



Creating citizenship: the SDGs as an opportunity for all

by Carla Rey

Organizers



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AICCRE - Italian Association of the Council of Municipalities and European Regions

ASviS - Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development

CEMR - Council of Municipalities and European Regions

CIPE - Interministerial Committee for Economic Planning

CLGF - Commonwealth Local Government Forum

CSAR - Centre for Studies on Russian Arts

DEF - The Italian government's programme for Economics and Finance

DeLoG - Development Partners Network on Decentralization and Local Governance

DG DEVCO - Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development of the European Commission

EDLS - European Days of Local Solidarity

FMDV - World Fund for City Development

GCAP - Global Call to Action Against Poverty

GSE - Energy Services Manager

HLPF - High Level Political Forum

IAEG-SDGs - Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals Indicators

IAO - Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Engineering

ICT - Information and Communication Technologies

INGV - National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology

ISPRA - Higher Institute for Environmental Protection and Research

ISS - Higher Institute of Health

ISTAT - National Institute of Statistics

KFW - Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (Credit Institute for Reconstruction)

MAECI - Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

MATTM - Ministry of the Environment and the Protection of Land and Sea

MIUR - Ministry of Education, University and Research

MPI - Max Planck Institute for Information Technology

OECD - Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

OGP - Open Government Partnership

NGO - Non-Governmental Organization

OSS - Sustainable Development Objectives

SMEs - Small and Medium Enterprises

PNR - National Reform Programme

PON - National Operational Programme

SDGs - Sustainable Development Goals (OSS - Sustainable Development Goals)

SNSvS - National Strategy for Sustainable Development

TAP Network - Transparency, Accountability, Participation Network

UCLG - United Cities and Local Governments

UNCDF - UN Capital Development Fund

UNDP - United Nations Development Programme

VNR - Voluntary National Review



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I am pleased to be here with you today to reaffirm the importance of a cohesive and strong Europe, capable of interpreting in the best possible way the specific characteristics of its territories and playing an increasingly important role at international level.

I have the honour to be the President of Emilia-Romagna, the Italian Region that in the last five years has been first in terms of growth in the country, and to represent both AICCRE and CEMR, which together promote collaboration between European Union countries. I often quote a paradigmatic datum: in 1950 Europeans were 20% of the world population. With the current demographic pace in 2050 they risk becoming only 7%. It is therefore clear that those who encourage the raising of walls and relaxing European cooperation, are proposing a future in which every single European country will be so weak in the face of global competition that it will become irrelevant. On the contrary, we hope that, while Brexit has taken Great Britain out of the European Union, other countries may soon join. In addition to maintaining and strengthening European integration, it is interesting to observe the international dimension, because it is the chessboard on which we can forge new alliances and partnerships for the future. About two years ago in Abidjan, the CEMR and its African counterpart created important relationships, and I believe that this is positive because the well-being of Africa and Europe are intrinsically linked. The merit of **Venice City Solutions 2030**, which within this framework unites representatives of local, national and international institutions, is to focus attention on priority issues for our future: first of all, the environmental issue, which has become predominant in political agendas around the world, being a topic that knows no borders or political colour. Last year I attended the Global

Climate Forum in San Francisco as President of the Emilia-Romagna Region and the CEMR. In this context, the Region that I represent has made a commitment to reduce air pollution by 40% by 2030, a decision considered important given that a third of the Italian population lives on its territory and where the greatest part of the national wealth is produced. This is why the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030 assume their importance, because they allow us to cluster the interventions, give decisive answers to the citizens, and avoid dispersing forces and energy in myriad fragmented actions and proposals.

Environmental issues should be read in conjunction with employment, which enables people to live full and dignified lives. It is necessary to rethink our development model, to ensure that the growth needed to redistribute resources is sustainable and respectful of the planet and human wellbeing, and is able to guarantee job prospects, welcoming the digital revolution that will lead future generations to carry out activities that we do not yet know. We must not fear modernization, but we must bend it to human needs. Europe, once again, is reaching out to us by working to make our continent competitive at international level, also in the fields of Artificial Intelligence and Big Data. The Emilia-Romagna Region, for example, has just received important European funding to create two super computers that allow the fast interpretation of Big Data, an operation that will put it straight at fifth place in the world, among the Chinese and American giants of research and technology.

Venice City Solutions 2030 this year addresses an important and complex issue, which concerns the consensus of citizens in a historical moment characterized by extremely complex challenges.

