat pumps and geothermal energy (1%).

In the municipalities with a more prosperous population in particular, there is a strong increase in the number of solar panels but this does not translate into a higher proportion of renewable electricity because consumption is increasing.

## Taking a leading role

In recent years, the provincial governments have invested in sustainable energy generation, mainly through solar panels. The province of East Flanders has the highest installed capacity. Since 2015, energy consumption has also decreased in 4 out of 5 provincial governments. The biggest decrease (15%) was observed in the province of Flemish Brabant. In the coronavirus year of 2020 the decrease was even sharper, but some of these energy savings were undone in 2021.



## SDG 7 in practice

### Working across municipalities on sustainable energy consumption

Since 2020 the municipalities of **Berlaar, Bornem, Duffel, Puurs-Sint-Amands, Sint-Katelijne-Waver** and **Willebroek** have focused on thermography through an **intermunicipal climate project** carried out by the regional IGEMO collaboration. Heat loss from homes is identified with a thermal imaging camera. This technique is a strong visual trigger that not only raises residents' awareness but motivates them to make their homes more energy efficient. With the scan, residents are given a report containing advice and, if desired, a follow-up from a renovation coach. So far the project has resulted in a saving of 200 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> per year. A good 81% of the households concerned reported that they were inspired to make their homes more energy efficient, mainly due to their energy bills



(45%), but also to reduce their climate impact (23%). When defining the neighbourhoods for action, particular attention is paid to the age of the buildings, but a balance is also sought between neighbourhoods with more energy poverty and those with the capital needed to renovate. Schools and volunteers go out in the field to take thermoscans once they have received their training. They are also involved in scanning schools and their own homes and transferring knowledge to the community through information sessions and other opportunities.

More information on the **European 'Stronghouse' project** and how IGEMO practice ties in with this.

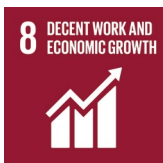
### Reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions through heating network

Again in Antwerp, in the municipalities of **Berchem, Edegem** and **Mortsel**, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from buildings have been reduced through a heating network. **'Warmte Verzilverd'** is a collaboration between energy cooperatives and technical experts, which brings residual heat from the industrial site at Agfa-Gevaert to homes and businesses. This residual heat can be led through an underground circulation line to heat the spaces, sanitary facilities and water in the buildings connected to it, in the place of a heating boiler, for example. The installation has been operational since 2021 and resulted in CO<sub>2</sub> savings of 920 tons in the first year. The municipalities concerned are currently investigating whether homes and apartments belonging to the social housing company near the project zone can be connected in the near future.







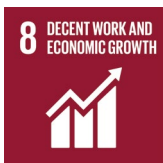


# SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth

The important action areas of SDG 8 are ensuring safe working conditions, protecting labour rights, reducing youth unemployment, promoting entrepreneurship and eradicating slavery, forced labour and child labour. The goal also covers sustainable tourism which promotes local products and culture and creates jobs.

The biggest levers for economic growth and employment lie at the Flemish and federal levels. However, local and provincial governments can take the lead by bringing together and managing partners within and outside their borders. As facilitators, they take their own initiatives to improve the business-friendly climate, such as granting or making referrals to subsidies or setting up a business counter. By focusing on the local service economy and social economy, (sub) local governments increase employment opportunities in their own regions and contribute to the principle of Leave No One Behind. They can also play an important exemplary role in their own personnel and procurement policies and govern by setting ecological and social criteria in their licensing policies, for example.

Overview of topics and indicators for SDG 8	
<b>Decent work and economic growth</b>	↑
<b>Employment</b>	↑
Employment rate 20-64-year-olds	↑
Employment rate women	↑
Employment rate older workers (50-64-year-olds)	↑
Employment rate non-Belgians, EU	↑
Employment rate non-Belgians, non-EU	↑
<b>Unemployment</b>	↑
Unemployment rate women	↑
Unemployment rate young people (20-24-year-olds)	↑
Unemployment rate older workers (55-64-year-olds)	↓
Long-term unemployment rate	↓
Low skilled unemployment rate	↑
<b>Circular and Social Economy</b>	↑
Employment: circular jobs ratio	↑
Tewerkstelling: ratio circulaire jobs	/
<b>Growth</b>	↑
Net growth rate of enterprises	↑
Gross Value added per capita	↑



## Progress for all Flemish municipalities since 2014

Almost all Flemish municipalities have made progress on indicators related to employment, unemployment, economic growth and circular and social economy over the past 8 years. Municipalities with a younger and larger population are the strongest risers.

The progress is mainly explained by the increase in employment rate. When we compare the Flemish data with the **international indicator reflecting the employment-population ratio**, we see that more than 9 out of 10 Flemish municipalities have an employment rate above 70.8%, which the SDSN recognises as achievement of the goal (category 'SDG achieved'). Almost half of the municipalities (46%) has already reached the long-term target of 77.8%.

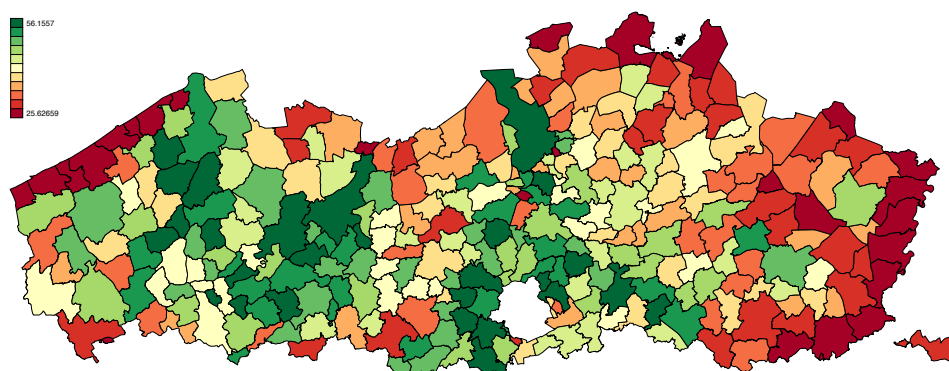
A second explanation for the overall progress is the increased economic growth. However, 10% of Flemish municipalities still lag behind in this area, while we see almost universal improvement in terms of employment rate.

The various Flemish municipalities are also growing closer to each other. Those with the lowest scores in 2014 have had the highest increase since then, which has reduced the differences between municipalities. This convergence is mainly due to the progress in employment rate and economic growth.

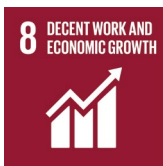
### Different motors

The municipalities around the Bruges, Ghent and Brussels axis in particular are leaders in SDG 8. The explanation for this depends on the type of municipality:

- Municipalities with a larger population tend to score highly on indicators related to circular economy and growth.
- Municipalities with a young and more prosperous population tend to do well in terms of employment rate and (lack of) unemployment.



*SDG score for decent work and economic growth for each municipality*



An important observation here is the increasing difference between municipalities as regards the circular and social economy. This has to do with the number of targeted employees who are employed in the social economy. In Flanders, people with disabilities or distance from the labour market are mainly employed in cities and municipalities with a larger population. This as opposed to municipalities with a more prosperous population, where fewer of the targeted employees have jobs.

## The collective challenge of engaging the long-term unemployed and youth

There are some promising trends for the Leave No One Behind principal in SDG 8. For example, women and young people have become less overrepresented in the unemployment rate in recent years.

However, reaching target groups remains an important and shared challenge for Flemish cities and municipalities. When comparing the youth unemployment rate, for example, with the **international SDG indicator 'NEET'** (youth Not in Employment, Education or Training), we see that only one-third of municipalities reach the set threshold (8.1%) in 2021. But long-term unemployment especially is a worrying trend. In fewer than 10 municipalities, long-term employment has improved in this regard.

city of Hasselt, Sustainable Municipality Week 2022 @ city of Hasselt







## SDG 8 in practice

### Matchmaking with the social economy

Fair work also means opening the labour market to all. Through the social economy, job opportunities are offered to people who face significant barriers to that labour market. The **Province of Flemish Brabant** has developed a digital matchmaking tool to better promote the potential of the social economy to regular businesses. [Doeners.be](#) gives an overview of all the services that social economy companies can offer to regular companies and governments. It allows companies and governments to easily search for a partner in the social economy.

The testimonials on the website itself illustrate the potential. The city of Halle, for example, talks about a project to use reusable cups at carnival weekend. Thanks to Doeners.be, the cleaning, drying and counting of most of the cups was assigned to AMAB vzw, a social integration company focused on integrating disadvantaged people or people with disabilities into society and the workplace.

In the meantime, all Flemish provinces have joined the Doeners initiative, and 312 social economy organisations have registered. There is now also a [Doeners LinkedIn-page](#).

### Social economy relieves workload in residential care

The **'Tea for Two'** project, which receives support from the European Social Fund, seeks solutions to relieve the workload in residential care by deploying employees from the social economy. In the municipality of Balen, participation in this project resulted in a long-term collaboration between the local social enterprise De Sprong and the Ter Vest residential care centre. Like many social enterprises, De Sprong had not yet focused on healthcare. However, the project managed to bridge the gap between the strengths of local disadvantaged groups on the one hand, and the needs of the residential care centre's employees on the other. In co-creation, the partners developed an appropriate task package, provided training to employees from both the residential care centre and the social economy and took ample time to allow for start-up and feedback. The employees from the social enterprise evolved from green workers in the residential care centre's garden to logistics workers in the building, and finally took on tasks close to the residents, as house fathers or in the provision of room care. The Balen partners wish to continue with this form of job crafting in the years to come, which is a win-win situation for all: the social enterprise can offer its employees more diverse activities and, in the residential care centre, the quality of care improves because everyone has more time for their core tasks.



# SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure

A strong economy and social welfare rely on a solid and resilient infrastructure. Internet for all, research and development and sustainable industry are important action areas for this goal.

Provincial governments contribute to the promotion of sustainable agriculture (SDG 2) and industry from various angles. For example, through licensing policies and by developing and sharing knowledge. The Flemish provinces stimulate a sustainable economy through innovation subsidies, network creation and creating space for innovative start-ups, such as in healthcare. The provinces also invest in infrastructure such as cycle paths, business parks, provincial estates, and so on.

Local governments are responsible for about half of government infrastructure investment in Flanders. And so they play an important role in the provision and maintenance of infrastructure for mobility, energy, ICT, education, sports, culture, healthcare, (social) housing, sewerage, industry and so on. Besides investments, the smart organisation and connection of this infrastructure is essential to making progress on other SDGs (such as vacancy policy, sustainable use of space, future-proof commercial centres, shared use of infrastructure, smart cycle paths, smart parking, smart control of energy systems, etc.).

## Overview of topics and indicators for SDG 9

Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	↑
Knowledge-based economy	↑
Proportion of self-employed in knowledge-intensive service sectors and high and medium-high technological industry	↑
Proportion of employees in knowledge-intensive and creative sectors among the total number of employees in the city/municipality	↓
Infrastructure	↑
Internet connection in households	↑
Occupied area of business parks compared to total area of business parks	↑



## Largest cities an important driving force in knowledge-intensive economy, but rural municipalities are making up ground

The Flemish economy is increasingly knowledge-intensive. The strongest economic growth is achieved in high-tech companies and knowledge-intensive services such as education, communication and computer sciences.

In general, the largest cities and municipalities with larger populations score higher on this indicator. In cities, this is mainly because there are more self-employed persons in the knowledge-intensive economy than in the more rural municipalities. There is also a correlation between a higher median income and younger population and a knowledge-intensive economy.

Cities and municipalities with a larger population have made less progress since 2014. However, municipalities with a more prosperous, younger or older population are making strong progress in terms of self-employed people in the knowledge-intensive economy, and so are making up ground.

## Flanders scores well in terms of internet connection at home

The **use of the Internet is an important international indicator**. For Flanders, the figures are very high: on average, 97% of the population has Internet access.

That said, the median income (and therefore the residents' level of prosperity) impacts on whether there is an internet connection in the home. Another obvious fact is that in cities and municipalities with a younger population, the number of internet connections is higher than in municipalities with an older population.

Cities and municipalities are also growing closer together: those that previously scored well (cities and municipalities with a more prosperous population) are growing less, while growth is strong for those with more elderly people.









## SDG 9 in practice

### Stimulating innovation through logistics testing space

Innovation in logistics is progressing extremely rapidly. It is almost impossible to obtain objective - non-commercial - information about the various logistics options that the market offers. After implementing a new logistics process, a company often faces unforeseen problems. In **'Fabriek Logistiek'**, the first logistics testing space in Belgium, the Provincial Development Company (POM) East Flanders offers a solution.

The practical testing centre brings together logistics applications and technologies, knowledge and experience, theory and expertise. You present your logistical questions and problems and try out existing solutions yourself, undisturbed and completely shielded in a realistic and safe environment.

SMEs and companies alike can seek solutions to logistical problems in the testing centre. Providers of innovative warehouse products make the logistics solutions, technology, hardware or software available for testing, training and education, while training providers have access to the most modern technology and researchers can test the new products.

The concept is a simple one. One or more spaces can be rented on a daily or longer-term basis and equipped on a modular basis. The spaces are provided with process technologies for all aspects of warehousing reception, storage and shipping. You test for yourself whether a new technology or process modification is usable and generates the added value expected. You configure a temporary test platform according to your own needs and carry out all testing with your own goods and your own staff. This gives you the most realistic experience possible of a new concept's usability. In this way, Fabriek Logistiek stimulates and facilitates innovation in the logistics sector.

### Future-proof business activity: integrated in the city centre

A site on the outskirts of **Turnhout** that has traditionally housed business activities - from an iron foundry to a postal sorting centre - has been vacant since 2010. Given the historical and economic function of the site and its favourable location in terms of mobility and proximity to the canal, the city council wished to avoid turning this location into a monofunctional residential development. Together with the site's owner, Bpost, and with project funds from the Flemish Knowledge Centre, VLAIO and the VVSG, the city of Turnhout sought a new use that would preserve space for business activity while also meeting the needs of residents in the (densely populated) neighbourhood. Residents were able to give input at the beginning of the process and later at the presentation of possible scenarios and the adaptation of the mobility situation. In the end, a bouldering hall with a restaurant was opened in the building. This activity is sporty, neighbourhood-oriented, integrated with other economic activities and has regional significance. To anticipate future redevelopment, the city established a number of urban planning conditions, such as limiting residential functions across the site to a maximum of 60%, prohibiting retail and monofunctional office development, and preserving the neighbourhood park.

[More info on the project 'from vacancy to interconnected work locations' in Turnhout](#)



# SDG 10: Reduced inequalities

We need to reduce inequality within and between countries. Important levers for structural reform in the areas of dignified salaries, social protection and safe and responsible migration, for example, lie at the federal, European and international levels. Local and provincial governments play an important role in promoting inclusion and equal opportunities by focusing on three major pillars. Accessible services for vulnerable groups and minorities ensure that we do not leave anyone behind. Possible action areas in this regard are integration policies, inclusive communication, e-inclusion and accessible buildings and public spaces. The second pillar is actively combating discrimination, by identifying and remedying discriminatory behaviour on the regional rental or labour market through correspondence testing. Finally, decentralised governments must be an inclusive employer with an accessible recruitment policy (for example, through accessible language in job vacancies and diversification in recruitment channels) and eliminate discrimination and unconscious exclusion mechanisms in the workplace.

Overview of topics and indicators for SDG 10	
Reduced inequalities	↑
Attitude towards diversity	↑
Income inequality	↑
Discrimination (sexual orientation, origin, physical or mental disability)	/
Origin gap in employment	↑
Origin gap inactivity rate	↑
Origin gap in long-term unemployment	↓

## Municipalities reduce inequality

We see an improvement in the reduction of inequality in Flanders. This is mainly due to further closing the gap in employment based on origin and the reduction of income inequality. In terms of income inequality, all municipalities with one exception are making strong progress. The figure below shows the scores. A higher score means an improvement (and thus a decrease) in income inequality and the origin gap.

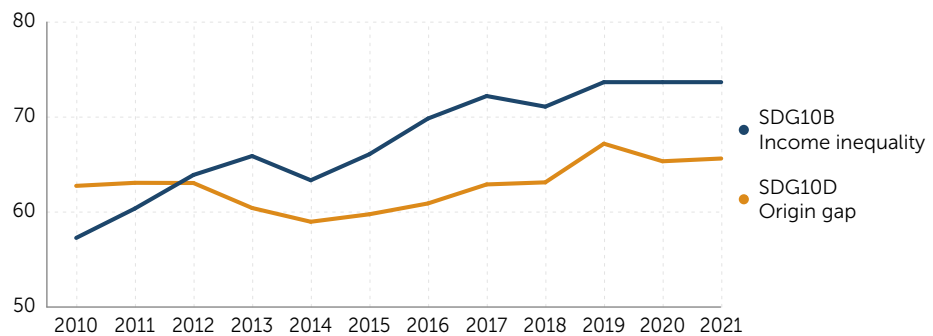


Figure 6: Trend in income inequality and origin gap



## Differences between municipalities in terms of origin in employment are decreasing

In 2021, the employment rate in Flanders was 78% for persons of Belgian origin. That is more than 12 percentage points higher than for persons of EU origin and 21 percentage points higher than for persons of non-EU origin. International comparison shows that in most EU14 countries the employment rate of persons born outside the EU is higher than in the Flemish region. Only in Belgium as a whole, Spain, Greece and France is the employment rate of persons born outside the EU lower (Jacques et al, 2022). Certain factors explaining these poor scores include the very strict language requirements set by the government of Flanders, which make diversity recruitment and the filling of open vacancies difficult (De Cuyper et al, 2019) and the long and cumbersome procedures in place at NARIC Flanders when it comes to the recognition and equivalence of foreign diplomas (An efficient and accessible recognition of foreign study certificates, 2020).

The origin gap is largest in the largest cities, but the difference with other Flemish municipalities has, however, decreased. On the other hand, the largest cities score better in terms of long-term unemployment. The proportion of long-term unemployed persons of non-EU origin in the largest cities is smaller than that in rural municipalities.

### Largest cities attempt to tackle discrimination

The larger the population of a city or municipality, the more discrimination is experienced. This applies to all forms of discrimination, be they physical or mental disability, origin or sexual orientation. However, this is in need of qualification. Research shows that looking only at the percentage of people who feel discriminated against gives a distorted picture, because there are people who feel discriminated against, but they are not, and there are people who do not know they are being discriminated against, but they actually are (Baert et al., 2020).

