Synergies between the Sustainable Development Goals and the National Recovery and Resilience Plans – Best Practices from Local and Regional Authorities
Integration of SDGs: overview

The EU has gradually included the SDGs into the European Semester but, despite the progress made:
• Lack of a comprehensive strategy addressing the gaps to the EU’s achievement of the SDGs;
• Weaknesses of the SDG indicator set and monitoring methodology;
• Procedures even more complex and time-consuming with the enlargement of the Semester’s scope;
• SDGs not mentioned in the guidance provided by the European Commission to Member States for drafting their NRRPs;
• Very limited consideration for the territorial dimension in the design of the NRRPs;
• Insufficient consideration for LRAs in the implementation of the NRRPs;
• Persisting challenges limiting the application of the SDGs at local level.
• Widened persisting differences in SDG performance across and within EU Member States

Overview of EU progress towards the SDGs over the past five years (2022)

Integration of SDGs: key study findings, national level

• Overall, there is a lack of integration of the SDGs into the 26 NRRPs analysed;
• The SDGs do not seem to be perceived in the NRRPs as a coherent framework for sustainable recovery at the national level;
• The majority of Member States merely mention the SDGs implicitly with very few Member States explicitly and clearly linking NRRP components to the SDGs;
• The overall level of integration is rather low, with the highest score reached in the economic SDGs (but below 50%) and the lowest in the two political SDGs (28%), showing little interest in the NRRPs to improve the role and the functioning of LRAs and foster cooperation and coordination across different levels of government;
• The use of SDG indicators in the NRRPs is limited to very few Member States, and for only a few SDGs, limiting both comparability between the plans as well as effective monitoring of their contribution to progress towards the SDGs.
Integration of SDGs: key lessons from LRAs

Five case studies analysed:
- Flanders and Ghent municipality (Belgium),
- Tallin (Estonia),
- Region Provence Alpes Cote d'Azur (France),
- Baden Wurtenberg and Stuttgart and Mannheim municipalities (Germany),
- Azores (Portugal).

Moreover, several measures in the five NRRPs could support and finance the implementation of projects and interventions at local level in line with the local SDG strategies.

- Setting-up clear objectives and targets and a strategy based on a long-term policy vision;
- Actively involving stakeholders;
- Adopting an effective bottom-up approach;
- Establishing an efficient governance structure;
- Developing a dedicated budget;
- Setting-up a well-structured monitoring system;
- Aligning local, national and regional strategies.
Recommendations

- The EC should continue to **improve integration of the SDGs in the European Semester** and develop a **structured SDG implementation strategy**
- A **stronger alignment between the EU's governance systems** in economic, social and environmental matters
- **Better LRAs inclusion in the Semester governance**
- Establishing a body for **structured stakeholder engagement in the implementation of the SDGs**
- The EC should consider **extending the SDGs beyond the cohesion policy funds**
- The **monitoring system needs to be reinforced**
- Member States are called on to **adopt SDG indicators to monitor the implementation of the NRRPs**
- Member States need to **actively involve LRAs in the implementation phases of the NRRPs**
- The EC and CoR could organise a **joint forum on the implementation of the RRF** to monitor the involvement of LRAs within the NRRPs
- Introduce an **EU sustainability award** to stimulate LRAs to adopt and implement SDG strategies
- LRAs should **use the SDG framework** as an explicit and formal reference for **budget procedures**
- LRAs should establish **knowledge partnerships and collaboration** with the scientific community, civil society and private sector
- **Direct incentives for financial and technical support** for LRAs should be set-up (at EU and national level)