This issue is close to my heart and at the same

time generates apprehension for me: the dramatic economic crisis that has hit us after 60 years of prosperity, and the new migrations, which are pushing people from difficult lands to leave their homes to seek opportunities in Europe, have been interpreted by some political forces as levers on which to stimulate fear and a sense of insecurity of its citizens. The concern is that, in the age of populism, what is said is more important than what is done. We need to “do”, because if the condition of people improves, those who incite anger have less chance of success. For our part, we need to rethink the relationship between politics and public opinion, so that it is increasingly oriented towards sharing and transparency. I am convinced, for example, that in order to make up for the democratic deficit in European politics, the Presidency of the European Commission must be sooner or later directly elected by the citizens. I therefore find the focus of this edition extremely topical, and at the same time I think it is admirable to reflect during these days on how to bring citizens closer to the institutions.

I would like to thank all the participants, especially those who have come from afar, because their presence makes us believe that our efforts are heading in the right direction. On the other hand, history reminds us that regimes have come to power thanks to public squares crowded with people pointing to someone to decide for them. Each time, however, reality has turned out to be studded with choices that have worsened social and economic conditions and reduced freedoms, even leading to the horror of war. In our own small way, we try to add a piece to the dialogue, sharing and cooperation, so that citizens are encouraged to participate. This is the way to strengthen democracies and it is a challenge we cannot lose.

Stefano Bonaccini - President of the Emilia-Romagna Region, President of AICCRE and CEMR



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IN TRO DU CTI ON

Venice City Solutions 2030 is an annual event that presents several key issues for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹ of Agenda 2030 at local level, with particular attention to the role of local governments as main players in the localization of SDGs. It is organized by AICCRE, UNDP, UN-Habitat, UN SDG Action Campaign, and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)² and is part of the “Platforma” project funded by the European Commission.

The 2019 edition of the event focused on how SDGs can create citizenship and promote the values of Agenda 2030, and on those tools that bring citizens closer to the Development Goals. The Venice event aims to respond to the concerns of mayors, governors and local government officials about the estrangement and disaffection of citizens from the institutions, and the difficulties in understanding the added value offered by public services, as well as their functioning. This is a trend that risks undermining confidence in the Public Administration and generating the risk of being poorly informed, misled and manipulated. Local governments play a leading role in the building of citizenship and in the strengthening of that fundamental social contract that binds the citizen to the institutions, and which must be renewed through innovative methods, such as new communication strategies, initiatives aimed at transparency and accountability and, above all, a strong political will.

Venice City Solutions gathered together more than 162 participants, coming from 22 countries, representing local administrations, networks,

‘think tanks’, NGOs, companies, universities and research centres. The 2019 edition took place over two days. On October 24th the event opened with the celebration of the United Nations Day, which was also attended by high school students. At the same time the first Italian workgroup dedicated to local and regional authorities was held, comparing itself with international realities on the status of implementation of the SDGs and moderated by OECD. On the same day, the Ca’ Foscari University of Venice oversaw the ‘think tank’ of the preparatory art workshop for the plenary session. On the 25th, the discussion on Sustainable Development Goals as a tool to bring citizens closer to institutions and to rethink local sustainable development models was opened, with representatives of local and regional governments, national states, NGOs, civil society associations, universities and the private sector.

The present document aims to position itself in the debate that sees Agenda 2030 increasingly as a key player in local planning, and to gather useful recommendations to fill the lacuna encountered so far in the implementation path, so that they can be presented at the High Level Political Forum in 2020.

The first chapter opens with an illustration of the multi-governance and multi-stakeholder strategy adopted by AICCRE to enhance the contribution of the Agenda in institutional forums and among citizens. Subsequently, we proceeded to outline the path undertaken by the Italian Government with the formulation of the National Sustainable Development Strategy (SNSvS) and to assess the critical issues and aspects on which to focus attention at the national level to ensure full ownership of the Agenda in the various levels of government. The regional and local dimension was addressed in depth through a review of the

¹ For brevity purposes, and in order to facilitate immediate reader understanding, the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030 will often be referred to in English as SDGs, Sustainable Development Goals.