8 out of the 13 largest cities score very poorly on all three aspects of discrimination mentioned. Nevertheless, they are trying to do something about this. The **number of sports clubs and associations that have a specific policy for disadvantaged groups** is higher in the largest cities and municipalities with a larger population. So it seems that cities and municipalities with higher levels of discrimination are setting up more programmes to counter it. Several of the largest cities also carry out correspondence tests in the rental market to investigate discriminatory behaviour and effectively work on anti-discrimination policy.

It is mainly the largest cities that have a **higher proportion of municipal staff of non-Belgian origin**. In Antwerp this was 31% in 2019, and in Gent it was 16%. We also see large regional differences. In municipalities in Limburg, for example, a larger staff proportion is of non-Belgian origin, whereas the proportion is quite small in West Flanders and the Flemish Ardennes.



## Municipalities with a younger and more prosperous population have a more positive attitude towards diversity

We see that in cities and municipalities with a higher median income and younger population, residents have a more positive attitude towards diversity. The same municipalities are also typified by lower income inequality.

This effect is also visible at the provincial level: provinces that score well on attitude towards diversity also score better on income inequality, and vice versa.

## SDG 10 in practice

### Springboard for diverse talent



In 2018 and 2019, Genk ran the 'Springboard for diverse talent' project, an innovative HR project that provides more opportunities in the labour market for well-educated foreign language speakers and highly educated persons of non-Belgian origin and increases diversity within the organisation's ranks. Since the 1990s, Genk has been attentive to diversity within its workforce. This is monitored every two years, with attention paid to gender balance, age and ethnic diversity. At present, one third of the employees has a migration background, the highest percentage of all the largest cities in Flanders. However, the monitoring indicates that this diversity decreases the higher you go in the organisation. '**Springboard for diverse talent**' aims to address this issue. The project offers the target group a higher-level job to match their education or field of expertise for 6 months maximum. The advantage is twofold: they gain relevant work experience and get to know the organisation from the

inside. If they would like to go on to a permanent job in government, they are better equipped to participate in the selection procedures. A considerable number of these springboarders found a job, either within the city or elsewhere, after the project.





## Threshold meter

Applying for a local government job, and using the services offered by local associations, can be perceived as a barrier by some citizens. To address this, the city of Hasselt developed the **'threshold meter'**: a tool to assess your organisation or association's accessibility for a diverse audience. The threshold meter consists of a questionnaire (screened for accessible language) and a materials box containing literature. The city gives support to complete the questionnaire and discuss the results and offers a coaching trajectory for organisations from Hasselt that would like to take further steps. Not only does the threshold meter focus on people with a migration background, but it is part of a broader diversity policy.



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# SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities

This goal appeals to local governments directly in their role in the 2030 Agenda and is **interlinked with all other SDGs**. Important action areas include access to quality and affordable housing and basic services, green and public spaces, protection of cultural and natural heritage, sustainable and affordable mobility, reducing urban greenhouse gas emissions and sustainable waste management. Rural municipalities face some specific challenges, such as keeping the village centre liveable, preserving open space and providing good connections to cities. The provinces ensure a bottom-up development of rural areas through diversification of the rural economy and improving the area's quality of life by financing and guiding LEADER projects. In Flanders, we see that leisure time also contributes to sustainable cities and communities. Through leisure infrastructure, local and provincial governments create a connecting third place alongside 'home' and 'the work context'. Effectively implementing SDG 11 means making progress locally on other SDGs, such as SDGs 1 and 10 (by providing social housing, creating inclusive housing for newcomers, implementing social rates for mobility and leisure services, for example), SDG 7 (by providing renovation advice and electric charging points, for example), SDGs 3 and 13 (by taking action to improve air quality, for example) and SDG 15 (through enforcement of littering and fly tipping and introduction of a waste bin and sweeping plan).







Overview of topics and indicators for SDG 11	
<b>Sustainable cities and communities</b>	↑
<b>Sustainable mobility</b>	↑
Sustainable mobility	↓
Sustainable short-distance travel	↑
Sustainable transport options	↑
Satisfaction with condition of footpaths	↓
<b>Safe cycling</b>	↓
Safe travel to school	↑
Traffic safety for cyclists	↓
Cycling infrastructure	↓
<b>Cars</b>	↑
Sufficient sharing systems	/
Availability of car sharing	/
Eco-score of vehicle fleet	↑
Proportion of registered hybrid or electric vehicles	↑
Number of cars per 100 households	↓
<b>Cleanliness and nuisance</b>	↓
<b>Culture and leisure</b>	↓
Satisfaction with cultural facilities	↓
Leisure activities: number of leisure activities introduced per 1000 inhabitants (all types)	↓
Satisfaction with library facilities	/
Heritage organisations and institutions	/
Satisfaction with recreation facilities	↑
<b>Recreation for youth</b>	↑
Suitable places for youth	↑
Satisfaction with youth facilities	↑
Satisfaction with safe play	↑
Sufficient activities for children and youth	↑
<b>Affordable housing</b>	↓
Affordability of housing (housing ratio)	↓
Satisfaction with the housing	↓
Number of unsuitable housing declarations	↓
<b>Sustainability of housing</b>	↑
<b>Air quality</b>	↑
<b>Greenery in the municipality</b>	↓
Neighbourhood greenery	↓
Satisfaction with greenery in the neighbourhood	↑

## Improvement in 9 out of 10 municipalities since 2014

Flemish cities and municipalities perform well on SDG 11. We see the main improvement in indicators related to sustainable personal transportation (cars), closely followed by indicators related to housing sustainability. There is a growing focus on and preference for sharing systems, more ecological cars, sustainable energy-saving and energy-efficient materials in the home (such as solar panels, better insulation and green roofs). Satisfaction with greenery in the neighbourhood has also improved.

Most municipalities (5 out of 6) also improved on indicators that assess recreational opportunities for youth.

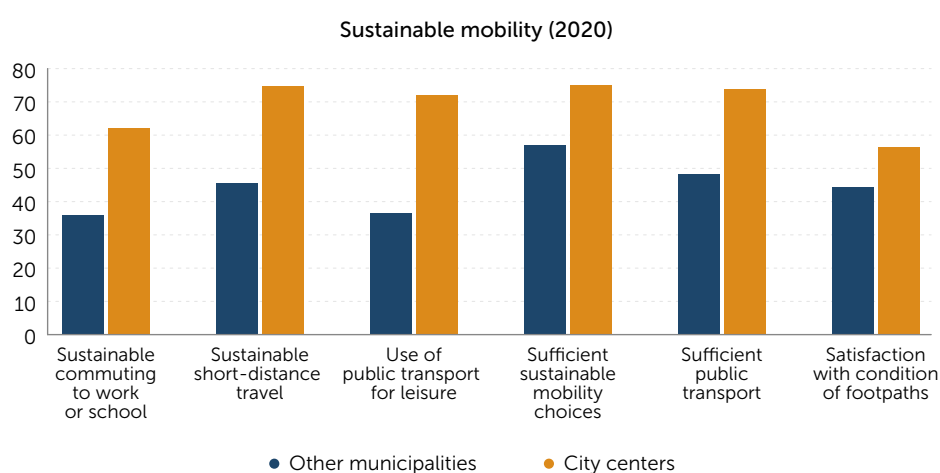




## The largest cities and larger municipalities are front-runners in sustainable mobility

We see that contextual factors have a significant influence on how municipalities perform on SDG 11. Municipalities with a larger population and the larger cities perform better on the indicators related to mobility, such as sustainable transportation, safe cycling and reduced pollution from cars.

Satisfaction with public transportation is also clearly higher in and around large cities than in other municipalities, but also in municipalities along the major train connection Bruges-Ghent-Brussels-Hasselt-Genk, Bruges-Kortrijk, and along the coastal tram route. It is worthy of note that there is a decreasing trend in satisfaction with public transportation in the largest cities.



## Growing sustainability of housing

We see more sustainable housing in all municipalities. More attention is paid to sustainable, energy saving and energy efficient materials in homes (such as solar panels, better insulation and green roofs). In cities and municipalities with a more prosperous and younger population especially, we see a strong increase. However, the largest cities perform poorly in terms of exterior wall insulation, use of rainwater, solar boilers and solar panels. They only score better on green roofs.

Despite the overall positive trend, the rate of renovations requiring permits is 0.6% of the housing stock, and the estimated total renovation rate of 2.5% of the Flemish housing market is still significantly lower than the 3% full-renovation target set in the long-term renovation strategy for Flanders. Since many families do not have the financial means to tackle a complete renovation all at once, the renovation rate will be raised beyond the 3% target in phases (Vermeiren, 2021).

Housing affordability is clearly under pressure. In 83 municipalities, more than half of the residents spend one third of their available income on rent or loan repayments (in 2020). In cities and municipalities with a larger population especially, residents pay more for housing and are less satisfied with its quality, and the number of declarations of unsuitability and uninhabitability is relatively high. The price-to-income ratio also worsens in all the largest cities. In only 1 out of 6 Flemish municipalities was housing more affordable in relation to income.



## Coronavirus impacted on leisure experience

Two out of three municipalities see a deterioration in the indicators related to culture and leisure. This is probably due to the effect of the coronavirus pandemic. At the end of 2020, for example, 64% of residents were satisfied with the cultural facilities in their municipality. This proportion is significantly smaller than the previous survey in the Municipality-City Monitor three years earlier, when 72% were satisfied. One caveat here is that repeated **satisfaction surveys among users of cultural infrastructure** show that they are very satisfied with the offering. Cultural centres and libraries also have a very positive impact on the well-being and mental health of their users and visitors.

Overall satisfaction with culture and leisure increases as the population grows. In the largest cities, 80% are satisfied with the cultural offering, while in the smallest municipalities this is 47%. There are, however, exceptions to the rule. Smaller municipalities score better on satisfaction with the library and youth recreation.

## Emissions decrease, but air quality in cities remains a challenge

**Emissions in Flanders** are decreasing. For example, the fine particle values (PM<sub>2,5</sub>) were halved in 2020 compared to 2000 and the nitrogen oxide value (NOx) was almost 60% below the level in 2000. Flanders therefore meets all of the European emission targets.

However, we see differences across local governments, with air quality decreasing in cities and municipalities with larger populations. In more than 1 in 3 municipalities, the standard <sup>5</sup> for at least 1 of the 4 indicators for fine particulate matter, nitrogen dioxide or soot was not met in 2019. This group includes all the largest cities.

<sup>5</sup> According to European law, PM10 must not exceed the threshold value of 50 µg/m<sup>3</sup> more than 35 times a year. The WGO advisory value for the daily average is lower (45 µg/m<sup>3</sup>), and the recommendation is that it is not exceeded more than 3 days a year. For PM2.5 the law on the annual average tends to be important, i.e. maximum 25 µg/m<sup>3</sup> (EU standard) and 5 µg/m<sup>3</sup> (WGO advisory value).



## SDG 11 in practice

### Healthy living

Through a housing project in the 'Debbautshoek' neighbourhood the municipality of Zelzate contributes to the mental and physical health of (vulnerable) residents in the area. The project focuses on two aspects of housing: the quality of the buildings and the quality of the immediate living environment. A mobile demonstration home was developed to engage with residents in an accessible way about the importance of ventilation and fresh air. People with structural problems in their homes were referred to Woonwijzer Meetjesland for further guidance. To create more opportunities for social interaction and physical activity in the immediate environment, the residents were also consulted



on the redesign of underused green spaces by means of participatory methods such as dream trees, postal ballots, door portraits and live chats. Local businesses around the square were also actively involved in the redesign. By organising neighbourhood activities for different target groups and being visibly present in the community (through the establishment of a meeting house, among other things), the project retains its impact on dynamism. Since the project steering group - which includes civil servants and councillors - continues to meet, the local government quickly addresses any issues that arise.

### Energy-neutral living

The supply of small, affordable low-energy homes is insufficient in Northwest Europe. Techniques and construction practices often fail to take the financial capacity of residents into account. Through the Interreg North West Europe project 'Housing 4.0 Energy' the Provinces of Flemish Brabant and Antwerp – together with 7 international partners – looked at how small-scale, energy-neutral yet affordable homes can be built. In collaboration with Kamp C (the Centre for Sustainability and Innovation of the Province of Antwerp), innovative techniques and materials for CO<sub>2</sub>-neutral construction were researched. In the project framework, various small (near) energy-neutral and low-CO<sub>2</sub> housing units were designed, built and tested. In Flemish Brabant, 6 small-scale model homes were built on a former campsite in Huldenberg. The homes will be rented out by a social rental agency.



Read more about the project on the [Kamp C](#) or [Interreg](#) website.





## Kolenspoor (coal track) becomes green cycling network

In the early 1900s, the Kolenspoor was brought into use in Limburg for the simple and rapid transportation of raw materials from, to and between the mine basins from Beringen to Maasmechelen - Masseik. The 70 km railway threads its way through Central Limburg. After the closure of the coal mines, an ambitious conversion plan for the region was launched. The historic mining sites have become innovation hubs (around cleantech, sustainable energy, design), as well as tourist locations. **The Province of Limburg** now wishes to further develop the **Kolenspoor** as an innovative mobility network with a heritage dimension, that also serves as a green-economic network and a space for meeting and experiencing. This requires integral cooperation across policy domains.

- **Mobility network:** the province will develop the Kolenspoor as a modern and landscape-integrated bicycle highway that structures and strengthens the existing mobility network. Alternative transportation modes, such as bike sharing systems, will also be offered.
- **Green-economic network:** the province aims to create clusters of new economies with a focus on 'green' sectors (such as cycling, cleantech, leisure, water) that are, wherever possible, small-scale, diversified, climate-neutral, circular and nearby.
- **Space to meet and experience:** the Kolenspoor forms a string of fascinating landscapes, valuable nature areas and vibrant places. The province wishes to strengthen the ecological structure and reduce fragmentation. Creating ownership and a common identity among local residents is also important in this regard.

The development of the Kolenspoor focuses on integrating the bicycle network into the landscape with consideration for the spatial, ecological and cultural aspects. The Kolenspoor should, therefore, connect spatially structuring elements such as mine sites, natural areas, stream valleys and garden and residential areas together. The mining region from Beringen to Maasmechelen will become a connected region and place the area on the map as an innovative, welcoming, sustainable region with international appeal that allows visitors to experience its unique heritage.





## Investment in cycle traffic

The municipality of **Boechout** prioritises the needs of soft road users in as many urban planning and mobility projects as possible. Residents, police and the local mobility council give their input and advice on the redesign of streets, bicycle routes and traffic junctions. Regular speed measurements and traffic counts are also used to inform municipal mobility policy. This participatory approach has led to significant investments in cycling infrastructure in recent years - and an increase in the number of cyclists. Boechout has created several comfortable and clearly marked bicycle paths, created efficient bicycle crossings and maximised bicycle parking opportunities, introduced bicycle streets and zones and invested in bike-sharing systems. For permits for home construction or plot subdivision the municipality systematically imposes conditions for smart crossings, intersections free of speed humps and curbs without height differences. In this way the municipality ensures that Boechout can be easily crossed by pedestrians and cyclists. Municipal staff are also encouraged to use bicycles: the municipal government has significantly reduced its car fleet, invested in service bicycles and developed a cycle-lease plan for its staff.

### More information on Boechout's cycling policy

The Flemish Provinces are also building sustainable and innovative mobility visions with the bicycle at the centre. They are an important driver behind the development of the bicycle highway network. The province of Flemish Brabant, for example, played a governing and financial role in the construction of the F1 bicycle highway in Zemst. During the construction of this bicycle highway along the river Zenne, maximum consideration was given to landscape adaptation, water, nature (new experience locations, for example) and biodiversity (construction of a toad tunnel, for example). To easily connect this network of 2,700 km of high-quality bicycle routes across Flanders, the 5 provinces took the initiative for [www.fietssnelwegen.be](http://www.fietssnelwegen.be). This website offers citizens all the information on all bicycle highways in one place.









# SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production

Every time we eat, drink, buy or do something we have an unintended effect on our living environment, here or elsewhere. The main action areas for SDG 12 are sustainable management and efficient use of resources, prevention of pollution, tackling food waste and producing less waste through prevention and reuse.

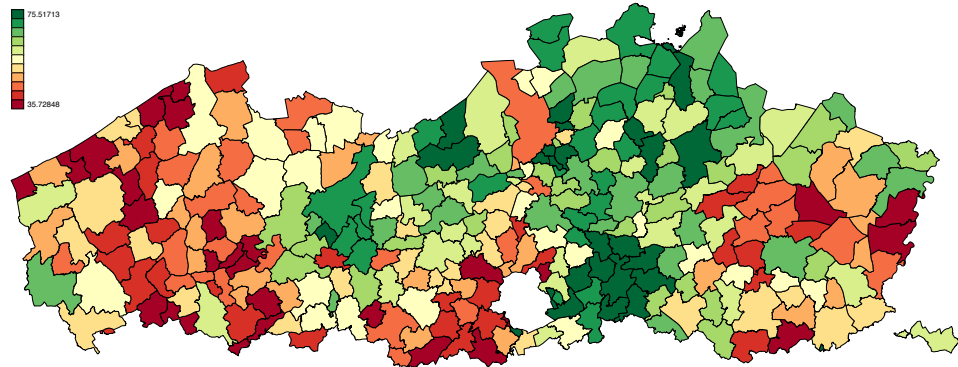
Local and provincial governments play a crucial role in responsible consumption and production, and through this they have an impact on several other SDGs. Consider waste management, for example, which is organised by intermunicipal waste organisations in 297 of the 300 Flemish cities and municipalities. Local and provincial governments can also focus on sustainable procurement policies, support initiatives in the circular economy, implement a local food strategy and promote circularity in the (waste- and emission-intensive) construction sector.

Initiatives such as local vegetarian days, repair cafés, material banks, circular economy networks, municipal compost masters, awareness-raising about waste-free shopping or collaborations with local merchants to reduce single-used plastics, already offer creative local solutions to the challenges posed by SDG 12.

Overview of topics and indicators for SDG 12	
Responsible consumption and production	↑
<b>Waste</b>	↑
Total waste per capita	↑
Residual waste per capita	↑
Share (%) destined for recycling	↓
<b>Environmental consciousness</b>	→
Short distances by bike	↑
Short distances on foot	↑
Reducing plastic purchases	/
Reducing food waste	↑
Fair trade products	/

## Geographical patterns

The indicators for SDG 12 are clustered around the topics 'waste' and 'environmental consciousness'. In the corridor from Leuven to Turnhout, all municipalities score high on both aspects. In West Flanders, we see a concentration of municipalities with a low score.



