



Call for participants - Connective Cities virtual Dialogue Event

Strengthening the local implementation of SDGs through local reviews and monitoring

In cooperation with the City of Bonn, 26th, 27th and 29th April 2021

Connective Cities and the City of Bonn are pleased to invite municipal actors to the **virtual dialogue event on strengthening the local implementation of SDGs through local reviews and monitoring** that will take place on 26th, 27th and 29th April 2021.

The event is aimed at German and international municipal actors from municipal administrations, municipal enterprises, civil society, business and academia who are working on different aspects of monitoring and reporting local SDG implementation and strengthening SDG implementation through local reviews and reports.

Connective Cities is organising the event in collaboration with the City of Bonn, which has relevant years of experience in sustainability reports and is eager to share its own experience on localising the SDGs through its recently published Voluntary Local Review (October 2020) and how to link the SDGs to the city strategy.

Background

In recent decades, there has been growing international recognition of the importance of local and regional governments (LRGs) in sustainable development. LRGs play a key role in contributing to the implementation of the entire 2030 Agenda and are essential partners for monitoring and reporting on the progress in localising SDGs. As the OECD states, “beyond SDG 11¹, an estimated 65% of the 169 targets will not be reached without engagement of local and regional governments” (OECD 2019). LRGs have direct access to the needs of citizens and as frontline responders can play a catalytic role in improving the achievement of the SDGs (European Union 2019a).

UN Member States have to “conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels²” (United Nations 2020). While national governments may consult local actors during the elaboration of their Voluntary National Reviews (VNR), the process is country-driven and focuses on national efforts (UCLG et al. 2020). Therefore, some cities and regions have taken the lead and have become increasingly engaged in this review process by developing Voluntary Local Reviews (VLR) based on local data and localised indicators. New York City and three Japanese municipalities were among the first to elaborate a VLR in 2018, with the aim of contributing to and complementing the information and data provided by their respective national governments to the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (UNHLPF) (UCLG et al. 2020).

In 2019, the UNHLPF witnessed the creation of the VLR Community of Practice and the signing of the VLR Declaration (UCLG et al. 2020). Around 200 cities worldwide have joined the New York City initiative and,

¹ SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

² Member States are required to submit at least two VNRs before 2030

to date, almost 40 VLRs have been published. City hall departments or specialised offices, but also academia, research institutions, citizens associations and civil society initiatives have played a key role in elaborating such reports (UCLG et al. 2020). VLRs are part of a voluntary process and there is no universally agreed structure yet, but their development represents more than a monitoring and reporting tool. VLRs allow local governments to listen to citizens' needs and reflect them in policymaking, generate self-reflection processes, enable a data-driven process that can be used for actions plans, and highlight the importance of local SDG implementation in the global debate on sustainable development (Koike et al. 2020).

Since 2015, more LRGs have committed to the localisation of the SDGs. However monitoring and reporting on SDG implementation remains complex as local disaggregated³ indicators are incomplete or unavailable, or there are no clear systems for collecting information. So far, different organisations within and outside the UN System have collected and provided information and guidelines in order to bridge the information gap and help cities to overcome data management challenges (UCLG et al. 2020). Currently, there is a very diverse and valuable basis of experiences, benefits, challenges and lessons learnt among LRGs on monitoring and reporting on SDG implementation. Therefore, an international exchange on this topic within the framework of Connective Cities is a relevant opportunity for promoting peer-to-peer learning and sharing of experiences and best practices across regions.

Thematic focus of the dialogue event

In order to discuss the different aspects of strengthening the local implementation of SDGs through local reviews and monitoring, the Connective Cities dialogue event will focus on three specific aspects:

- **Data availability and data collection systems:** to complement nationally collected data and bridge its gaps, cooperation with civil society, academia and businesses can support the identification of additional suitable indicators to ensure the quality and regular updating of SDG reports. E.g., by strengthening skills to better identify and use existing data.
- **Data-driven policy development and contribution to different levels of governance:** Local SDG reporting and data-driven information can help LRGs to assess status, adapt strategies and policies, and improve government capacities at all levels. E.g., identifying good practice examples from LRGs and their associations can support learning among the community of practice.
- **Quality citizen dialogue and stakeholder engagement:** Data-driven local SDG reporting can be used to improve communication with citizens and raise awareness of the SDGs among citizens, engage different urban actors, make the municipality's progress in SDG implementation more visible, and spark interest in accelerating action towards sustainable development. E.g., by defining a common language or using SDG-data in participative and stakeholder engagement processes.