² AICCRE - Italian Association of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, UNDP - United Nations Development Programme and UCLG - Union of Cities and Local Governments. UN SDG Action Campaign is the action campaign created by special initiative of the United Nations General Secretariat in order to support the member states at international level and the United Nations in the implementation activities of the SDGs.

status of adoption of the Agenda in the Italian regions, and the analysis of the institutional steps that led to the formulation of Regional Sustainable Development Strategies in Italy. In the same chapter, ample space was devoted to good practices of localization of SDGs, presented during the 2019 edition of **Venice City Solutions** by local government representatives from almost all over the world, whose testimonies show that Agenda 2030 is a flexible tool for sustainable development, able to adapt to many different contexts. The third chapter aims to briefly shift the focus to the ability of art to create a sense of belonging and to facilitate the relationship with younger citizens, while the fourth chapter reports on the discussions of the working groups that fed into the discussion on the second day of the conference. The topics dealt with concerned four fundamental areas for the creation of citizenship: open government and transparency in administration, the involvement of the new generations, the contribution of social and economic players in building shared values and mutual trust as an indispensable glue in the relationship between citizens and institutions. The document concludes with the recommendations made by the participants of the event, developed in the light of the analyses carried out and corroborated by the ideas that emerged during the debate, which will be brought to the United Nations High Level Political Forum in New York with AICCRE's reflections.

"If Agenda 2030 doesn't happen at local level, it won't happen at all" - Diana Lopez Camarazana, Head of Local Governments and Decentralization Unit, UN-Habitat

When UN-Habitat and UNDP started working on Agenda 2030 in 2014, and in particular on its implementation at local level, we never imagined

that Regions and Cities would use it as an actual local planning tool. Our aim is to continue working in this direction, because we are convinced that if Agenda 2030 is not adopted at local level, it will not be adopted at all. The Development Goals must become tools that can transform decision-making mechanisms, and represent an opportunity for multi-level dialogue between central, regional and local governments. In this regard, the presence of local authorities at the HLPF and the Local Government Forum, organized as part of the UN General Assembly's high-level meetings, has been a powerful innovation in the Agenda 2030 governance process. **Venice City Solutions** was the ideal context to ask challenging questions to which the demonstrations of good practices of implementation of Agenda 2030 at local level have tried to give answers.

"The all-round governance of Agenda 2030 - Sergio Mercuri, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Italian Government

The presence of a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at an event of this nature indicates the willingness of the organizers of **Venice City Solutions** to analyze the governance of the implementation of Agenda 2030 in its different facets. The Agenda has a transformative power, not only because it affects our daily life, but because it is able to generate organizational and managerial changes in the way it is implemented, where a leading role is played by local authorities.

"A transformative diplomacy for sustainable development" - Emilia Saiz, Secretary General, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

The model of diplomacy to which events like **Venice City Solutions** are inspired, and which we, as UCLG, promote, is transformative diplomacy. Such an approach, multilateral and multi-level, proposes a change in the way communities perceive their role in the daily lives of citizens and, at the same time, promotes collective thinking, capable of making the future more sustainable for humanity and the planet. Agenda 2030 can trigger the transformation that we need to achieve sustainability, because more than any other document or international agreement it is global and universal in nature, while at the same time it is nevertheless still anchored concretely to a local reality.

The three topics that revolve around the objectives of Agenda 2030, and which we must oversee in order to favour sustainability concerns: the safeguarding of common assets, beginning with the supply of base services to citizens, which are the responsibility of local and regional governments and fundamental and inclusive to sustainable development; the ongoing ecological transition, and the progressive shifting from an economy based on the production of tangible goods to an economy based on creativity and intangible goods, with the consequent repercussions on the future of employment, and, ultimately, a change in relationship with citizens, and the necessary recovery in belief, capable of reinventing the democracies and thinking of a system of government not just limited within national borders. On these topics, UCLG is trying to take forward a debate at local and international level, together with other organizations, committed to hearing the petitions of civil society with the formulation of recommendations for the international community to present to the United Nations and the European Union's institutions. In order to implement **Venice Solutions** all over the

world, a space open to dialogue and to reciprocal education, it is necessary to have the participation and the contribution of all, so that a wave of positive actions is created capable of locating the SDGs in every territory.



Photo by Stefano Cola



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THE CITY VISION 2030: CRE strategy

1.1 From the Sustainable Development Goals to decentralized cooperation: the multi-governance and multi-stakeholder approach of AICCRE

Multi-governance approach

Agenda 2030 and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the new Urban Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction and the Addis Abeba Agenda for Action on Financing for Development, represent a global response to current challenges and a first approach to a common international strategy. Climate change, social and economic inequalities, poverty, migration flows, are just some examples of problems that cannot be tackled by a single country, but which require the joint work of Member States and local authorities around the world.