SDG Geographical patterns

## Strong recycling, but the waste mountain keeps growing

In SDG 11, we discussed waste management. In SDG 12, we focus on indicators relating to waste production. An international comparison shows that Flemish municipalities are managing to limit the amount of residual waste. For the **SDSN indicator on non-recycled municipal residual waste**, only 1 municipality is not yet in the 'SDG achieved' category and almost all municipalities exceed the long term goal (0.6 kg per day per inhabitant) by a large margin. Cities and municipalities in which more tourists stay overnight are the exception to the rule.

The limited amount of residual waste mostly shows that a lot is being recycled, but not that the total amount of waste is decreasing. Only 18 cities and municipalities are in the 'good' category (less than 1 kg of waste per inhabitant per day) in terms of the **SDSN indicator for total amount of residual waste** and in 3 out of 4 municipalities, the amount has even increased since 2017. Municipalities with a younger population in particular, perform better in terms of total amount of waste.

## Residents of the largest cities are more environmentally conscious

3 out of 10 Flemish people live in a highly environmentally conscious way. Specifically, these are residents who make weekly efforts to limit food waste (6 out of 10), travel short distances on foot (6 out of 10) or by bike (half), limit their purchase of plastic (half) and buy fair trade products (2 out of 10). In the 13 largest cities in particular, we see that residents pay more attention to this.

## SDG 12 in practice

### Financial incentive to separate waste

In 2019, the city of **Sint-Niklaas** began collecting residual waste through the **diftar system**. The traditional grey bin bags were replaced by a container and chip that registers the quantity and type of waste produced by each household. The more residual waste a citizen produces, the higher their diftar tax charge will be. This financial incentive should encourage citizens to better sort the waste for the waste collector. Sint-Niklaas saw a considerable improvement in the way its residents began sorting their waste. The residual waste figure dropped from 172 kg per inhabitant in 2018 to 108 kg per inhabitant in 2021, or almost the entire 40% decrease that was planned. Since its introduction, the city has seen a strong increase in the quantity of both GFT (vegetable, fruit and garden waste) and PMD (plastic and metal packaging) offered. This is due to an extension of the sorting rules to green waste and plastic packaging, as well as greater awareness among citizens about better waste sorting through the diftar system. Citizens were comprehensively informed through social media and physical information sessions prior to the implementation of the diftar collection. All residents received a container in which to offer the residual waste. Basement containers were placed in apartment buildings. Residents who are entitled to social rates or produce a lot of waste for medical reasons receive a discount on their tax bill. Thought was also given to citizens with small children and those who produce a lot of nappy waste. Special nappy bags can be purchased and taken to the recycling parks.





### Sustainability heroes inspire environmental consciousness

SDG 12 is also about raising awareness of sustainable development and promoting sustainable behaviour. Since 2018, the VVSG has organised the annual campaign, **Sustainable Municipality Week**. More than 170 local governments have already participated. In campaign week, they fly an SDG flag from the town hall and put local 'sustainability heroes' in the spotlight. These heroes can be individuals, companies, schools or associations that contribute to the SDGs in their work or free time. Participating municipalities communicate about their heroes' achievements (through social media, municipal information bulletins, website, local radio) and often organise original activities to introduce citizens to the heroes, such as bike or hiking tours, speed dating, debate evenings, picnics and so on. Through very specific stories about fellow citizens who live packaging -free, for example, or barely use their car, grow local food, have things repaired or remove paving from their garden, the SDGs take on a local face, and people are inspired to take action themselves. After 5 editions of the campaign, around 3,000 sustainability heroes have been celebrated. Several municipalities continue to involve their heroes in local policy, through, among other things, sustainability working groups, educational activities or long-term communication campaigns.

# Local Heroes for Global Goals

## Week of the Sustainable Municipalities



Campaign image of the Sustainable Municipality Week



# SDG 13: Climate action

Climate change affects every country on every continent. Therefore, policies should provide measures to reduce CO2 emissions, strengthen climate-resilient spatial planning and mitigate waterlogging, drought and heat stress. Citizens should also be made aware of the climate adaptations needed, and vulnerable nations should be made more resilient to natural disasters.

Local and provincial governments can make an important contribution in all these areas. International frameworks such as the European Covenant of Mayors (signed by 98% of Flemish municipalities) provide guidance for local measures against CO2 emissions. Since 2021, Flemish municipalities and the government of Flanders have joined forces with the Energy and Climate Pact, in which local governments receive budgetary support for efforts related to greening, energy, mobility and rainwater. By the end of 2024, all Flemish local governments must also have a rainwater and drought plan, which focuses on de-paving, the construction of water-permeable paving, raising awareness among the population, water reuse and the provision of water buffers for dry periods.

Overview of topics and indicators for SDG 13	
Climate action	↑
CO2 emissions	↑
CO2 emissions per capita	↑
Evolution in CO2 emissions	↓
CO2 intensity of households	↑
CO2 intensity of businesses	↑
Reduction in CO2 emissions due to renewable electricity in relation to local electricity consumption	↑
<b>Floods and waterlogging</b>	/
Percentage (%) of buildings affected by waterlogging	/
Percentage (%) of buildings affected by floods	/
Percentage (%) of vulnerable institutions affected by waterlogging	/
Percentage (%) of vulnerable institutions affected by floods	/
<b>Heat and drought</b>	/
Percentage (%) of heat affected individuals (0-4 and 65+)	/
Percentage (%) of agricultural land with significant drought stress	/
Percentage (%) of vulnerable ecotopes with significant drought stress	/

## Sparsely populated municipalities perform better

To discuss climate action we use indicators related to CO2 emissions, heat and drought, waterlogging and floods. For the latter 2 topics, records have only been kept since 2021, which is why we cannot yet observe progress or regress in many indicators. In general, municipalities with a larger population score lower on SDG 13. This is mainly due to the greater impact that they experience from both flooding and waterlogging, as well as heat and drought.



## CO2 emissions decreased by 24% between 2005 and 2020

In 2020, there was a 9% decrease in greenhouse gas emissions compared to 2019. This strong decrease in the space of one year is mainly due to a sharp drop in transportation and some economic activities (including petroleum refining) caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. CO<sub>2</sub> (carbon dioxide) decreased by 24% between 2005 and 2020.

Since 2014, most cities and municipalities have seen a reduction in their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, averaging 2.6%. In 1 out of 10 municipalities, this reduction was even more than 10%. On the other hand, almost 3 out of 10 municipalities saw an increase, and for 12 of those an increase of more than 10%. The rate at which emissions are decreasing is, however, slowing.

## Impact of flooding greater in densely populated areas and poorer municipalities

Precipitation patterns are changing in Flanders. Peak flows have increased in recent decades and the likelihood of flooding has risen. In some areas, these floods are now causing damage more than once every ten years.

In only a few municipalities, more than 5% of the buildings are currently threatened by flooding, including Antwerp (6%) and mainly some smaller municipalities such as Sint Martens-Latem (13%), Damme (11%) and Rotselaar (7%). But by 2050, flooding could also pose a threat to many homes in larger cities such as Mechelen (8%) and Dendermonde (11%).

The increase in flood-prone areas is highest in the flatter parts of Flanders, where they are linked to the flooding of mainly larger waterways (such as along parts of the Zeeschelde and in the Flemish valley). The expected impact is particularly significant for cities and municipalities with a high population density. The effect on local governments with a high population density is further amplified by the percentage of institutions vulnerable to waterlogging such as childcare centres, schools, hospitals and care institutions.

## Regional differences in drought and heat

The **average annual air temperature** has increased significantly since the mid-19th-century, and heatwaves occur more frequently, last longer and reach higher temperatures. Heat stress due to rising temperatures is mainly observed in urban areas and less so in rural areas. At night in particular, the temperature difference between a city and its rural surroundings can increase by up to several degrees, sometimes even reaching 7 to 8°C or more. As a result, heatwaves occur more frequently and intensely in the larger cities. The larger the municipality, the greater the effect. Distance from the sea and soil composition also play a role. Greenery in the municipality has an important mitigating effect.

In the current climate, we see a range of 2 heatwave days per year on the coast to 6 or more in heavily urbanised areas. By 2050, this will increase to a range of 12 heatwave days on the coast to more than 24 heatwave days in heavily urbanised areas inland and in the east of Flanders.





And yet, even under a high-impact scenario in 2050, cool or cooler spots in Flanders will still exist but temperatures will remain significantly lower by comparison. These spots invariably consist of forested areas and/or running water. This demonstrates the potential of wetlands and emphasises the need for green-blue interventions in our urbanised environment to mitigate the possible impact of future heatwaves.

## SDG 13 in de praktijk

### CO2 reduction in collaboration with local companies

Over the past 10 years, the municipality of **Evergem** has seen a gradual decrease in the CO2 emissions of local households and businesses. Although it is difficult to determine the extent to which local policy has contributed to this positive trend, the municipal government has strongly focused on various climate initiatives. Citizens and staff are encouraged to leave their cars at home, for example, through the offer of bike leasing to municipal employees and setting up a local bicycle library for children. The '**buurzame warmte**' project, in collaboration with the Province of East Flanders, examines what is needed to connect homes to a district heating network. The villages along the canal in Evergem get a green buffer between their borders with industry in the form of '**coupling areas**'. This leads to more greenery, greater liveability and space for walking paths, play forests, bike lanes and so on. The '**Business for climate**' project also actively involves local companies in the creation of local climate action plans. Three SMEs from Evergem are currently participating in the project. They receive a free climate scan to gain insight into their direct and indirect emissions through energy consumption, mobility, materials, waste, water, procurement, catering and maintenance. They list measures to reduce emissions, possibly produce sustainable energy themselves and offset residual emissions. They also share their experience and good practices with other companies in Evergem. Through this, the municipality aims to establish a community of engaged businesses.

### Heat and drought resistant green management

In 2019 the city of **Aalst** was the first local government in Benelux to sign the **ByeByeGrass-charter**. The city encourages citizens to mow less and applies this principle in its own green maintenance. Lawns are transformed into ecological grasslands, rarely used green spaces are left by the city to grow wild and mowing is sometimes replaced by grazing or simply doing nothing (rewilding). Less frequent mowing results in higher biodiversity, lower sensitivity to drought and better water infiltration. The city also takes many other measures to adapt local greenery to the increasingly frequent periods of heat and drought in our country. Green teams are instructed not to water lawns - planted trees are only watered in their first year of growth - and fewer flowerbeds are created because they require too much water and have a high CO2 footprint (due to the use of heated greenhouses for growing bedding plants). Street and avenue trees are planted in such a way that rainwater is maximally drained towards the planting location. Soil cultivation, such as ploughing or milling, is avoided to prevent disturbance and drying out. Drought and heat resistant tree species are chosen for planting in the city centre. Autumn leaves are left in place as much as possible and only removed when necessary, such as on roads, paths and sports fields.



## Romboutsewerve polder

On the **Water-Land-Scenery** programme, the **Province of West Flanders**, in collaboration with the City of Damme, City of Bruges, Farys, Regional Landscape Houtland & Polders and the Oostkustpolder, leads the project on the Romboutsewerve polder, one of the oldest polders in Flanders, where the search for a sustainable connection between agriculture and nature is central.

Water-Land-Scenery is a Flemish subsidy programme focused on projects that solve problems related to both water shortages and excess water in rural areas in close collaboration with the users from the area, such as farmers, residents and landscape managers. In almost all programme's projects, the 5 provinces are either a partner or project leader, acting as regulators who bring the various actors in an area together.

The goal of the programme:

The Romboutsewerve polder contains important green areas owned by the Province of West Flanders and Natuurpunt, closely intertwined with agricultural lands. The entire project area has been designated by the Government of Flanders as a European Special Protection Area (SBZ-V) in implementation of the European Bird Directive.

This project provides for an integral optimisation of water management in the Romboutsewerve polder with attention paid to diverse land use, drought and flood risks, water quality, biodiversity, cultural-historical landscape and water experience. The water system (water availability for nature and agriculture) serves as the connecting topic. Crucial actions include investing in source differentiation, making the area more climate-resistant, preventing salinisation, and innovative projects related to the water system.

The project builds on years of collaboration between the polder concerned and the province, in areas such as maintenance and preservation of the dyke and its iconic, landscape-valuable vegetation as a 'dry nature connection'.

The Province of West Flanders is also leading several other projects in Water-Land-Scenery.





# SDG 14:

## Life below water

Seas and oceans are endangered and in need of protection. Overfishing, waste and illegal fishing are incompatible with sustainability policies. Our handling of water, wastewater and land-based waste plays a key role in the protection of seas and oceans. It is primarily the ten coastal municipalities that, in cooperation with the Flemish (and federal) government, are responsible for maritime management. However, the Provinces and all other cities and municipalities, together with the various actors responsible for water and waste management on land, have a key role to play in protecting the seas and oceans, and can do this through local policies on sewage management, littering and building regulations. No good indicators were found for this SDG. We limit ourselves to inspirational good practices from West Flanders, the only province that borders the coast.

### SDG 14 in practice

#### Natural coastal protection

The city of Ostend wants to encourage spontaneous dune growth on various stretches of beach. This is a natural means of coastal protection: the dunes hold the sand in place, providing more protection during storms. To speed up the process and for the purposes of scientific research, zones with beach grass have been planted in the Oosteroever and Raversijde areas. The wind will ensure that these zones naturally grow with sand, creating a dune strip over time that will keep the sand on the beach. The Agency for Maritime Services and Coast (MDK) wishes to learn about sand transport and nature development from these pilot projects, so that the solution can also be considered in other coastal areas in the future. Dunes provide invaluable ecosystem services: not only do they provide natural coastal protection, but they host a wealth of biodiversity.

Not only is the dune landscape in Ostend used to strengthen the coastal protection, but it has been redesigned in recent years to create better connections with the public space. Club and association buildings have been relocated, cultural and historical heritage (such as military buildings) has been restored and in places the dunes are now part of a car-free cycling route - the Green Ribbon - which was built around the city.

The City of Ostend has also appointed a beach manager and works closely with the The Clean Beachcombers work with volunteers who collect litter along the beaches and record the associated data.

The City of Ostend works closely with the **Propere Strandlopers [Clean Beachcombers]** to raise awareness among visitors about littering and show them the impact of waste on the beach and sea. In summer, a beachteam is active, which, among other things, distributes free ashtrays and waste bags and monitors the smoke-free beach zone. During the summer months, the Clean Beachcombers are also supported by #beachheroes who clean up every night. Beach bars have to follow sustainability rules (for example ban on disposable straws). In addition to this intensive commitment to prevention and enforcement, extensive manual and machine cleaning of the beach is carried out.





Also through its city-to-city relationship with sister city Banjul in Gambia, Ostend contributes to SDG 14. For example, the mass planting of coconut trees (5,000 trees) on the beach at Banjul is intended to serve as a buffer against coastal erosion. At the same time, with good management, the trees will become a source of income for the city council of Banjul.

More information on the trial projects with beach grass, the redesign of the Oosteroever dunes and the city-to-city partnership with Banjul

### Fishing for Litter (FFL)

The Province of West Flanders, together with the FPS for the marine environment, supports the Fishing For Litter (FFL) initiative. FFL encourages fishermen to bring the waste they catch in their nets back to shore. Bin bags (large waste bags) are provided and distributed through the Flemish Fisheries Cooperative. When a fishing vessel brings a bin bag back to shore and unloads it on the dock, the waste is then carefully sorted and processed by local partners.

The fishermen who participate in the project are volunteers that not only remove the waste from the sea but create awareness within the industry of the impact of waste in the sea, thereby contributing to behavioural change among fishermen.

Belgian fishermen who participated in the Fishing for Litter project removed 65 tons of waste from the North Sea in 2021. This is three times as much as in 2020. The result is a cleaner sea, cleaner beaches and a healthier marine environment.





# SDG 15: Life on land

SDG 15 focuses on the conservation of biodiversity and protection and restoration of ecosystems on land such as forests, marshes and mountains. The impact of local and provincial governments on SDG 15 can be diverse, ranging from giving more space to local flora and fauna to reviewing construction plans for environmental damage and implementing a local tree policy focused on preserving and planting trees. There are also 'regional landscapes' - collaborations between at least three municipalities that work together with local associations to develop nature and landscape. As partners in the 'Blue Deal' and the Flemish government's 'test gardens for de-paving', provinces, cities and municipalities aim to achieve less paving, more wetting and maximum circular water use through specific local projects. The de-paving of the public domain can play an important role-model function for citizens and other local actors.

Overview of topics and indicators for SDG 15	
Life on land	↓
Green area	↓
Green space area (compared to total area)	↓
Valuable ecotope area	/
Forest quota: hectares of new forest (not compensatory)	↑
Paving	↓
Unbuilt cadastral area as a percentage of total cadastral area	↓
Soil sealing (paving)	↓
Erosion problem areas	/

## Systematic deterioration since 2010

The amount of paving is increasing in almost all cities and municipalities, with the exception of a small 10% - nearly all located in the province of West Flanders. The municipalities that were already heavily paved are also experiencing the strongest decline. We see a similar trend in the total area of green spaces, with also 20% (60 governments) improving. The deterioration of those that are in decline is greater.



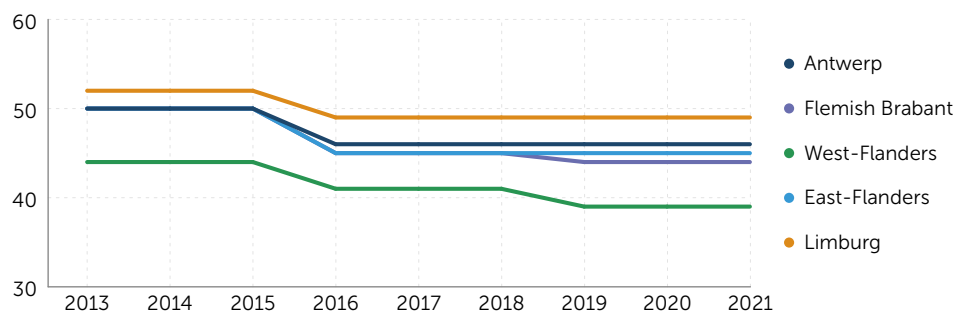
## Exceptions to the rule

Although the area of green spaces is declining in most municipalities, we see some exceptions. It is striking that municipalities with a higher proportion of young inhabitants are doing better. Municipalities with a more prosperous population also have more green space in their territory.