Objectives of a dialogue event

The main objective of a dialogue event is to facilitate the exchange of experiences and mutual learning based on **good practice examples** of municipal actors with different local conditions. The focus is mainly on pragmatic solutions and approaches that can be applied and/or adapted to different regional contexts.

³ Information can be disaggregated "by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in the national context" (SDG Target 17.18)

A dialogue event also provides a space for **in-depth discussion of current challenges** around the theme of the event and supports the **joint development of innovative solutions for sustainable urban development**. This is the first step in what we call a “Connective Cities learning process”. Ideally, therefore, the project ideas developed within the framework of a dialogue event will be further **implemented in the respective home communities** or within the framework of existing or new thematic municipal partnerships. To this end, Connective Cities can support through follow-up activities such as project planning workshops, expert missions, webinars, or study tours. The last step of a learning process is to support a municipality with peer advice regarding external or third party financing to enable the implementation of a project resulting from this learning experience.

Target group

The virtual dialogue event will be a **highly interactive workshop** with municipal actors, including representatives of civil society, academia and business. Ideally, **project managers** working in this thematic area (e.g. VLR coordinators, local sustainability staff with monitoring functions) will be able to discuss in detail the projects and ideas implemented or planned in their municipality.

Around two third of the participants will be presenting projects on how they strengthen the local SDG implementation through local reviews and monitoring in their countries. The rest of participants are expected to come from municipalities that are willing but have not necessarily started their work on the topic yet and could use this opportunity to develop ideas with this goal with the support of other peers. With a mix of project presentations, peer-to-peer consultations focusing on current challenges in this area and finally the space to develop joint project ideas generated from such interactions, we hope to support an intense and productive knowledge exchange.

Participation and contact

If you wish to participate and actively contribute to the dialogue event with a good practice or project example of your organisation, we warmly invite you to apply for a participant spot at the event. To do so, **please send us an email** with your name, function and organisation, as well as with a brief description of the project you would like to present. We welcome **delegations of two experts** working respectively on the topic, one of the participants may also represent other relevant actors from civil society, private sector or academia. The event is limited to a **maximum of 35 participants** and the deadline for application is **March 19, 2021**.

If you have any questions about the event or the participation process, we encourage you to contact us:
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Connective Cities at a glance

The international community of practice - Connective Cities - has been bringing together urban actors from city administrations, civil society, academia and the private sector since 2013. Connective Cities is a cooperation project of the German Association of Cities (Deutscher Städtetag), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), and Engagement Global with its Service Agency Communities in One World (EG). For more information, please visit: www.connective-cities.net

Factsheet: All information at a glance

Date	26 th , 27 th and 29 th April 2021
Duration	3 virtual sessions of 3.5 hours each, including breaks and networking activities
Language	English
Thematic focus	<p>The event will focus on the following aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data availability and data collection systems: to complement nationally collected data, support the identification of additional suitable indicators and ensure the quality and regular updating of SDG reports; • Data-driven policy development and contribution to different levels of governance: to assess status, adapt strategies and policies, and improve government capacities at all levels; • Quality citizen dialogue and stakeholder engagement: to improve communication with citizens, engage different urban actors, and arouse interest in accelerating action towards sustainable development.
Criteria for participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical perspective and first-hand experience of municipal strategies and projects in strengthening the local implementation of SDGs through local reviews and monitoring; • Presentation of a local good practice example or a related challenges; • Willingness to engage in an exchange on current needs and challenges in this thematic area.
Expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • German and international practitioners will present their experiences, share their knowledge and discuss the challenges they have faced on the topic.
Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate a practice-oriented exchange between German and international practitioners active in strengthening the local implementation of SDGs through local reviews and monitoring; • Facilitate peer-to-peer learning; • Foster the development of concrete project ideas.
City delegations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideally, a city is represented by two participants • At least one of the two participants should represent a relevant department of the municipality; the second participant may represent other relevant urban actors from civil society, private sector or academia.

In cooperation with:

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