As also reiterated in the Bucharest Declaration on Fostering Partnerships for Sustainable Development of 19 April 2019¹, local and regional governments have a key role to play in the implementation of global agendas, just as their National Associations have become fundamental to facilitating the process of accompanying cities in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. AICCRE works in partnership with CEMR and the “Platforma” network to train local and regional authorities and lead them to taking international cooperation actions, while Agenda 2030 has become for many countries, including Italy, a tool to accompany cities and regions to decentralized cooperation. The

European Commission has also recognized the value of local authorities and their Associations, and since 2015 DG DEVCO² has established a successful partnership with “Platforma” to improve decentralized cooperation between European local authorities. Talking about Agenda 2030 means referring to a global context, not only in terms of objectives and targets, but also in terms of cooperative partnerships and multi-level governance.

In this report we will try to summarize the process undertaken by AICCRE in implementing and placing SDGs at international, national, regional and local level. AICCRE’s strategy started in 2015, and it took three years of work to reach the **Venice City Solutions** 2030 objective: a platform for international meeting and exchange on SDGs addressed to local authorities, whose participation in the governance of the Agenda represented the starting point of the reflections started by AICCRE. Local, regional, national and European institutions, in fact, must interact not only at the level of actions and the sharing of objectives, but also in the planning of the Agenda.

A first contact has been established with the Italian Municipalities and Regions. Italian local authorities have never been the main players of cooperation at national level, with some exceptions. This is due to the fact that the competencies and resources needed to undertake exchange actions with third countries are mostly regional. In a country of more than 7900 small and medium sized municipalities, with 10 metropolitan cities and 107 provinces, the competencies of local governments have changed over time, but adequate training in development cooperation has not always been associated with the new responsibilities; or insufficient resources have been allocated to the assigned competencies.

¹ The Declaration was adopted at the International Conference 2030 Agenda: Partnerships for Sustainable Development, organized during the Romanian Presidency of the European Council.

² DG DEVCO - Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development of the European Commission.

For this reason, the culture of cooperation has not yet taken root among Italian municipalities and for AICCIRE it has been necessary to undertake a path of accompaniment and training on the subject.

It began with a series of territorial meetings (at least 10, involving 360 representatives) on the subject of cooperation from which it emerged that, in the territories, non-governmental organizations and many 'Third Sector' players had already been active for years without the support of local authorities and had managed cooperation projects with several developing countries. However, the lack of dialogue between institutional players and Third Sector players did not allow for the promotion of good practices on a large scale, nor did it involve municipalities and citizens. It is important to underline how Agenda 2030 and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals have been instrumental in accelerating the Italian discussion platform. Its global nature, in terms of objectives and language - at the same time concretely local - considering that its application requires a bottom-up sharing process, has been crucial in raising awareness among municipalities on the meaning and importance of building common projects of decentralized cooperation. At the same time, the Agenda has strengthened the concept of multi-level governance, encouraging the beginning of dialogue between cities and regions, the State and the European Union.

The effort to inform mayors about the link between the National Strategy for the Voluntary National Report 2017, the regional funds allocated for this strategy, and the implementation plans at local level, proved to be crucial because it spurred municipalities to undertake actions aligned to the SDGs, without waiting for their own Region to implement its own strategy in line with the national one. There are, in fact, plans in line with the SDGs in municipalities belonging to regions without

their own strategy. This gave us the possibility to understand that the training activity on SDGs dedicated to the municipalities, thanks to the @UCLGlearning models, was useful and had to be adapted to our national forum. The discussions on the Development Goals began in 2016 from the bottom up, at local and regional level³, and continued in 2017 at national and European level. From the outset, efforts were made to stimulate an active role from local authorities and, at the same time, to make the central government aware of the role that municipalities and regions must play in development and external actions⁴.

To ensure the sustainability of the actions dedicated to Agenda 2030, we had to build a form of permanent dialogue between all levels of governance, which was not readily accepted. While local authorities were showing an increasing interest in the Sustainable Development Goals, the central government was not interested in dialoguing directly with cities on Agenda 2030 issues, leaving the task to the Regions. The National Strategy was however presented at the United Nations High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in New York, after a brief consultation of the Conference of Regions in the Environment Commission and the hearing of the Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASviS), which mostly represents the world of environmental research. But this Voluntary National Report, although leaning more in accordance to the demands of the SDGs, did not recognize the role that cities should have in the strategy planning process. AICCIRE therefore began to talk with senators and deputies of the Republic and of the relevant committees to draw the attention of the national government. Finally, institutional interaction involved MEPs, inviting them to pay attention to the need to recognize the

³ For more information, see the 'Platforma' National Multi-Stakeholder Dialogues on Development Summary report, August 1, 2018, p. 15.