Municipalities with a larger population score lower, unsurprisingly, on the proportion of green space still available, but perform better in terms of valuable ecotope area and number of hectares of new forest.

Therefore, more open space does not automatically mean more greenery. For example, municipalities in the central and southwestern part of the province of West Flanders score lower on green space area. The eastern part of the province of Flemish

Green space area (compared to total area)



## Building shift

In recent decades, open space has seen an increasing number of activities that are not related to nature. Urban centres are facing difficulties as housing and business activities continue to expand and spread in the form of residential strips and retail parks. With this additional human space consumption, the amount of pavement has also increased significantly. As a result, rainwater can no longer infiltrate locally, which can lead to flooding or even drought. Provinces and municipalities can take initiatives through spatial planning to prevent poorly located building lots from being developed. A prerequisite for this is that the system is affordable for local governments and that planning processes can proceed smoothly and with legal certainty. When it comes to reducing the amount of pavement, municipalities have a specific objective through the Blue Deal, and that is to de-pave 1 m<sup>2</sup> and capture an additional 1 m<sup>3</sup> of rainwater per inhabitant by 2030 for reuse or infiltration on site.





## SDG 15 in practice

### De-paving, greening and bluing

The small group of municipalities in which the amount of paving decreased in recent years (see above) includes the neighbouring municipalities of **Izegem** and **Wevelgem** in West Flanders. Wevelgem came to a number of larger special projects with a green-blue perspective: a street where two schools, a residential care centre and several youth organisations are located was completely de-paved to create a **green campus site** with local vegetation and water buffers (wadis). A BEO field (borehole energy storage) was installed to enable sustainable heating and cooling of buildings on the site. A **40-year-old green zone is also being redesigned**, in consultation with sports and youth associations in the area. In the new green zone, useless parking spaces are de-paved, the circulation plan is adjusted and there is a greater focus on nature, experience, meeting and play space. The city of Izegem focuses on raising awareness, partly by participating in the first **Flemish Tile Flipping Championship**. In 2021 the city published a **brochure on water permeability**, which gives inspirational and practical tips on the constructions of gardens, terraces, squares, and so on. At present, Izegem is also focusing on the creation of a green cycling and walking zone by de-paving the north bank of the local canal and opening up the river Mandel.

### Tillegem, a suburban forest ahead of its time

The provincial government of **West Flanders** purchased the **Tillegem** estate in 1963. Located on the outskirts of Bruges, it is a much-frequented green buffer with a well-preserved castle as a focal point. The province has invested extensively in this heritage site and has given it more than just a decorative function. The castle houses the regional office of North West Flanders. Due to its short distance from the city centre, the estate plays a very important role as an accessible green space for the local population. The province has expanded the estate to 150 ha in successive stages. Thanks to this expansion, the estate also has quieter areas that are perfect for nature development and serve as a habitat for, among other things, the red wood ant and amphibians. The management plan formulates a vision for the next 20 years and tries to further protect the natural assets. New investments always take this into account: for example, the lighting in the car park and around the castle (where evening meetings are sometimes held) is deliberately energy efficient and amber coloured (bat friendly).

Tillegem is not an isolated green oasis but part of a larger network of forest areas around Bruges, which are increasingly being connected by cycling and hiking networks. The soft-recreational co-usage is also reflected in recent equestrian and running routes. The car parks and paths will soon be renovated, with greater attention paid to accessibility, de-paving and water infiltration (for example, by replacing asphalt paths with French dolomite).





# SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions

Local and provincial governments contribute to a safe, inclusive and just society by ensuring participatory and representative decision-making, taking care of public order and safety, striving for caring neighbourhoods, safeguarding their administrative integrity and optimising (digital) access to information. The Flemish Decree on Local Government gives municipalities a specific mandate to involve citizens as much as possible in policy-making. It also gives them the freedom to choose the instruments for this purpose. Through initiatives such as participatory budgets, e-participation, mobile participation teams and the involvement of bridge figures to minorities, various cities and municipalities have already demonstrated themselves to be innovative players in this regard.

Overview of topics and indicators for SDG 16	
Peace, justice and strong institutions	↓
<b>Security</b>	↓
Feeling of insecurity	↓
Crime	↑
Trust in police	↓
<b>Social fabric</b>	↓
<b>Satisfaction with governance</b>	↓
Trust in local government	→
Satisfaction with counter services	↓
Satisfaction with digital services	↑
Satisfaction with household waste services	↓
<b>Communication</b>	↓
Dissemination of information	↓
Satisfaction with communication from government	/
<b>Consultation and participation</b>	↓
Consultation of residents	↓
Active engaged citizens	↑





## Social fabric under pressure

47% of residents experience a strong social fabric in their neighbourhood in 2020. They have lots of contact with people in their neighbourhood, feel at home with these people, trust them and notice that neighbours are willing to help each other. In West Flanders in particular, residents are very positive about social cohesion. Municipalities with a more prosperous population score well on all social-fabric aspects except for the number of contacts with people in the neighbourhood.

On the other hand, we find that the larger the population, the lower the scores on all aspects related to social fabric. In the 13 largest cities in particular, the social fabric is not as strong. The proportion of people who find the social fabric in the neighbourhood to be strong is 8% lower than the Flemish average, according to the Municipality-City Monitor. The social fabric is also less strong in the Brussels Periphery and the outskirts of Antwerp.

## Trust in local government remains stable

The survey conducted by the Municipality-City Monitor shows that 34% of residents have a great deal of trust in the municipal government. This means that trust has remained stable between 2017 and 2020, despite the start of the coronavirus crisis. Although 34% is a relatively low percentage, trust in local government is significantly higher than trust in the Flemish government (16%) and federal government (11%).

There is a strong correlation between residents' trust and the means by which they are informed and consulted by government on policies. Satisfaction with services and facilities in the municipality is also an important factor, as shown by the [analysis of local government by the Agency for Internal Affairs](#).

## Strengths on all scales

Both the largest cities and the smaller municipalities have their own strengths. On average, the largest cities perform better in terms of trust in local government and satisfaction with counter services. However, satisfaction with household waste facilities is higher in other Flemish municipalities. Almost all Flemish municipalities felt the impact of the pandemic on satisfaction with counter services, which showed a significant decline in 2020 compared to the 2017 measurement.

Residents also experience communication from the government differently depending on the scale. In the largest cities, residents are more positive about general communication and information on the decisions made. In the case of local governments with fewer residents, those residents give a higher score to information on activities. Residents also feel better consulted and involved in municipalities with a smaller population.

Municipalities with prosperous residents, regardless of size, perform very well in terms of counter services and communication.

## SDG 16 in practice

### Mobile service delivery

To make their services accessible to all residents, many local governments already offer mobile services. The peripheral Brussels municipalities of **Londerzeel, Machelen, Meise, Vilvoorde, Zemst and Grimbergen** – united in the intermunicipal waste organisation Incovo – were among the first in Flanders to provide **mobile recycling parks**. Neighbourhood residents who do not have their own means of transport or experience other barriers can bring their waste on foot. Those who do come by car are directed to the regular recycling park. The municipalities work together with social housing companies to inform target groups about the initiative. The Antwerp municipality of Bornem also focuses on the self-reliance of less mobile residents and the elderly, through its mobile neighbourhood store, for example. Bornem's **'neighbourhood cart'** travels a fixed route through the municipality and, in addition to a food store, is also a meeting place for neighbourhood residents and a mobile service centre where people can bring their questions about care, welfare and municipal services. The neighbourhood cart collaborates with local traders (short chains) and offers opportunities for people who are distant from the labour market to find social employment within the project.



Mobile civic amenity sites



Security and strong social fabric through empowerment of youth in Kessel-Lo

## Safety and strong social cohesion through empowerment of youth

The Casablanca neighbourhood in Kessel-Lo, Leuven, has a reputation for turbulence. Under the guidance of youth workers, a group of committed young people are working towards social interaction and positive image building for the neighbourhood. Through joint activities with external partners, such as a sports activity with the police, the youth have built their own network with the residents, police and municipal services. In turn, they ask the partners to consider how a structural bond can be built with the young people in their own organisation. By starting a litter campaign and working to upgrade the community centre, the young people and their partners have succeeded in creating a safe and pleasant neighbourhood where neighbours trust each other and meet. The highlight of the project is an international exchange with a volunteer organisation in the Moroccan city of Essaouira, where the young people work for an orphanage, and hence the project title 'Casablanca goes Casablanca'. The young people concerned learn new skills, feel empowered and take on the role as ambassadors for the neighbourhood, which creates a positive mentality.

## Inclusive service provision

The Vilvoorde LoketNED project aims to better prepare people with a migration background for their visit to the City Hall, so that they can quickly apply for the correct legal documents. The Centre for Basic Education (CBE) in Vilvoorde, which carried out the project, developed practice material for the students and took the classes to visit the service desks. It was an authentic learning opportunity to practice how to request documents in Dutch in a real setting. LoketNED also wanted to alleviate tension among the service desk employees in Vilvoorde, as there are considerable communication difficulties with the many newcomers in the Brussels Periphery. To this end, the CBE organised individual coaching sessions with the service desk employees and offered training courses. The participants gained insight into the different NT2 levels (Dutch language levels) and the speeds at which various students acquire a language. Prior to the start of the project, the CBE conducted a survey among the service desks and students to identify the bottlenecks and needs of both groups.





# SDG 17:

## Partnerships for the goals

The United Nations calls for more collaboration between businesses, governments, citizens and organisations, as well as between all players. Technology, knowledge sharing, trade, finance and data are crucial. Collaboration is the key to further sustainable growth. The task of strengthening implementation tools and engaging in partnerships applies to all governments, civil society, businesses, organisations and institutions. Partnerships are essential at all levels: local, supra-local, national and international.

Local and provincial governments are involved in a large number of collaborations to implement their policies. The SDGs provide an excellent framework for working together in these partnerships on specific topics and issues. Local and provincial governments can also promote international solidarity and cooperation through global policy choices, such as sustainable procurement, ethical banking and promoting global citizenship, and through international partnerships such as a city-to-city programme and support for NGOs, socio-cultural associations, diaspora organisations, hospitals, universities, businesses, and so on, which are active in the global South.

Due to a lack of good outcome indicators, SDG 17 was not included in the data analysis. However, some interesting observations can be made on the basis of a study by the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG) in 2022 (Results of SDG Surveys, 2022) and budget figures from local and provincial governments.

### Limited staffing and time investment in municipal global policy

Half of the local governments actively engage in municipal global policy, but staffing is limited. On average, staffing amounts to 0.5 FTE, but in 10% of municipalities, no time is provided (Results of SDG Surveys, 2022). Often, it is also a (small) part of a wider range of tasks for the civil servant in charge. Only a small minority of local governments have one full-time employee or more for municipal global policy. This is the case for most large cities and municipalities with a city-to-city partnership.

The budget for municipal global policy varies widely between municipalities. In most local governments (37%), it ranges from 2,500 to 20,000 euro (Results of SDG Surveys, 2022).

### Provincial work on global policy

In 2021, the provincial governments collectively allocated around 4.4 million euro in operational budget for global policy, equivalent to 0.68 euro per inhabitant. In West Flanders, more than the targeted threshold of 0.7% of the budget was spent on global policy, while in the other provinces the share is slightly lower.

## SDG 17 in practice

### Diaspora and fourth pillar initiatives at the provincial level

The five Flemish Provinces support initiatives by diaspora associations (fourth pillar initiatives). Besides financial support through subsidy regulations, they provide substantive reinforcement through training and networking opportunities with other partners from the academic and socio-economic sectors.

Diaspora organisations are increasingly present in this socio-cultural network of cities, municipalities and provinces. This is because they possess good knowledge of the local reality and have access to local networks that complement the existing networks of (international) NGOs. The Province of East Flanders provided a one-time impetus subsidy for the Federation Diaspora for Solidarity Cooperation (FEDIAS) and the Fourth Pillar Support Centre, with the aim of giving Diaspora organisations (in all their diversity) a clear position and valued voice in the Flemish North-South movement. Diaspora organisations contribute quality work in their countries of origin, develop knowledge and expertise in sustainable and contemporary development cooperation and recognise the need for structural political changes that benefit their partner countries.

The Province of West Flanders also aims to further support these associations and recognise their strengths. A practical research project is being conducted in collaboration with the VIVES College and the Federation of Global Democratic Organisations (FMDO), a network of diaspora organisations, to explore how diaspora organisations can be guided more easily towards subsidy regulations. The language used in the regulations and application forms can sometimes be a barrier for this target group. After analysing the [profile of diaspora organisations](#) and identifying the challenges they face, tailored project calls are now being implemented which experiment with new ways of submitting applications that place less emphasis on the linguistic aspect.



*SDG consultation between Brasschaat and Tarja*





VERBETER  
DE WERELD  
VANUIT JE  
LUIE ZETEL

AAN HET DROME  
VAN EEN BETERE



## Cross-border mental health care

Since 2011, the municipality of **Zoersel** has maintained a **city-to-city partnership with the city of Bohicon in Benin**. Both local governments work together on challenges including the digitisation of the administration, library services, birth registration and local economy. As both municipalities have centres for mental health care within their territories, the exchange and mutual learning in this field have become important pillars of the city-to-city relationship over the years. The social worker in Bohicon completed several internships at a centre in Zoersel for adults with intellectual disabilities. In return, staff from the centre and the psychiatric institution in Zoersel also worked in the psychiatric centre in Bohicon. Both Zoersel and Bohicon gained valuable insights from this knowledge sharing. Bohicon integrated activation and psychiatric home care into its mental health care policy and now offers patients day activities that often generate additional income for the centre (such as rabbit farming and sewing workshops). Zoersel, on the other hand, observed how Bohicon engages (former) patients more extensively as lived experience experts. Due to the close involvement of staff and residents in institutions in both Zoersel and Bohicon, there is ample opportunity for expanding support for mental health care as well as international cooperation and solidarity.

## The SDGs as a framework for international cooperation

Having reduced the financial resources for their twinning programmes, the municipalities of **Herent** and **Brasschaat** embarked on a renewal process with their city-to-city partners from Guatemala and Bolivia respectively. The municipalities aim to transition from a more traditional donor-recipient relationship to an equitable partnership, increasing the level of participation both within the city-to-city programme and within their own communities. Through open dialogue, theoretical training (on the concept of participation, for example), practical exercises and collective learning, the partners identified their shared expectations, strengths and weaknesses. They decided to align their work with the framework for the 2030 Agenda and make maximum contributions to embedding the SDGs in their municipalities. They are taking further steps in the experiment at present through local projects that focus on food strategy, reforestation, de-paving and water, and through a joint learning journey on participation.



SDG consultation Herent and Brasschaat with their twin cities

# Conclusions and recommendations

Since 2017, Belgium has taken important steps in strategically embedding the 2030 Agenda at various policy levels and among stakeholders. These include the new federal sustainable development plan, the development and adjustment of Vizier 2030 in Flanders, the third Wallonian Sustainable Development Strategy, the integration of the 2030 Agenda into the policies of universities and colleges, the implementation of the Flemish Network of Enterprises Charter for Sustainable Enterprise and the increasing number of local and provincial governments incorporating the 2030 Agenda into their policy cycle. This commitment from various levels of government and local actors strengthens the sustainability reflex within these organisations and encourages provinces, cities and municipalities to further prioritise the 2030 Agenda. Nevertheless, we observe that, as in other countries, the use of the 2030 Agenda as a compass and strategic framework has been somewhat overshadowed by a series of crisis situations, notably COVID-19, the conflict in Ukraine, significant inflation and the resulting pressure on local and provincial budgets.

To ensure that local and provincial governments continue to fulfil their pioneering role in the local implementation of the 2030 Agenda and make further progress in achieving the 17 SDGs, several key factors are crucial, as described below. For a more in-depth discussion of the sustainability topics encompassed in the 2030 Agenda, including specific recommendations and expectations, we refer to the memoranda of both the VVSG and the VVP, which will be finalised by the end of 2023 in light of the Flemish, Federal and European elections in 2024.

## Striving for full partnership

The complexity of current societal challenges calls for innovative forms of collaboration and full and equal partnership, among different levels of government in our country, with partners in Europe and globally. Local and provincial governments should be recognised for their key role in achieving the SDGs, and we need to work towards stronger and more transparent coordination between governments, allowing local and provincial authorities the space, flexibility and resources to effectively implement policies.

For local and provincial governments, the following recommendations are proposed:

- To boost trust in local and provincial government, a full partnership with citizens is crucial. Not only is it necessary to have more participation initiatives, but they should also be supported by a solid communication strategy to reach citizens, especially the most vulnerable groups. It is also crucial to provide feedback about how citizen input is used. The VVSG and the VVP can develop tools to integrate the SDGs into participation initiatives.
- European and international partnerships are necessary to promote justice and reduce negative spillovers. Local and provincial governments can play an exemplary role in this by committing to (and maintaining a focus on) global policy.
- Provincial governments need to raise awareness about the services and support they provide to cities and municipalities as regards the SDGs and communicate this collectively as Flemish provinces. This will enable them to further demonstrate their exemplary role and encourage cities and municipalities to make use of provincial support.





city of Ghent, Sustainable Municipality Week 2020 @ city of Ghent

The Flemish and federal governments can focus on the following:

- Engage local and provincial governments, either directly or through their umbrella associations, in intergovernmental dialogue on sustainable development in a structured manner.
- Focus more strongly on intergovernmental collaboration on the 2030 Agenda, not only in policy preparation but also in implementation, reporting and evaluation. At present, efforts are fragmented, with each level of government outlining its own goal framework, strategies and monitoring systems. This hinders an integrated and effective vision and implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- Work towards more structural policies and financing in addition to project subsidies. While projects subsidies can be useful for initiating new experiments, once projects move beyond the pilot stage, the use of calls for projects creates a stop and go policy approach that hinders necessary structural progress.

International action is also needed. The ambitions of the 2030 Agenda do not end in 2030. We must continue to strive for a more sustainable world, with every level of government and every actor needing to sustain their efforts. The strong engagement of local governments worldwide in integrating and achieving the SDGs, as well as addressing crises, emphasises the key role of provinces, cities and municipalities. Local governments and their umbrella associations are crucial in the international development and national implementation of the follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and should have a seat at the decision-making table.

## Need for improved data collection and data accessibility

Flemish local governments can rely on various freely accessible data sources, such as the Municipality-City Monitor, Provincies.incijfers.be and the SDG monitor. However, the preparatory work and data analysis for this report highlights the need for even better data collection and data accessibility. There are several SDGs for which there is either no data or insufficient data available and for which disaggregation (e.g. by age, gender or neighbourhood) is limited in existing data, and local and provincial governments require more data that provide insights into the impact of their own policies.

Moreover, most centrally available data is at the outcome level, which pertains to broader societal trends and challenges where local governments are just one of the actors influencing the data's evolution. This is evident too in the indicator set used for this SDG report. Monitoring this data provides valuable insights into the municipal context but does not evaluate local or provincial policies. There is a need, therefore, for more data/indicators that provide information about the effects of local and



provincial policies. This applies to both service-level data and internal operations (such as personnel management, procurement policies and asset management of own buildings/properties).

Therefore, we encourage local and provincial governments to use a balanced set of indicators when monitoring policies, that takes account of the cascade of goals, action plans and actions, and contains indicators that provide information about the local context as well as their own policies, for which the services can call upon. A municipality/province can track energy consumption in its area, for example, supplemented with data on the energy production and consumption of its own fleet and buildings; or available poverty data can be supplemented with data linked to initiatives taken by the local government and public social welfare centres. Qualitative framing through practical evaluation is still necessary. Practical examples enable the interpretation of indicator trends and help fill gaps in data availability.

## **The VVSG and the VVP play an important supporting role in this by providing model indicators and sharing good practices.**

### **Impact of local policies**

The majority of centrally available data provide valuable insights into the municipal (and provincial) context but do not have a direct link to the policies implemented by the municipal or provincial government. It is therefore necessary to supplement a monitoring system with local data. The VVSG inspiration guide '[SDG Monitoring and Reporting for Local Policies with Impact](#)' (2022, Annex 2) provides several examples of indicators that local governments track to monitor their policies. Also, through the provincial and municipal working groups in the context of this SDG report, several interesting indicators have emerged that do pertain to the policies of the government:

- Provincial governments:
  - % women in the provincial council (SDG 5)
  - Sustainable energy production measured on basis of installed capacity in WM (SDG 7)
  - Waste production of the provincial government in tons (SDG 12)
- Local governments:
  - Number of m<sup>2</sup> of extensive mowing compared to the number of m<sup>2</sup> of intensive mowing in public domain (SDG 15)
  - Number of m<sup>2</sup> of forests under sustainable forest management (SDG 15)
  - Area of public domain annually de-paved by the local government (SDG 13, 15)

However, it has proven challenging to monitor indicators in a consistent manner across all municipalities and provinces. In the data collection working groups, for example, we examined whether we could track local government energy consumption (gas, electricity, water usage) in 9 municipalities. As it turned out, this was not an easy task. The data was not always available, there was uncertainty about exactly which figures were included, the municipality's assets change over time, and so on. On a positive note, opening up the discussion about data and this sort of tracking has led to new initiatives. The city of Deinze, for instance, is to develop a digital tool to better monitor its own energy consumption. The provincial governments have learned from the data collection for this report



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that they need to further focus on registering and maintaining internal data time series (e.g. waste, energy consumption, etc.).

At the Flemish level, efforts can be made in collaboration with local and provincial governments to improve data collection and dissemination. For example, there is a need for better indicators for the following SDGs:

- SDG 2: access to nutritious and sufficient food; obesity
- SDG 3: mental health
- SDG 9: digital service delivery; e-inclusion; budget for research and innovation
- SDG 12: circular economy; sustainable procurement policy; food waste; education for sustainable development
- SDG 14 (especially for coastal municipalities): marine pollution; management of marine and coastal ecosystems
- SDG 17: partnerships for sustainable development

For many of the existing indicators, more detailed information can also be made available, such as disaggregation by gender, age and neighbourhood or district. Such information enables local governments to take more targeted action with a focus on the Leave No One Behind principal.

We also call on the Flemish and federal governments to utilise the already rich local data for monitoring the SDGs at the Flemish and federal levels. This contributes to a better alignment of SDG monitoring across different levels of government. Ideally, we aim for a standardised set of indicators in collaboration with all levels of government to ensure more efficient monitoring and reporting.

There is also a need for better coordination among different data sources. Councillors and local government employees struggle to navigate the available information, partly due to the multitude of data sources, which are only partially integrated (such as the Municipality-City Monitor, Provincies. incijfers.be, thematic databases maintained by various Flemish departments and agencies, the Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training, National Bank of Belgium, SDG monitor).

## Further-reaching efforts in the local anchoring of the 2030 Agenda

Local and provincial governments can further strengthen their pioneering role in the local integration of the 2030 Agenda. The greatest opportunity lies in connecting the 2030 Agenda with existing policy processes, programmes and activities. For example, the future Policy and Management Cycle (BBC) (including contextual analysis and multiannual plan for 2026-2031) offers an excellent opportunity to embed the SDGs throughout the organisation. An SDG assessment can also be applied to projects; the SDGs can be incorporated into council proposals, subsidy regulations, specifications and cooperation agreements; the SDGs can be visually and conceptually integrated into events, and so on. The experience of recent years has shown that this linkage with existing processes and activities reduces the likelihood of perceiving the SDGs as an additional task or framework. It also provides an opportunity to integrate sustainability into policy planning, implementation and monitoring, and promotes awareness of the SDGs internally (among employees and councillors) and externally (among citizens and partners). Moreover, it represents an opportunity for cross-cutting collaboration on sustainability since policy processes require the involvement of the entire organisation. The 5 provincial Governments have already expressed their ambition to use the SDGs as a source of inspiration for the upcoming BBC. The VVP aims to inspire and support this endeavour as much as possible, including through the internal trajectory of SDG masterclasses.

On the [SDG website of the VVSG](#) a lot of supporting material can be found in relation to communication and stakeholder engagement, as well as strategic integration of the SDGs into local policy. We advise the following for local and provincial governments to achieve a stronger integration of the 2030 Agenda:

- The 2030 Agenda is a comprehensive framework that applies to the entire municipality and cannot be attributed to a single topic or councillor competence. To strengthen the political mandate for the 2030 Agenda, we recommend that it be assigned to the Mayor.
- The integrated nature of the SDGs also calls for administrative leadership, from the management team, for example. Engage employees who have a good overview of the entire organisation, such as a policy officer, communication officer or global policy officer, if possible through an SDG working group.
- Report and communicate how your local or provincial government contributes to the SDGs. This can be done in various ways, such as incorporating SDGs into council proposals, including SDGs in quarterly and annual reports to municipal and provincial councils, showing SDG-related data on the website (e.g. Municipality X in figures), or creating an SDG report similar to the city of Ghent's VLR (see above). This not only contributes to the visibility of the SDGs internally and externally, but it aligns with the increasing demand for a trend towards sustainability reporting. Banks, for instance, are more frequently asking public entities to demonstrate their commitment to sustainability in the context of loans.
- Make the SDGs as specific as possible. This report once again demonstrates that there is already much to promote the achievement of the SDGs and that employees are already contributing to sustainability. Try to link specific examples to this. Manageable tools such as the SDG Circle Exercise or the SDG Check by the VVSG can help with this.
- Follow a specific SDG process consistently. This creates recognition and support within the organisation. It might involve systematically applying an SDG assessment to (a number of) projects, consistently including the SDGs in reporting, or focusing on specific SDGs (e.g. per year) and communication and monitoring.





SDG chocolates @ VVSG

- Many local governments and stakeholders now speak the language of the SDGs. Bring together local actors who are committed to the SDGs (companies, schools, organisations, citizen movements), disseminate good practices and foster cross pollination. By incorporating the 2030 Agenda as a strategic framework in intermunicipal collaborations (police zones, tourism partnerships, mayoral meetings, social welfare collaborations, etc.), the sustainability reflex will also find its way to local policy development and implementation through that level.
- Achieving the SDGs does not always mean doing more (initiating positive actions and activities), but also entails honestly assessing the potential negative impacts of your policies and ceasing or withdrawing support for certain actions that are counter-productive to realising the 2030 Agenda.

## **Integrate the SDGs into the operations and communication of all departments and agencies.**

We request the following from the Flemish government:

- Integrate the SDGs into the operations and communication of all departments and agencies. This will also increase awareness of the SDGs among various municipal and provincial services and provide guidance for implementing the 2030 Agenda from different thematic perspectives.
- Incorporate the SDGs in the communication and offering about the BBC. Clearly demonstrate the added value and possibilities of integrating the SDGs in the development and implementation of the new BBC cycle (utilising materials from the VVSG and the VVP) and advise local and provincial governments to make this connection. Also, provide support and incentives for further local embedding of the 2030 Agenda.

Given their responsibilities, proximity to citizens and experience with the 2030 Agenda, local governments are indispensable partners in the ambition to make progress on the SDGs. The VVSG and the VVP play a crucial role as umbrella organisations in building the capacity of their members in relation to the 2030 Agenda as a policy framework and the realisation of the 17 SDGs. Sustained and increased involvement and support of these umbrella organisations from regional and federal governments is therefore necessary, particularly in the run-up to the local elections of 2024 and the subsequent development of multiannual policy plans.

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# Annex 2

## List of indicators

Please read the chapter titled 'Methodology for the development of the report' for an explanation of the construction of the indicator set.

**NOTE:** In certain cases, individual indicators are combined and presented as 1 indicator. This is the case, for example, under SDG 3.B (mental health): in the overview depicting the trends of the indicators (see chapter titled 'Progress on the 17 SDGs'), the individual indicators (antidepressants, antipsychotics, alcohol addiction, anti-dementia, stimulants) are merged into 1 indicator called 'Use of psychoactive drugs'. The indicators were combined when they met several criteria:

- The data is from the same source, where they are often taken together
- The SDG already contains many indicators (not applicable to SDG 1 or SDG 2 for example, but applicable to SDG 16 and SDG 11).
- The indicators are strongly correlated (thus providing a similar signal).



	Description	Source	Detail on source	Measurement points included in data analysis	SDG also linked to indicator	
<b>SDG 1 - No poverty</b>						
<b>A</b>	<b>Relative poverty</b>	Fiscal income below critical threshold: Share of individual tax returns (excluding zero returns) with a net taxable income lower than 10,000 euro. Share of joint tax returns (excluding zero returns) with a net taxable income lower than 20,000 euro.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Statbel	2010-2019	SDG 10
<b>B</b>	<b>Low work intensity</b>	Share of individuals aged 0 to 59 living in a household with a work intensity lower than or equal to 0.2 as of 1 January of the year. The Crossroads Bank for Social Security (CBSS) records the socio-economic position of the entire Belgian population. At the household level, it is possible to determine how many adults in the household are employed and their working hours. The household's work intensity is calculated from this information. This work intensity ranges from 0 (no adult member of the household employed) to 1 (all adult members of the household in full-time employment). Households with a work intensity below 0.2 are considered to have a very low work intensity.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Data Warehouse for the Labour Market and Social Protection of the Crossroads Bank for Social Security.	2010-2019	
<b>C</b>	<b>Payment difficulties</b>					
	Residents with payment difficulties for basic needs	Percentage of households reporting difficulties in paying one or more bills (on-time) (rent/mortgage, energy costs, healthcare expenses, school expenses, Internet/telephone/television, etc.)	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2017-2020	
	Overdue on loan repayment	Borrowers with overdue instalment loans (as a percentage of total instalment loans)	provincies.incijfers.be	National Bank of Belgium - Central Credit Register for Private Persons	2010-2021	
	Overdue on mortgage repayment	Borrowers with overdue mortgage loans (as a percentage of total mortgage debt)	provincies.incijfers.be	National Bank of Belgium - Central Credit Register for Private Persons	2010-2021	
<b>SDG 2 - Zero hunger</b>						
<b>A</b>	<b>Organic agriculture</b>	Surface area of agricultural land under organic certification as a percentage of total arable land (capped at 10%)	provincies.incijfers.be	Department of Agriculture and Fisheries	2015-2020	SDG 12
<b>B</b>	<b>Agricultural emissions</b>					SDG 13
	Non-energy-related emissions N2O from soil	N2O from soil in CO2 equivalents	provincies.incijfers.be	Flemish Energy and Climate Agency (VEKA)	2011-2019	
	Non-energy-related emissions Livestock	CH4 from digestion and N2O and CH4 from manure storage (in CO2 equivalents)	provincies.incijfers.be	Flemish Energy and Climate Agency (VEKA)	2010-2019	
	Ammonia Emissions from agriculture	Ammonia emissions from agriculture	provincies.incijfers.be	Flemish Energy and Climate Agency (VEKA)	2016-2019	



	Description	Source	Detail on source	Measurement points included in data analysis	SDG also linked to indicator	
	CO2 emissions from agriculture	CO2 emissions from agriculture in relation to the cultivated land area	provincies.incijfers.be	Flemish Energy and Climate Agency (VEKA)	2011-2019	
<b>C</b>	<b>Sustainable food</b>					SDG 12
	Environmental consciousness: local vegetables or fruit	Proportion of residents who report consuming locally grown vegetables or fruits at least weekly	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2014, 2017, 2020	
	Environmental consciousness: organic products	Proportion of residents who report purchasing organic (BIO) products at least weekly	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2014, 2017, 2020	
	Environmental consciousness: vegetarian	Proportion of residents who report eating vegetarian at least weekly	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2014, 2017, 2020	
	Environmental consciousness: seasonal vegetables	Proportion of residents who report taking account of the season when purchasing vegetables at least weekly	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2014, 2017, 2020	
<b>SDG 3 - Good health and well-being</b>						
<b>A</b>	<b>Physical health</b>					
	Excess mortality per municipality	The percentage of excess deaths is calculated by taking the ratio of observed deaths for weeks 12 to 19 of 2020 to the average number of deaths for those weeks over the period 2009- 2019, per province. Excess deaths relates to all deaths, whether COVID-related or not.	Statbel	Population	2020	
	Diabetes	Proportion of beneficiaries with dispensations of antidiabetic medication or with nomenclature referring to diabetes per 1000 beneficiaries (diabetes convention, diabetes card, diabetes care trajectory).	provincies.incijfers.be	InterMutualist Agency	2010-2020	
	Chronic conditions	Proportion of beneficiaries with at least one chronic condition status	provincies.incijfers.be	InterMutualist Agency	2013-2020	
<b>B</b>	<b>Mental health</b>					
	Use of psychoactive drugs: antidepressants	Volume of DDD (Defined Daily Dose) of antidepressants per 1,000 beneficiaries	InterMutualist Agency		2010-2020	
	Use of psychoactive drugs: antipsychotics	Volume of DDD (Defined Daily Dose) of antipsychotics per 1,000 beneficiaries	InterMutualist Agency		2010-2020	
	Use of psychoactive drugs: alcohol addiction	Volume of DDD (Defined Daily Dose) of alcohol addiction drugs per 1,000 beneficiaries	InterMutualist Agency		2010-2020	
	Use of psychoactive drugs: antidementia drugs	Volume of DDD (Defined Daily Dose) of antidementia drugs per 1,000 beneficiaries	InterMutualist Agency		2010-2020	

	Description	Source	Detail on source	Measurement points included in data analysis	SDG also linked to indicator	
	Use of psychoactive drugs: stimulants	Volume of DDD (Defined Daily Dose) of stimulants per 1,000 beneficiaries	InterMutualist Agency	2010-2020		
	Sense of happiness	Proportion of residents who, all things considered, feel happy.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2020	
<b>C</b>	<b>Road traffic safety</b>					
	Traffic fatalities	Number of traffic casualties (serious injuries and fatalities) per 1,000 residents	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Statbel	2010-2019	
	Traffic fatalities among vulnerable road users	Number of traffic casualties (deaths and serious injuries) among cyclists and pedestrians	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Statbel	2010-2020	
	Safe travel to school	Proportion of residents who consider it safe for children in the municipality/neighbourhood to travel to school alone.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2014, 2017, 2020	SDG 11
<b>D</b>	<b>Health facilities</b>					
	Satisfaction with health facilities	Proportion of residents satisfied with the health facilities.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
	Availability of nearby general practitioners	Proportion of residents who consider that there is a sufficient number of general practitioners in the neighbourhood.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2021	
	Financial difficulties accessing healthcare	Proportion of residents belonging to a household facing payment difficulties who were unable to pay health expenses (on time) in the past year.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	SDG 1
<b>E</b>	<b>Services for the elderly</b>					
	Satisfaction with services for the elderly	Proportion of residents satisfied with the elderly care services.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
	Availability of elderly care services	Proportion of residents who consider that there is a sufficient number of elderly care services in the neighbourhood.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
<b>F</b>	<b>Preventive care</b>					
	Cancer screening: cervical cancer	Total coverage rate of cervical cancer screening (compared to women aged 25-64)	provincies.incijfers.be	Cancer Screening Centre	2013-2020	
	Cancer screening: breast cancer	Total coverage rate of breast cancer screening (compared to women aged 50-69)	provincies.incijfers.be	Cancer Screening Centre	2010-2020	
	Cancer screening: colorectal cancer	Total coverage rate of colorectal cancer screening (compared to 51-74-year-olds)	provincies.incijfers.be	Cancer Screening Centre	2013-2020	
	Preventive oral care	Proportion of beneficiaries who have had contact with the dentist at least twice in two different years within a period of three calendar years	provincies.incijfers.be	InterMutualist Agency	2010-2018	

	Description	Source	Detail on source	Measurement points included in data analysis	SDG also linked to indicator	
	COVID-19 percentage (%) fully vaccinated	Percentage of people who have received partial/complete/booster vaccination (to be further specified)	Vaccination counter	2021		
<b>G</b>	<b>Exercise and sports</b>					
	Availability of sports facilities	Proportion of residents who consider that there are sufficient sports facilities in the neighbourhood.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2017, 2020	
	Active movement (daily walk, stepping, cycling)	Proportion of residents who walk, hike or cycle at least thirty minutes <b>daily</b> .	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
	Sports participation (at least weekly)	Proportion of residents who engage in sports activities at least weekly (activities lasting a minimum of 20 minutes, such as swimming, cycling, walking playing football, etc.).	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2020	
<b>SDG 4 - Quality education</b>						
<b>A</b>	<b>General</b>					
	Satisfaction with educational facilities	Proportion of residents satisfied with the educational facilities.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
	Difficulty in paying school fees	Proportion of residents belonging to a household facing payment difficulties who were unable to pay school expenses (on time) in the past year.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	SDG 1
<b>B</b>	<b>Babies and toddlers</b>					
	Preschool childcare places for babies and toddlers	Number of childcare places for babies and toddlers, who are children aged 0 to 2, per 100 children aged 0 to 2.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Kind & Gezin	2014-2020	
	Preschool childcare places for babies and toddlers with income-based fees	Number of childcare places for babies and toddlers, who are children aged 0 to 2, per 100 children aged 0 to 2. The figures refer to formal childcare: professional and paid childcare services. Each childcare facility for babies and toddlers has a licence from Kind & Gezin (Child & Family). No distinction is made between private and public facilities.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Kind & Gezin	2014-2020	
	Satisfaction with childcare	Proportion of residents satisfied with the childcare for babies and toddlers.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
	Difficulty in paying for childcare	Proportion of residents belonging to a household facing payment difficulties who were unable to pay childcare expenses (on time) in the past year.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	SDG 1
<b>C</b>	<b>Early childhood and primary education</b>					
	Participation in early childhood education	Number of pupils enrolled in regular or special preschool education in the establishments located within the municipality, compared to the number of children aged 2.5 to 5.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Department of Education & Training	2010-2021	