⁴ Ibid, p.8

role of local authorities in Agenda 2030 and, in the face of the legitimacy of the European Parliament, to provide adequate resources for decentralized cooperation.

Multi-stakeholder approach

From discussions with the institutions, AICCRE has moved on to discussions with the various stakeholders in society, seeking to create new inclusive forms of partnership with the private sector, universities, the Third Sector, associations and civil society. Dialogue with NGOs, the most active and professional players in the panorama of Italian international cooperation, was considered a priority, given the need to establish contacts with cities and municipalities that have not yet developed cooperation projects. The approach with Third Sector players came about slowly, due to the need to build new points of contact between players who did not use the same language: NGOs saw local authorities as an expression of bureaucratic processes that hinder cooperation, while local authorities considered non-governmental organizations as structures with which it was not possible to build any common activity. Agenda 2030, which represents global objectives and languages common to the different souls of society, was the key to creating new relationships and new partnerships.

The first major challenge was to make the Third Sector understand that the principle of sustainability, which has always been a priority for the players of cooperation, does not concern only some goals, but all 17 Objectives, and that the Agenda itself requires that each of them is approached according to an overall and non-fragmentary vision. Environmental sustainability

issues have always been of particular interest to NGOs and fair trade stakeholders, but the discussion with AICCRE has made explicit the need to approach these issues by adopting a holistic vision that interconnects with all the SDGs. The Third Sector has an innate sensitivity to issues relating to the planet, but inevitably also deals with the issues of the person and prosperity. Peace is the common link between these players and local authorities. Goal 11: resilient cities, is transversal to many actions that go beyond local sustainable development. The approach to realities working with different perspectives also finds a point of contact with the need to plan new urban models.

The second challenge has involved the adoption of a new common language between local authorities and the Third Sector. It is not easy to create mutual trust, but it is possible to find consensus on perspectives, and the Agenda supports us in this exercise because it clearly defines objectives and targets to be reached, identifying them in the same way and with the same indicators for all partners. At the same time, it makes clear the need to create a broader partnership, which must involve both NGOs and local authorities. It is for this reason that players previously ignored or avoided have become part of AICCRE's dialogue on Agenda 2030. We can say that the local approach to SDGs has brought the Third Sector closer to local governments, requiring their active participation⁵.

The same approach has concerned the world of research and universities, which has always been very responsive to sustainability. They have set the study work mainly on goals related to environmental issues, favouring contacts at national level, directly with the Government and large companies, without taking into due

⁵ Ibid p.13

consideration the dialogue and exchange with local authorities and micro enterprises. In order to get in touch with some representatives of the academic world, AICCRE has become a partner of ASviS, bringing to the National Festival good practices tested with local authorities and contributing to the drafting of urban reports related to the National Strategy for the Voluntary National Report 2019⁶. The dialogue has also been extended to Universities that are investing in Agenda 2030, first of all the University of Ca' Foscari of Venice, partner of Venice City Solutions 2030, and the University of San Marino⁷. With the latter, summer school experiences dedicated to the themes of decentralized cooperation have been launched to bring young people closer to the realities of local authorities.

Finally, the private sector was also to be involved in AICCRE's dialogues, and it is once again Agenda 2030 that promotes an innovative partnership that is not easy to apply. If we consider that there has always been a strong distrust between public administrations and the business world. On the one hand, companies complain about the lack of sensitivity of public administrators to facilitate economic investments in their territories, using bureaucracy as the most effective measure to put a brake on development, on the other hand the public administration often holds back investment in the belief that it defends the public good from economic speculation. The Agenda shows that it is important to build strong collaborative relationships between different players, pursuing common objectives of sustainable development. The public-private partnership, precisely because it is not yet fully developed, becomes an essential element for achieving SDGs. For some time now, large multinational and national companies

have shown their interest and commitment to sustainability. There is still much to do, but it is the beginning of a worthwhile path that leads to the sharing of common goals. On the other hand, to create this new alliance between the two sectors, we cannot neglect medium and small businesses and their economic activities, as the latter have a greater impact on the local context of the municipalities. A first series of AICCRE researches, in collaboration with the municipalities, have shown examples of innovative approaches to SDGs precisely by small local companies.