	Description	Source	Detail on source	Measurement points included in data analysis	SDG also linked to indicator
Minimum attendance in early childhood education (%)	Number of pupils enrolled in regular preschool education with a minimum attendance of 150 half days (3-year-olds), 185 half days (4-year-olds) and 250 half days (5-year-olds), by main establishment, relative to the number of 3, 4 and 5-year-olds enrolled in regular preschool education, by main establishment.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Department of Education & Training	2018-2021	
Educational disadvantage in primary education, by education type (>=2 years)	Number of pupils in regular primary education who have experienced at least 1 year of educational disadvantage and reside in the municipality, relative to the number of pupils in regular primary education residing in the municipality.	Onderwijs Vlaanderen	Dataloep	2012-2021	
After-school childcare places for 100 children	Number of places in after-school childcare per 100 children aged 3-11.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Kind & Gezin	2015-2021	
<b>D Secondary education</b>					SDG 8
Early school leavers in secondary education	Fraction of young people aged 18 to 25 who leave regular or special secondary education (including apprenticeship and part-time education) without a diploma, certificate or other qualification at the secondary education level and who reside in the municipality, relative to the number of students aged 18 to 25 who exit regular or special secondary education (including part-time education) in that year, and who reside in the municipality.	Onderwijs Vlaanderen	Dataloep	2011-2020	
Early school leavers: females	Fraction of female early school leavers in secondary education, by place of residence	Onderwijs Vlaanderen	Dataloep	2011-2020	
Early school leavers: non-Belgians	Fraction of Non-Belgian early school leavers in secondary education, by place of residence	Onderwijs Vlaanderen	Dataloep	2011-2020	
Early school leavers: Non-EU	Fraction of Non-EU early school leavers in secondary education, by place of residence	Onderwijs Vlaanderen	Dataloep	2011-2020	
Educational disadvantage in secondary education, by place of residence (>=2 years)	Number of pupils in regular secondary education who have experienced at least 2 years of educational disadvantage and reside in the municipality, relative to the number of pupils in regular secondary education residing in the municipality.	Onderwijs Vlaanderen	Dataloep	2012-2021	
<b>E Higher and adult education</b>					
Higher and adult education	Proportion of young people aged 18-26 enrolled in basic higher education programmes, residing in the municipality. Young people refers to those who reside in the municipality, regardless of whether they are pursuing education within the municipality or elsewhere. Denominator number of residents	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Department of Education & Training	2011-2020	
Enrolment in adult education	Enrolment in adult education (by place of residence) compared to the 15+ population	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Department of Education & Training	2014-2020	

	Description	Source	Detail on source	Measurement points included in data analysis	SDG also linked to indicator	
<b>SDG 5 - Gender equality</b>						
<b>A</b>	<b>Equality in employment</b>					SDG 8, 10
Employment rate - Female/Male	Employment rate of women (20-64) divided by the employment rate of men (20-64)	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Flemish Labour Account [Vlaamse Arbeidsrekening] based on RSZ-DMFA, RSZPPO, RSVZ, RIZIV, CBS, IGSS, OEA, SEE, RVA, IWEPS, Statbel, DWH AM&SB at the KSZ, processed by the Labour Market Research Centre	2010-2019		
Gender gap in full-time employment	absolute waarde van (% vrouwen in voltijds werkenden - 50%)	Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training	Arvastat	2017-2021		
Gender gap in part-time employment	absolute waarde van (% vrouwen in deeltijdse werkenden - 50%)	Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training	Arvastat	2017-2021		
Gender gap in long-term unemployment	absolute value of (% women in long-term unemployment - 50%)	Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training	Arvastat	2010-2021		
<b>B</b>	<b>Discrimination and violence</b>					
Discrimination: sex	Proportion of residents who have felt hurt, offended or disadvantaged in the past year as a result of their seks	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2020	SDG 10	
Domestic violence: physical	Number of incidents of physical domestic violence per 10,000 residents	provincies. incijfers.be	Crime statistics of the Federal Police	2010-2020		
Domestic violence: sexual	Number of incidents of sexual domestic violence per 10,000 residents	provincies. incijfers.be	Crime statistics of the Federal Police	2010-2020		

	Description	Source	Detail on source	Measurement points included in data analysis	SDG also linked to indicator
Domestic violence: psychological	Number of incidents of psychological domestic violence per 10,000 residents	provincies.incijfers.be	Crime statistics of the Federal Police	2010-2020	
Domestic violence: economic	Number of incidents of economic domestic violence per 10,000 residents	provincies.incijfers.be	Crime statistics of the Federal Police	2010-2020	

## SDG 6 - Clean water and sanitation

### A Drinking water

Access to water supply	People disconnected from the water supply network (per 10,000 inhabitants)	Application of the general water sales regulations	Application of the general water sales regulations	2019	SDG 1
Average water consumption	Average water consumption among households with 1-5 registered residents.	provincies.incijfers.be	Flemish Environment Agency	2021	

### B Sewerage

Treatment rate	Number of residents who are connected to a sewer system and discharge into a wastewater treatment plant (WWTP), relative to the population.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Flemish Environment Agency	2015-2021	
Sewerage connection rate	Ratio between the total number of residents connected to the sewerage system and the maximum number of residents intended to be connected to the sewerage system under the municipality's overall sewerage plans. This indicator is an expression of the progress made in the development of the sewerage system within the municipality.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Flemish Environment Agency	2015-2021	

### C Protection of water resources

Weighted average water quality of water courses	Average presence of shallow streams and rivers with good structure and water vegetation, weighted by the share of the catchment area per municipality	provincie.incijfers.be		2019	
Biological average water quality of surface water bodies	The quality of the surface water expressed in terms for the occurrence of specific plant and animal species (macro-invertebrates)	Flemish Environment Agency	Water Quality Geocounter	2021	
Physicochemical average water quality of surface water bodies	Presence of oxygen, nutrients, pesticides,...	Flemish Environment Agency	Water Quality Geocounter	2021	

## SDG 7 - Affordable and sustainable energy

### A Sustainable energy production

Local production of renewable electricity (% consumption)	Percentage of local production of green electricity (wind, solar, hydro, biomass, biogas) (compared to total electricity consumption within the territory across all sectors)	provincies.incijfers.be	Flemish Energy and Climate Agency (VEKA)	2011-2019	
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	Description	Source	Detail on source	Measurement points included in data analysis	SDG also linked to indicator
	Photovoltaic (PV) utilisation rate on roofs (%)	Percentage of usable roofs (solar radiation > kWh/m2/y) that were effectively utilised for PV panels on 1 January of the respective year (compared to the total usable roofs)	provincies.incijfers.be	Flemish Energy and Climate Agency (VEKA)	2018-2020
	Installed wind turbine capacity [MW]	Installed capacity (in MW) in wind energy (cumulative figures)	provincies.incijfers.be	Flemish Energy and Climate Agency (VEKA)	2010-2020
	Satisfaction with support for renewable energy	Proportion of residents satisfied with the support provided by the municipality/city in the field of renewable energy (score higher than 7 out of 10).	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2020
<b>B Energy intensity</b>					
	Energy intensity of households per number of inhabitants	household energy consumption per number of inhabitants	provincies.incijfers.be	Flemish Energy and Climate Agency (VEKA)	2011-2019
	Energy intensity of businesses per value-added	energieverbruik bedrijven tav toegevoegde waarde	provincies.incijfers.be	Vlaams Energie- en Klimaatagentschap (VEKA)	2011-2019
	Percentage (%) of LED street lighting	% LED street lighting	provincies.incijfers.be	Fluvius	2014-2021
<b>C Affordable energy</b>					
	Electricity budget meter	Number of activated (active) electricity budget meters compared to the number of access points on 31 December.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Flemish Electricity and Gas Market Regulator	2012-2021
	Access to gas network (%)	Number of gas disconnections compared to the number of access points on 31 December.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Flemish Electricity and Gas Market Regulator	2011-2020
	Affordability of energy and water	Proportion of residents (%) belonging to a household facing payment difficulties who were unable to pay electricity/water/gas/heating oil bills (on time) in the past year.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020
<b>SDG 8 - Decent work and economic growth</b>					
<b>A Employment</b>					
	Employment rate 20-64-year-olds (%)	Proportion employed as a percentage of the population aged 20-64	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Support Centre for Work - Flemish Labour Account [Vlaamse Arbeidsrekening] based on RSZ, RSVZ, RIZIV, RVA, Statbel (General Directorate Statistics – Statistics Belgium), DWH AM&SB at the KSZ, BISA	2010-2019

Description		Source	Detail on source	Measurement points included in data analysis	SDG also linked to indicator
Employment rate women	Proportion of employed women as a percentage of the population aged 20-64	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Support Centre for Work - Flemish Labour Account [Vlaamse Arbeidsrekening] based on RSZ, RSVZ, RIZIV, RVA, Statbel (General Directorate Statistics – Statistics Belgium), DWH AM&SB at the KSZ, BISA	2010-2019	SDG 10
Employment rate older workers (50-64-year-olds)	Employment rate older workers (50-64-year-olds)	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Support Centre for Work - Flemish Labour Account [Vlaamse Arbeidsrekening] based on RSZ, RSVZ, RIZIV, RVA, Statbel (General Directorate Statistics – Statistics Belgium), DWH AM&SB at the KSZ, BISA	2010-2019	SDG 10
Employment rate non-Belgians, EU	Proportion of employed non-Belgians as a percentage of the population aged 20-64	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Data Warehouse for the Labour Market and Social Protection of the Crossroads Bank for Social Security.	2010-2020	SDG 10
Employment rate non-Belgians, non-EU	Proportion of employed non-EU citizens as a percentage of the population aged 20-64	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Data Warehouse for the Labour Market and Social Protection of the Crossroads Bank for Social Security.	2010-2020	SDG 10
<b>B Unemployment</b>					

	Description	Source	Detail on source	Measurement points included in data analysis	SDG also linked to indicator
Unemployment rate women	Proportion of non-working unemployed women aged 18-64 (compared to women aged 18-64)	Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training	Arvastat	2010-2021	
Unemployment rate young people (20-24-year-olds)	Proportion of non-working unemployed individuals aged 20-24 (compared to inhabitants aged 20-64)	Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training	Arvastat	2010-2021	
Unemployment rate older workers (55-64-year-olds)	Proportion of non-working unemployed individuals aged 55-64 (compared to inhabitants aged 55-64)	Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training	Arvastat	2010-2021	
Long-term unemployment rate	Proportion of long-term unemployed individuals without work (aged 15-64), unemployed for 1 year or longer, out of the total group of unemployed individuals without work (aged 15-64)	Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training	Arvastat	2010-2021	
Low skilled unemployment rate	Employment rate (%): Low skilled. Individuals are considered low-skilled if they have at most a diploma of primary education of the 1st cycle of secondary education, apprenticeship, part-time vocational secondary education, or the 2nd cycle of secondary education	Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training	Arvastat	2010-2021	SDG 4
<b>C</b>	<b>Circular and Social Economy</b>				
Target-group employees in social economy employment	Number of target-group employees employed in at least 1 quarter in the various forms of social economy (log (1+ x)) per inhabitants aged 18 to 64 (log)	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Departement Werk en Sociale Economie	2017-2020	SDG 10
Employment: circular jobs ratio	Total number of circular jobs divided by the total number of jobs per municipality	Jobsmonitor Circle Economy		2021	SDG 12
<b>D</b>	<b>Growth</b>				
Net growth rate of enterprises	Number of new business establishments minus the number of closures, divided by the number of active enterprises	provincies. incijfers.be	Statbel	2010-2020	
Gross Value added per capita	The gross value added is the difference between the market value of goods and services produced in a year and the market value of the goods and services used in the production process. In other words, it represents the value that the factors of production, labour and capital add to the used or intermediate goods and services.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	The Flemish Statistical Authority	2010-2019	



	Description	Source	Detail on source	Measurement points included in data analysis	SDG also linked to indicator	
<b>SDG 9 - Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure</b>						
<b>A</b>	<b>Knowledge-based economy</b>					
	Proportion of self-employed in knowledge-intensive service sectors and high and medium-high technological industry	Number of jobs in the medium-high-tech industry and knowledge-intensive service sectors in relation to total employment	provincies.incijfers.be	The National Institute for Social Insurance for the Self-Employed	2010-2021	SDG 8
	Proportion of employees in knowledge-intensive and creative sectors among the total number of employees in the city/municipality	Number of employees in knowledge-intensive and creative sectors in relation to total employment	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	National Social Security Office	2010-2019	SDG 8
<b>B</b>	<b>Infrastructure</b>					
	Internet connection in households	Proportion of residents with home access to the internet	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
	Occupied area of business parks compared to total area of business parks	Proportion (%) of occupied area of business parks on the municipality's territory	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Agency for Innovation and Entrepreneurship	2014-2021	
<b>SDG 10 - Reduced inequalities</b>						
<b>A</b>	<b>Attitude towards diversity</b>					
	Attitude towards diversity: enrichment	Presence of people of different backgrounds is enriching (% in agreement)	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2020	
	Attitude towards diversity: coexistence	People of different backgrounds live well together (% in agreement)	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2017, 2020	
	Attitude towards diversity: attitude towards different origins	Not so comfortable if neighbours have a different background (% not in agreement)	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
	Attitude towards diversity: getting to know each other	It is good to get to know each other better (% in agreement)	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
	Attitude towards diversity: too much diversity	Too many people of different origins living in the municipality/city (% not in agreement)	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	

	Description	Source	Detail on source	Measurement points included in data analysis	SDG also linked to indicator	
	Attitude towards diversity: interaction activities	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020		
<b>B</b>	<b>Income inequality</b>	Income inequality: interquartile coefficient (ratio of Q3-Q1 to the median)	provincies.incijfers.be	Statbel - Fiscal incomes	2010-2019	
<b>C</b>	<b>Discrimination</b>					
	Discrimination: sexual orientation	Proportion of residents who have felt hurt, offended or disadvantaged in the past year as a result of their sexual orientation (if applicable)	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2020	SDG 5, 16
	Discrimination: origin	Proportion of residents who have felt hurt, offended or disadvantaged in the past year as a result of their origin (if applicable)	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2020	SDG 16
	Discrimination: physical or mental disability	Proportion of residents who have felt hurt, offended or disadvantaged in the past year as a result of their physical or mental disability (if applicable)	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2020	SDG 16
<b>D</b>	<b>Origin gap in employment</b>					
	Origin gap in activity rate	The origin gap is the employment rate difference between persons of Belgian origin and persons of non-EU origin. The employment rate refers to the proportion of persons employed in the population between the ages of 20 and 64, per origin group	Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training	Arvastat	2010-2019	SDG 8
	Origin gap in long-term unemployment	difference in long-term unemployment (>= 1 year) compared to total unemployment between non-EU and EU citizens	Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training	Arvastat	2010-2021	SDG 8
<b>SDG 11 - Sustainable cities and communities</b>						
<b>A</b>	<b>Sustainable mobility</b>					
	Sustainable commuting to work or school	Proportion of the population reporting sustainable commuting (by walking, cycling or using public transportation) between their home and work, school or training in the municipality/ neighbourhood	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2014, 2017, 2020	SDG 12
	Sustainable short-distance travel	Proportion of residents who frequently used bicycles or walked for short distances in the past year.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2014, 2017, 2020	SDG 12
	Sustainable transport options: leisure time	Proportion of residents who often/always use a specific mode of transportation for leisure travel. Average of those who often/always respond with bus, tram or metro, bicycle - general, on foot, by train	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	SDG 12
	Sustainable transport options: satisfaction	Proportion of residents satisfied with the range of sustainable mobility choices in the municipality/city (average across sustainable modes of transport, % in agreement).	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2020	
	Sustainable transport options: public transport	Proportion of residents who consider that there is sufficient public transport in the neighbourhood (% in agreement).	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	SDG 9

	Description	Source	Detail on source	Measurement points included in data analysis	SDG also linked to indicator	
	Satisfaction with condition of footpaths	Proportion of residents satisfied with the condition of footpaths in the municipality/city.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2017, 2020	
<b>B</b>	<b>Safe cycling</b>					
	Safe travel to school	Proportion of residents who consider it safe for children in the municipality/neighbourhood to travel to school alone.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2017, 2020	
	Traffic safety for cyclists	Proportion of the population reporting that it is unsafe to cycle in the municipality/neighbourhood	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2014, 2017, 2020	SDG 3
	Cycling infrastructure: sufficient number of cycle paths	Proportion of residents who consider that there are sufficient cycle paths in the municipality/city.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2017, 2020	SDG 9
	Cycling infrastructure: cycle paths	Proportion of residents satisfied with the condition of cycle paths in the municipality/city (% in agreement).	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2017, 2020	SDG 9
	Cycling infrastructure: bicycle parking facilities	Proportion of residents who consider that there are sufficient bicycle parking facilities in the municipality/neighbourhood (%)	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2014, 2017, 2020	
<b>C</b>	<b>Cars</b>					
	Sufficient sharing systems	Proportion of the population indicating that there are sufficient shared systems (car, bicycle, etc.) available.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2020	
	Availability of car sharing	Number of cars per 1,000 households	autodelen.net		2021	
	Eco-score of vehicle fleet	Number of privately owned passenger cars with an eco-score above 70 as a proportion of the total number of passenger cars (excluding company cars)	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Flemish Institute for Technological Research	2012-2020	SDG 13
	Proportion of registered hybrid or electric vehicles	Proportion of registered hybrid or electric vehicles (compared to registered vehicles)	provincies.incijfers.be	Statbel	2010-2021	SDG 7
	Number of cars per 100 households	registered passenger cars (including company cars) per 100 households	provincies.incijfers.be	Statbel	2010-2021	
<b>D</b>	<b>Cleanliness and nuisance</b>					
	Neighbourhood nuisance: harassment in the street (never/rarely)	Proportion of residents who were never/rarely harassed in the street in the past month	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	SDG 16

	Description	Source	Detail on source	Measurement points included in data analysis	SDG also linked to indicator
Neighbourhood nuisance; neighbourhood noise (never/rarely)	Proportion of residents who never/rarely experienced noise nuisance (arguments, barking dogs, music, etc.) in the past month	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
Neighbourhood nuisance: other forms of noise (never/rarely)	Proportion of residents who never/rarely experienced noise nuisance (from hospitality, sports fields, businesses) in the past month	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2017, 2020	
Neighbourhood nuisance: environmental nuisance from litter (never/rarely)	Proportion of residents who never/rarely experienced environmental nuisance from litter in the past month	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2014, 2017, 2020	SDG 12
Neighbourhood nuisance: environmental nuisance from animals (never/rarely)	Proportion of residents who never/rarely experienced environmental nuisance from animals in the past month	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2020	
Neighbourhood nuisance: environmental nuisance from dog excrement (never/rarely)	Proportion of residents who never/rarely experienced environmental nuisance from dog excrement in the past month	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
Neighbourhood nuisance: vandalism (never/rarely)	Proportion of residents who never/rarely experienced nuisance from vandalism in the past month	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	SDG 16
Neighbourhood nuisance: drug dealing (never/rarely)	Proportion of residents who never/rarely experienced nuisance from drug dealing in the past month	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2017, 2020	SDG 16
Neighbourhood nuisance: traffic nuisance from speeding (never/rarely)	Proportion of residents who never/rarely experienced nuisance from inappropriate speed of traffic in the past month	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
Neighbourhood nuisance: traffic nuisance from cut-through traffic (never/rarely)	Proportion of residents who never/rarely experienced nuisance from cut-through traffic in the past month	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2017, 2020	
Cleanliness of streets and footpaths	Proportion of residents who find that the streets and footpaths in the neighbourhood are generally clean	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
<b>E Culture and leisure</b>					
Satisfaction with cultural facilities	Proportion of residents satisfied with the cultural facilities.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	



	Description	Source	Detail on source	Measurement points included in data analysis	SDG also linked to indicator
Leisure activities: number of leisure activities per 1,000 inhabitants (all types)	Number of leisure activities introduced per 1,000 residents in five categories: (1) performing arts: Music (festivals included), Dance- or theatre performance, Film; (2) Cultural heritage: Exhibition, Guided excursion, Monument; (3) Sociocultural work: Courses, Lectures or congresses; (4) Sport: Sporting activity, Sports competitions, Cycling or walking route; (5) Miscellaneous: Party or Event, Food and Drink, Nature Area or Park, Game or Quiz, Camp or Holiday, Miscellaneous (theme park or amusement park, fair, carnival or festival, market or street fair, open house, recreational area).	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	UiT-databank, Cultuurnet	2015-2020	
Satisfaction with library facilities	Proportion of residents satisfied with the library facilities (%)	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2020	
Heritage organisations and institutions	Number of heritage associations per 10,000 households.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	FARO	2017	
Satisfaction with recreation facilities	Proportion of residents satisfied with the recreational facilities.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2014-2018	
<b>F Recreation for youth</b>					
Suitable places for youth	Proportion of residents who consider that there are sufficient suitable places for youth growing up in the municipality.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
Satisfaction with youth facilities	Proportion of residents satisfied with the youth facilities.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
Satisfaction with safe play	Proportion of residents who believe that children can play safely in the municipality.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2014, 2017, 2020	
Sufficient activities for children and youth	Proportion of residents who believe that there are enough activities organised for children, young people and adolescents growing up in the municipality.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2014, 2017, 2020	
<b>G Affordable housing</b>					
Affordability of housing (housing ratio)	Proportion of residents whose total household expenditure on housing represents at least 30% of the household income.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2017, 2020	SDG 1
Satisfaction with the housing	Proportion of residents satisfied with the housing.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
Number of unsuitable housing declarations	Number of decisions declaring dwellings unfit or uninhabitable, based on the Flemish Housing Code or new municipal decree (ratio per 1000 buildings)	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Flemish Housing Agency	2016-2020	
<b>H Sustainability of housing</b>					
Sustainability of housing: Double glazing or triple glazing	Proportion of residents living in a dwelling with energy efficient and energy recovering elements: double glazing or triple glazing	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	SDG 7

	Description	Source	Detail on source	Measurement points included in data analysis	SDG also linked to indicator	
	Sustainability of housing: Energy efficient boiler	Proportion of residents living in a dwelling with energy efficient and energy recovering elements: energy efficient boiler	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
	Sustainability of housing: Use of rainwater	Proportion of residents living in a dwelling with energy efficient and energy recovering elements: use of rainwater	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
	Sustainability of housing: Green roof	Proportion of residents living in a dwelling with energy efficient and energy recovering elements: green roof	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
	Sustainability of housing: Insulated roof	Proportion of residents living in a dwelling with energy efficient and energy recovering elements: insulated roof	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
	Sustainability of housing: Wall insulation	Proportion of residents living in a dwelling with energy efficient and energy recovering elements: wall insulation	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
	Sustainability of housing: Heat pump	Proportion of residents living in a dwelling with energy efficient and energy recovering elements: heat pump	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
	Sustainability of housing: Solar boiler	Proportion of residents living in a dwelling with energy efficient and energy recovering elements: solar boiler	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
	Sustainability of housing: Solar panels	Proportion of residents living in a dwelling with energy efficient and energy recovering elements: solar panels	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
	Sustainability of housing: Energy performance (E) level of new buildings	Average Energy Performance (E) level of completed new buildings, calculated from the EPB declarations according to the year of permit application. The average E level for residential purposes is included. The E level represents the overall energy performance and is expressed as the ratio of the characteristic annual primary energy consumption to a reference value.	provincies.incijfers.be	Flemish Energy and Climate Agency (VEKA)	2010-2021	
<b>I</b>	<b>Air quality</b>	Year Average Common Air Quality Index	VMM		2017-2019	SDG 3
<b>J</b>	<b>Greenery in the municipality</b>					SDG 15
	Neighbourhood greenery	Percentage of residents living within 800 m of neighbourhood green spaces (minimum 10 ha)	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Flemish Institute for Technological Research	2013, 2016, 2019	
	Satisfaction with greenery in the neighbourhood	Proportion of residents satisfied with the greenery (nature and green spaces) in the municipality/city.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	

Description		Source	Detail on source	Measurement points included in data analysis	SDG also linked to indicator
<b>SDG 12 - Responsible consumption and production</b>					
<b>A Waste</b>					SDG 11
Total waste per capita	Total household waste including comparable commercial waste	provincies.incijfers.be	Public Flemish Waste Agency	2013-2020	
Residual waste per capita	Total amount of residual waste expressed in kilograms per resident	provincies.incijfers.be	Public Flemish Waste Agency	2013-2020	
Share destined for recycling	Proportion of kilograms of selectively collected waste compared to total household waste. Sum of selectively collected waste (excluding car tyres, WEEE and medicines) / total household waste (including comparable commercial waste) * 100. Disclaimer: Please note! The data represents the amount of waste collected within the municipality's territory. The total quantity of selectively collected waste excludes car tyres, WEEE and medicines (due to the absence of data at the municipal level).	provincies.incijfers.be	Public Flemish Waste Agency	2013-2020	
<b>B Environmental consciousness</b>					
Environmental consciousness: bike travel	Share of residents who travel short distances by bike at least weekly	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2014, 2017, 2020	
Environmental consciousness: on foot	Share of residents who travel short distances on foot at least weekly	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2014, 2017, 2020	
Environmental consciousness: reducing plastic	Share of residents who reduce the purchase of plastic at least weekly	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2020	
Environmental consciousness: reducing food waste	Share of residents who reduce food waste at least weekly	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2017, 2020	
Environmental consciousness: fair trade	Share of residents who purchase fair trade products at least weekly	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2020	SDG 8, 17
<b>SDG 13 - Climate action</b>					
<b>A CO2 emissions</b>					
CO2 emissions per capita	Total CO2 emissions per capita	provincies.incijfers.be	Flemish Energy and Climate Agency (VEKA)	2011-2019	
Evolution in CO2 emissions	reduction or growth in CO2 emissions over time	provincies.incijfers.be	Flemish Energy and Climate Agency (VEKA)	2012-2019	
CO2 intensity of households	CO2 emissions of households per number of inhabitants	provincies.incijfers.be	Flemish Energy and Climate Agency (VEKA)	2011-2019	

	Description	Source	Detail on source	Measurement points included in data analysis	SDG also linked to indicator	
	CO2 intensity of businesses	CO2 emissions of businesses relative to their value added	provincies.incijfers.be	Flemish Energy and Climate Agency (VEKA)	2011-2019	SDG 8, 9
	Reduction in CO2 emissions due to renewable electricity in relation to local electricity consumption	Reduction in CO2 emissions due to renewable electricity in relation to local electricity consumption	provincies.incijfers.be	Flemish Energy and Climate Agency (VEKA)	2011-2019	SDG 7
<b>B</b>	<b>Floods and waterlogging</b>					
	Percentage of buildings affected by waterlogging	Percentage of buildings affected by waterlogging - Scenario: high-impact 2050	Flemish climate portal		2021	
	Percentage of buildings affected by floods	Percentage of buildings affected by floods - Scenario: high-impact 2050	Flemish climate portal		2021	
	Percentage of vulnerable institutions affected by waterlogging	Percentage of vulnerable institutions affected by waterlogging - Scenario: high-impact 2050	Flemish climate portal		2021	
	Percentage of vulnerable institutions affected by floods	Percentage of vulnerable institutions affected by floods - Scenario: high-impact 2050	Flemish climate portal		2021	
<b>C</b>	<b>Heat and drought</b>					
	Percentage of heat-affected individuals (0-4 and 65+)	Percentage of heat-affected individuals (0-4 and 65+) - Scenario: high impact 2030	Flemish climate portal		2021	
	Percentage of agricultural parcels with significant drought stress	Agricultural parcels with significant drought stress (%) - Scenario: high-impact 2050	Flemish climate portal		2021	
	Percentage of vulnerable ecotopes with significant drought stress	Vulnerable ecotopes with significant drought stress (%) - Scenario: high-impact 2050	Flemish climate portal		2021	
<b>SDG 15 - Life on land</b>						
<b>A</b>	<b>Green area</b>					
	Green space area (compared to total area)	Aandeel (%) van de totale oppervlakte van de stad/de gemeente die ingenomen wordt door woongroen, buurtgroen en wijkgroen.	provincies.incijfers.be	Land Use Register	2013, 2016, 2019	
	Valuable ecotope area	Valuable ecotope area compared to total area	provincies.incijfers.be	Land Use Register	2020	



	Description	Source	Detail on source	Measurement points included in data analysis	SDG also linked to indicator	
	Forest quota: hectares of new forest (not compensatory)	Report of ha new forest on Bosteller.be	bosteller.be	2020 2021		
<b>B</b>	<b>Paving</b>				SDG 6, 11, 13	
	Unbuilt cadastral area as a percentage of total cadastral area	Proportion of unbuilt cadastral area as a percentage of total cadastral area.	Statbel	2011-2020		
	Soil sealing (paving)	Proportion of area where the nature and/or condition of the soil surface has been altered by the addition of artificial, (semi-) impermeable materials, resulting in the loss of essential ecosystem functions of the soil.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Flemish Information Agency	2015, 2018	
<b>C</b>	<b>Erosieknelpunten</b>	Total surface area of erosion hotspots (current, potential and unspecified) the municipality (% of total area)	provincies. incijfers.be	Soil Database Flanders	2021	SDG 13
<b>SDG 16 - Peace, justice and strong institutions</b>						
<b>A</b>	<b>Security</b>					
	Feeling of insecurity	Proportion of residents who often/always feel unsafe in the neighbourhood (%)	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	SDG 11
	Crime: theft and extortion	Number of registered thefts and extortions divided by the total population (per 1,000 inhabitants).	provincies. incijfers.be	Crime statistics of the Federal Police	2010-2020	
	Crime: property damage	Number of registered property damage incidents divided by the total population (per 1,000 inhabitants).	provincies. incijfers.be	Crime statistics of the Federal Police	2010-2020	
	Crime: physical integrity	Number of registered offences against physical integrity divided by the total population (per 1,000 inhabitants).	provincies. incijfers.be	Crime statistics of the Federal Police	2010-2020	
	Crime: fraud	Number of registered fraud offences divided by the total population (per 1,000 inhabitants).	provincies. incijfers.be	Crime statistics of the Federal Police	2010-2020	
	Crime: drug-related	Number of registered drug-related offences divided by the total population (per 1,000 inhabitants).	provincies. incijfers.be	Crime statistics of the Federal Police	2010-2020	
	Crime: other offences	Number of other offences registered divided by the total population (per 1,000 inhabitants).	provincies. incijfers.be	Crime statistics of the Federal Police	2010-2020	
	Trust in police	Proportion of residents that have little trust in the police	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
<b>B</b>	<b>Social fabric</b>				SDG 11	
	Social fabric: helping neighbours	People in the neighbourhood want to help their neighbours (% in agreement)	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	

	Description	Source	Detail on source	Measurement points included in data analysis	SDG also linked to indicator	
	Social fabric: trust	People in the neighbourhood can be trusted (% in agreement)	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
	Social fabric: plenty of contact	Plenty of contact with people in the neighbourhood (% in agreement)	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
	Social fabric: feeling at home	Feeling of being at home with people in the neighbourhood (% in agreement)	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
<b>C</b>	<b>Satisfaction with governance</b>					
	Trust in local government	Proportion of residents that have a great deal of trust in the local government.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
	Satisfaction with counter services	Proportion of residents satisfied with the counter services in the municipality/city.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
	Satisfaction with digital services	Proportion of residents satisfied with the digital services in the municipality/ city, %.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2017, 2020	
	Satisfaction with household waste services	Proportion of residents satisfied with the household waste services, %.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	SDG 11, 12
<b>D</b>	<b>Communication</b>					
	Dissemination of information: planned activities	Proportion of residents who feel adequately informed about the activities planned in and by the municipality/city.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
	Dissemination of information: decisions taken	Proportion of residents who feel adequately informed about the decisions taken in and by the municipality/city.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
	Dissemination of information: new initiatives	Proportion of residents who feel adequately informed about the initiatives taken in and by the municipality/city.	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	
	Satisfaction with communication from government	Proportion of residents who consider that the communication from the municipality/city government is clear and easy to understand (% in agreement).	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2020	
<b>E</b>	<b>Consultation and participation</b>					SDG 11
	Consultation of residents	Proportion of the population indicating that the local government puts enough work into knowing the population's wishes	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	SDG 11
	Actively engaged citizens	Proportion (%) of residents who were actively involved in improving something in the neighbourhood or city in the past year	Municipality-City Monitor, ABB	Citizen survey	2011, 2014, 2017, 2020	SDG 11

# Annex 3

## VSR approach

This annex offers more insights into the process of developing the VSR. It serves as an inspiration for other regions and local government associations which embark on this endeavour.

### Relation to VNR

The first Belgian Voluntary National Review in 2017 made only limited and fragmented reference to local governments. However, Belgium planned to produce a second VNR in 2023. Therefore, the VVSG (Associations of Flemish cities and municipalities) decided to develop a VSR, intended to be published right before the launch of the VNR. The VVP (Association of Flemish Provinces) decided to join this effort in order to provide an overview of the state of affairs at all decentralised government levels in Flanders. Note that in the Belgian state structure, the regions – Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia – are central government levels.

We started the VSR process very early and communicated our plans and timing to the central government levels, in the first instance to the Flemish government. This pro-active approach paid off. In August 2022, the national working group on the VNR decided to include a separate chapter on localising the SDGs in the VNR (approximately 10 pages). For this chapter, the VVSG and the VVP worked together with the Brussels and Walloon associations of local governments and provinces. The preliminary findings of the VSR already a useful source for this chapter, even though the scope of the chapter for the VNR was wider than only the Flemish findings.

Why a Flemish VSR and not a Belgian VSR? For the last years, localising the SDGs has had a much stronger take-up in Flanders than in the other two regions, amongst others because of the engagement of the VVSG. The associations of local governments in Brussels and Wallonia were notified of the engagement to develop a Flemish VSR. They were asked about their interest and willingness to make a VSR for their regions (optionally in a more 'light version' than the Flemish one) or to get involved in a later stage to add data and practices for a Belgian VSR. Unfortunately, they did not have the financial and human resources to do so. In addition, data which are available to local governments are not the same in all regions. It would therefore have been very difficult to develop a joint dataset for all Belgian provinces and municipalities.

### Goals

The VSR aims to contribute to the core tasks of the VVSG and the VVP.

- Advocacy:
  - Nationally increase the visibility of local governments (and smaller municipalities) and have the input of the VSR included in the VNR.
  - Internationally stress the importance of localising the SDGs and stress the pioneer position of Flemish local governments and provinces in that area.

- Knowledge sharing:
  - Motivate and inspire provinces and local governments through data (indicators) and good practices to work on the SDGs.
  - Support provinces and local governments in their SDG-monitoring (and reporting).
- Networking: stimulate mutual learning between Flemish local governments and provinces, and with their international peers.

## Financial and human resources

The VVSG received funding from the Flemish and federal governments (as an activity included in broader subsidy programmes funded by those governments) to develop the VSR. The VVP invested its own means. The VVSG and the VVP hired Idea Consult for the data collection, data analysis and writing of the report. The total budget was approximately 50.000 euros (excluding translation, layout and internal staff costs).

Idea Consult worked together with UNU-CRIS, the United Nation University Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies. This was a cost-effective way to develop the VSR, since the cooperation between Idea Consult and UNU-CRIS did not require remuneration from the VSR budget. Even more importantly, the involvement of UNU-CRIS led to a varied and thorough data collection and statistical data analysis which the VVSG and VVP could not have done by themselves.

Regarding human resources, both the VVSG and the VVP had two lead persons working on the project. From April 2022 to April 2023 they spent approximately 0.5 to 1 day a week on the VSR. However, this time investment was not evenly spread throughout the year. There were moments when almost no effort was needed, but there were also peak periods mostly at the end of the process from January to April 2023.

In addition, many VVSG colleagues and the VVP interprovincial SDG working group were involved at various stages in the data collection, the selection of good practices and the review of the chapter on the 17 SDGs.

## Timing and process

	Apr 22	May 22	June 22	July-Aug 22	Sept 22	Oct 22	Nov 22	Dec 22	Jan 23	Feb 23	Mar 23	Apr 23
Hiring consultant	■											
Building SDG indicator set		■	■	■	■	■						
Data analysis of indicators				■	■	■	■	■				
Collection good practices						■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Writing of									■	■	■	■



## Data collection and analysis

As also explained in the VSR, we built the VSR on two important pillars:

- A dataset of more than 200 indicators (focus on outcome level, available to all 300 Flemish municipalities) on which a statistical analysis was carried out looking into trends at the local level in Flanders and taking into account contextual factors such as number of inhabitants, age structure and median income.
- Information on the role of and strategies used by local and provincial governments, complemented by good practices on the 17 SDGs and the use of the 2030 Agenda as a policy framework. This information is needed to fill in the data gaps and to clarify findings from the data analysis.

## Indicator set

To develop the indicator set, we built on previous work done by the VVSG (SDG indicator set of 2018) and by Idea Consult in cooperation with UNU-CRIS (SDG monitor for municipalities, [www.sdgmonitor.be](http://www.sdgmonitor.be)). To further expand and finalise the indicator set for the VSR, we could rely on the VVP interprovincial SDG working group and on a working group of 9 municipalities. The 9 municipalities reacted to an open call to participation from the VVSG. Both small and larger municipalities from different provinces took part. The interprovincial working group consisted of 8 representatives from the provincial administrations. Both working groups helped choose which indicators to connect with which SDGs and helped look for additional data sources.

Originally, we hoped to identify some common indicators with a more direct link to provincial and local policy, such as energy and water consumption by the provincial and local governments themselves or an indicator on food distribution by local governments. However, this proved to be very difficult. For the provincial government, additional information could be found on production of waste and sustainable energy production, for example, for which all 5 provincial administrations monitored the data in a similar way. This was not the case for local governments since information was only partially or not similarly monitored.

## Good practices

For each SDG, we chose to select 2 or 3 practices. We balanced local and provincial examples with a majority of municipal examples, since there are 300 municipalities and 5 provinces in Flanders.

For the selection of good practices, the VVP and the VVSG took a different approach.

- VVP: the SDG working group made the choice.
- VVSG: Each service within the organisation was asked (through its head of service) to provide information on 2 to 10 good practices taking into account the principles of Leave No One Behind, interlinkages, partnerships and a long-term approach. Based on the submitted practices, the 2 leaders at the VVSG made a final selection in consideration of the geographical spread between the 5 provinces, the variation in municipal size and political coalitions and the variation in target group and made sure that there were examples of internal focus (e.g. HRM or policy regarding municipal buildings), service delivery to citizens, and contribution to international solidarity. Once a practice was decided on, the municipality was contacted to gather additional information.

While the first round of selections was made in October-December 2022, it took longer than anticipated to define the final selection of good practices. This was mostly to do with the fact that we lacked examples on some important topics (such as local food strategy or protection of marine ecosystems) and examples that matched the data analysis, for example, to provide more information around negative trends or show the impact of local policy.

Contributing to the 2030 Agenda is not only monitoring the realisation of the 17 thematic SDGs. It also involves using the 2030 Agenda as a strategic framework and moral compass to guide policy decisions and policy communication. Therefore, we also included good practices on this important aspect of localising the SDGs, which is unfortunately still missing in many VNRs and VSRs.

We decided not to conduct a survey. The VVSG and the VVP already have a lot of information on how local governments and provinces work on the 2030 Agenda. The VVSG, for example, has in the past coordinated a pilot project on localising the SDGs, organises webinars and seminars, coordinated working groups on specific SDG topics (such as monitoring and an SDG check), guides municipalities in their participation in Sustainable Municipality Week, and offers individual advice. In addition, the VVSG does a yearly survey on the SDGs. In the survey we gauge, among other things, commitment to internal and external communication on the SDGs, use of the 2030 Agenda as a framework for policy development and monitoring, and the extent to which VVSG support contributes to localising the SDGs.

## Communication

We refer to annex 3 for more information on our communication strategy. We would like to highlight a webinar we organised in January 2023 to present the first results of the data analysis to staff and councillors of local and provincial governments. We also made sure to communicate the progress made on the VSR to the Flemish and federal government, mostly during the initial months.

## Writing of the report

The writing phase had already begun in November-December 2022, but the majority of the work was done in February-April 2023 with different feedback rounds. Here as well, the VVP and the VVSG took a different approach:

- VVP: all members of the provincial SDG working group read the entire report in the different feedback rounds.
- VVSG: the 2 leaders read the entire report in the different feedback rounds. Other VVSG colleagues were asked to read specific parts of the report, dealing with their topic of work. The final report was also read by the heads of the department of Governance and Strategy and the communication department. The main added value in feedback from thematic colleagues lies in complementing possible local strategies for achieving specific SDGs, and in framing progress or regression on certain indicators (great overall progress on a particular indicator does not mean there is no more work to be done in Flanders).

## Validation

The administrative and political leadership of both organisations approved the development of the VSR at the beginning of 2022 and the final report in April-May 2023.

## Lessons learned

Being pro-active works! We began working on the VSR in the first half of 2022, months before the VNR approach was defined. This contributed to the decision by the national working group to include a separate and extensive chapter on localising the SDGs in the VNR. This chapter is now being considered by various advisory bodies as one of the best chapters in the VNR.

Take your time. In just a few months it is almost impossible to conduct a quality data collection and analysis and ensure a participatory process including colleagues and municipalities.

Work with a (university) researcher for a statistically sound data collection and analysis.

The joining of forces between the VVSG and the VVP ensured that the VSR covered all decentral governments in Flanders. It also resulted in useful contacts, mutual learning and a possible foundation for good cooperation in the future between the two associations. However, the cooperation required good coordination and give and take on both sides.

Involving various colleagues has its advantages and challenges:

- Advantages:
  - Broader support within the association for the VSR and the SDGs
  - Possibility of verifying findings and adding nuance and argumentation
- Challenges:
  - Takes more time and work
  - Colleagues are not always aware of the entire process or the decisions made by the leaders and the consultant, which can lead to conflicting feedback
  - To limit the length of the VSR, not all feedback can be included

Think about your target audience: why are we developing a VSR and who do we want to reach? This impacts on the information you include and how you present it. We decided, for example, to make a different version for our own members (in Dutch) and for the international audience. In the English version we provide information on aspects such as the Belgian state structure and the tasks and responsibilities of the VVSG and the VVP as umbrella associations. This information is known by our own members and would only make the report unnecessarily longer. It was also very important to us that the VSR is not just a research report but a useful tool for municipalities and provinces. Possible local strategies and good practices for each SDG take up a fair amount of space in the report but were not to be missed.

The main challenge is to keep using the insights of the report and support colleagues in doing so. We tried to take this into account when developing our communication plan.

# Annex 4

## VSR communication plan

A VSR aims to reach various target groups (to inspire, inform or influence them). This is also the case for the VSR of the VVSG and the VVP. We identified the following target groups:

- Politicians and administrators of Flemish local and provincial governments.
- VVSG colleagues: in order to reach different departments and profiles within municipalities, colleagues at the VVSG need to share the (results of the) VSR with their contacts and network.
- Local governments in the Belgian regions of Brussels and Wallonia, through their umbrella associations Brulocalis and UVCW and through the 'Service Publique de Wallonie'.
- Flemish government, focus on departments working on sustainability, foreign affairs, local governance.
- Federal government, focus on departments working on sustainability, foreign affairs.
- International network: UCLG, CEMR, CIB, Platforma, UN organisations working on SDGs and VSRs.
- Other civil society groups, the private sector, academics working on SDGs, local governance.

An important decision made by the VVSG and the VVP, was the development of a version of the VSR for the national audience (aimed chiefly at its own members at local and provincial level) and a version for international use. While large parts of the VSR are the same in both versions, some aspects differ. This was needed to avoid unnecessary information on the one hand and provide essential context and explanation on the other.

In the national Dutch version, for example, we added an introduction on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, and argumentation on the advantages of using the SDGs as a framework for local policy. In the English version for international use, this information is not included since the international readers will know what the SDGs are and will not need to be convinced about the added value of localising the SDGs.

In the English version of the VSR we included a description of the Belgian state structure and provided additional information describing in more detail things such as the data sources that Flemish provinces and municipalities can access. This information is known to the national audience and would have been superfluous. Also, in the English version we added annexes on the VSR approach and communication plan, to inspire other associations of subnational governments that wish to develop a VSR.

For clarification, the VVSG decided not to actively involve all local governments in the collection of data and good practices. We already have a long trajectory with local governments on localising the SDGs and have a yearly survey on the SDGs. This provided us with sufficient information at the earliest stage to make a draft report. All local governments were able to give feedback during a webinar (January 2023).



#### Acronyms:

- ABB: Agency Internal Affairs of the Flemish Government, tasked with local governance and the municipal monitor which collects data for all 300 local governments
- Brulocalis: association of Brussels local governments
- CEMR: Council of European Regions and Municipalities
- CIB: Capacity and Institution Building working group of UCLG
- DKBuZa: Department of Flemish Government working on sustainable development and foreign affairs
- ESDN: European Sustainable Development Network
- FIDO: Federal Institute on Sustainable Development, which nationally coordinated the development of the Belgian VNR
- HLPF: High-Level Political Forum, SDG event of the UN held yearly in New York
- KS: Association of Norwegian municipalities
- LGA: local government association
- SALAR: Association of Swedish municipalities
- SPW: Walloon Regional Department working on SDGs towards Walloon local governments
- UCLG: United Cities and Local Governments
- UVCW: association of Walloon local governments
- VVP: association of Flemish provinces
- VVSG: association of Flemish cities and municipalities

The communication plan below was developed by the VVSG. The VVP also developed a communication strategy, but given the organisation's more limited resources, we chose to present the more elaborate communication plan of the VVSG to provide maximum inspiration. When actions were carried out in cooperation with the VVP, this is clearly indicated.

## Remarks and lessons learned

- Early communication to the Flemish and federal governments on our plans to develop a VSR ensured good connections with the respective departments and contributed to the decision to include a chapter on localising the SDGs in the VNR.  
We had originally foreseen frequent updates on the progress of the VSR for these governments, but in the end did not do so, partly because we met with representatives of these governments on other occasions and there had already been ad hoc communication on the drafting of the VNR.
- We put quite a lot of effort into determining our target groups and considering the best ways to reach them. This led to a somewhat different outline and content for the national and international versions of the VSR, to an investment in informing and involving VVSG colleagues at different stages throughout the process, and to involving international peers in refining our communication plan.
- The Brussels and Walloon associations were informed about the VSR at the very beginning and contact was made over the chapter on localising the SDGs in the VNR. However, we did not keep them systematically updated on the progress and results throughout the development of the VSR. In a future project, we would strive to do this better.
- We decided to organise a specific VSR session mid-process, to be able to collect feedback from our members. We did not have an additional VSR session once the VSR was finalised. Instead, we opted to connect with pre-planned VVSG events and projects (such as the supporting documents for the 'context analysis', which all Flemish municipalities develop in preparation for a new multiannual policy cycle) to make the VSR and its results known. We will continuously have to look into opportunities to integrate the VSR into planned VVSG activities.
- Throughout 2022 and 2023, the VVSG presented its VSR approach at several VSR workshops organised by international partners such as Platforma and UCLG-CIB.

When	What	Target group	Additional info
October – November 2021	Meetings with UCLG, KS and SALAR on their VSR trajectories / experiences Presentation of intent to develop VSR to political commission VVSG on European and international affairs; approval to develop VSR.	Citizen survey	Citizen survey
December 2021	Meeting with cabinet of federal minister for sustainable development to inform about VSR plans	Federal government	
February 2022	Meeting with UVCW and Brulocalis on possibility of producing a joint Belgian VSR	Other Belgian associations of local governments	At this stage, agreement had not yet been reached with the VVP to develop a joint Flemish VSR (decision made in April 2022). In the end, no agreement was made on a Belgian VSR.
February 2022	Meeting with DKBuZa on the state of affairs of the VNR and a VSR plan of approach	Flemish government	Frequent talks with DKBuZa and federal government organisations have contributed to the decision to include a chapter on local governments in the VNR.
March 2022	Open call to all VVSG members to participate in a municipal working group on data collection – 9 applications	Flemish local governments	Meetings of the working group were held in May, July and September 2022
June 2022	Meeting with DKBuZa on the state of affairs of the VNR and VSR	Flemish government	
July 2022	Meeting with FIDO to explain VSR and gain insight on the VNR timeline	Federal government	
4/10/2022	Session by VVSG & VVP on SDG-monitoring and VSR at Belgian SDG-forum (held yearly)	Flemish local governments and broader audience of civil society, private sector, academia	Shared on social media of VVSG and VVP (as way to announce VSR)
29/11/2022	Session with international peers on communication plan	International peers; strengthen VVSG	First draft of communication plan was presented to international associations and cities which have already produced a VSR or VLR. Focus was on how to ensure that the report reaches local governments and influences local policy, and on how to motivate and support VVSG colleagues when using the report in their work.
October 2022	Compilation of good practices for each SDG among VVSG departments	VVSG colleagues	In addition, VVSG-international (team leading the VSR process) collected good practices on using the 2030 Agenda as a policy framework.
December 2022 – February 2023	Contact municipalities to clarify or extend good practices	Flemish local governments (for which good practices will be included in VSR)	

When	What	Target group	Additional info
December 2022 – January 2023	Short presentation of VSR (process and draft conclusions) in all 6 political commissions of the VVSG, asking for feedback and giving invitation to participate in the upcoming webinar.	Local councillors who are members of 6 political commissions of the VVSG	
19/01/2023	Distribute press release on general trends from data analysis: “Flemish cities and towns become more sustainable. Open space and education remain biggest challenge”	The general public	Picked up by several regional and national newspapers. No focus on term VSR, but more general on terms like data analysis, trends and challenges for local governments.
24/01/2023	Webinar to present draft conclusions from the data-analysis and key messages, and to gather feedback.	Staff members and politicians from local and provincial governments. VVSG and VVP colleagues and members of Flemish and federal government could also join.	Webinar organised with the VVP. Key moment to involve all local and provincial governments in the process and to gather final feedback to finalise the VSR. Mention of webinar through VVSG and VVP social media and share recording and presentation of webinar on VVSG website.
February 2023	Request feedback from several VVSG colleagues on data-analysis results and draft text for the SDGs related to their work.	VVSG colleagues	
March 2023	Session for VVSG colleagues: presentation of draft results; gather input for key messages and recommendations; discuss how they can spread VSR results in their network and what support they need for this.	VVSG colleagues	Limited attendance (approximately 10 participants), but session was recorded.
April 2023	Main messages of chapter localising the SDGs in VNR shared with national working group VNR, at their request	Federal and regional governments	
April 2023	Discuss press strategy and communication about final VSR report with respective VVSG colleagues		Later, this was also taken up with the VVP.
April 2023	Submit draft report (pre-final version) to VVSG and VVP executive board for final feedback, especially on conclusions and recommendations	VVSG and VVP management	
May 2023	Develop synthesis with infographics as stepping stone to reading full report	All readers, with focus on local governments	Additional budget foreseen for consultant
Mid-May 2023	Finalise Dutch version of VSR		Together with the VVP; VVP in charge of cost lay-out
01/06/2023	Session on use of SDG data to guide local policy, including presentation of results of VSR data-analysis	Flemish local governments	Session organised in the framework of a large VVSG event targeting approximately 1,000 participants of local governments, offering sessions on various topics
Beginning of June 2023	Finalise English version of VSR		Together with the VVP; VVSG in charge of cost translation and VVP in charge of cost lay-out
Beginning of June 2023	Transfer VSR report to federal and Flemish government (through secretary-generals or president)	Federal and Flemish government	Together with the VVP



When	What	Target group	Additional info
June 2023	Share VSR and synthesis with broader network in Belgium and ask them to spread the report in their network. Also share English version of VSR with international network.	Flemish local governments through newsletter, LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook. External actors: UVCW, Brulocalis, SPW, organisations from civil society, private sector and academia International network: UCLG, CIB, CEMR, Platforma, UN-DESA, UN-Habitat, ESDN, LGAs who plan to produce VSR in 2024	Preference to communicate in June, when VSR and VNR are ready and due for presentation at HLPF. Presents opportunity to share how input to VSR has been taken up in VNR. Add English version of VSR, so that Belgian stakeholders can share in their international network.  The VVSG and the VVP use their own communication channels to communicate to their members. For external actors such as civil society and academia, communication is shared.  Where possible: focus on parts of VSR of interest to certain target groups (e.g. private sector)  Where possible: link communication on VSR to national and regional government communication on VNR
June - October 2023	Link insights of VSR to VVSG work on the context analysis: Include relevant observations and SDG data in the documentation and thematic sheets which the VVSG is preparing to support its members. Furthermore, the VVSG has detailed graphs for all municipalities based on the SDG indicator set for the VSR. This will be forwarded to each local government, along with the inspirational guide on how to use the Agenda 2030 as a framework for the context analysis.  In addition, share all this information with ABB and urge them to include SDGs in their communication and support for local governments (see also recommendation in VSR).	Flemish local governments ABB	In the framework of their multiannual policy cycle, each Flemish local government is required to prepare a context analysis. Based on data, it gives insight into the demographic, ecological, social, economic, ... situation of the municipality. In relation to local elections in 2024, local governments carry out their context analysis between 2023 and 2025.
July 2023	Present the VSR at events at HLPF. Link press release on VSR to chapter on localising the SDGs in the VNR and the important role of local governments.		Press release together with VVP. Attend HLPF.
July 2023	Article on SDG-monitoring and -reporting, in relation to the VSR, in the summer edition of VVSGs monthly magazine	Flemish local governments	include interview with mayor from municipality involved in VSR working group
October 2023	Follow-up in broader network: were the results of the VSR used? Was the report shared? Were there any questions?	UVCW, Brulocalis, SPW, other organisations from civil society, private sector and academia (to be determined)	Ask VVSG communication department to keep an eye on social media of stakeholders.
Second half of 2024	Carry out follow-up after 1 year VSR: effect of VSR? What steps were taken to implement our recommendations?		

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