Civil society has been invited to participate in collective meetings: the European Days of Local Solidarity (EDLS)⁸, an initiative of "Platforma", was an excellent opportunity to invite citizens to inform them as to what the territories were doing in terms of decentralized cooperation, together with schools, research institutes, NGOs and companies, and represented an important collective moment of reflection and sharing of the SDGs and their effect on everyday life. Talking about decentralized cooperation is not easy, especially if citizens do not accept to take on board the stimulus and active participation that the localization of the Agenda's objectives requires⁹.

Having successively built, from the bottom up and not at the same time, the levels of dialogue with the different players involved and having consolidated these relations in the time needed to create a climate of mutual trust, this has allowed AICCRE members to establish a national exchange platform whose role cannot be considered limited to official meetings. For this reason, it was necessary to create a dedicated discussion area, fed by the entrance of new subjects and by the

⁶ ASviS, Urban Agenda for Sustainable Development, Report No. 1 July, pp. 55-72.

⁷ Varini R., *Designing Civic Consciousness/ABC for the reconstruction of civil consciousness*, Quodlibet editions, p. 237

⁸ In English European Days of Local Solidarity (see table acronyms and abbreviations). More information in the section of the 'Platforma' website dedicated to European Days of Local Solidarity.

⁹ Platforma, 10 years of 'PLATFORMA'; 10 years of action!, 26 September 2018, p.21

continuous learning of the Agenda issues. This activity took three years of work, during which there was not always a constant interest by the participants¹⁰. The involvement of the central government through its parliamentarians, for example, did not have the expected result: the role of AICCRE and local authorities in the national strategy was recognized only after the launch of the **Venice City Solutions** platform, but from the beginning the effectiveness of the tool was highlighted by the continuous demand for new stakeholders.

To understand the long training course on Agenda 2030 issues carried out by AICCRE, it is necessary to remember the opening context: as reported in the Unipolis Foundation survey (BOX 1.1), in January 2017, 77% of Italians did not know what the Sustainable Development Goals were. Such a change of cultural approach by local governments and stakeholders could not have been completed in a shorter time. It is clear that even today there are still some issues that need to be addressed and that can represent a weak point for the achievement of the SDGs. The main one, in Italy and mostly at national level, which concerns not only the public sector but often also the private sector and the world of research, is the tendency to consider sustainability as a purely environmental issue, risking paying insufficient attention to the other 4 Ps of the Agenda (person, prosperity, partnership and peace, understood as transparent administration). If at the beginning the push of the Ministry of the Environment was fundamental for the development of the Italian National Strategy, the subsequent passage to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers for the coordination of implementation policies provided the assurance that certain issues were not favoured over the overall approach required

by Agenda 2030. However, with the subsequent electoral mandate, the coordination functions returned to the Ministry of the Environment. In this case it will be appropriate to monitor that we do not fall back into the so-called “Greta effect” in which, following the alarm launched by Thunberg, we focus only on some SDGs leaving aside the others, considered secondary because they are less known in the collective imagination, and for this reason we risk frustrating the holistic approach of Agenda 2030.

Survey conducted in January 2017 for the Unipolis Foundation on approximately 1.600 people.

It should be noted that the overwhelming majority of Italians (85%) are in favour of policies for sustainable development, a percentage that still rises even more among young people. In particular, 71% of young people aged 15-24 and 72% of adults aged 35-44 consider policies in favour of environmental protection a priority, even at the cost of lower economic growth, compared to a share of 58% among the over-65s. One third of 45-54 year olds consider that priority should be given to economic growth, even at the expense of the environment, a position shared by only 28% of young people and less than a quarter of people living in large cities and 22% of those with high educational qualifications. Finally, it should be noted that the percentage of those who, at the beginning of 2017, declared themselves in favour of sustainable development policies, increased by eight points compared to 2016, compared to a clear reduction of those who had not expressed an opinion on the subject a year earlier. Only few Italians, however, are aware of Agenda 2030. In fact, the percentage of those who are “little” and “not at all” informed is 77%, a much higher value than those who declare themselves “fairly informed” (17%) and “very

¹⁰ Platforma, Summary report - National Multi-Stakeholder Dialogues on Development, 1 August 2018, p. 17.

informed” (5%). A quarter of those over 65 are informed about Agenda 2030, compared to 16% of young people aged 15-24; in addition, males are more informed than females, as are people with educational qualifications.¹¹

¹¹ Unipolis, The banality of fear, work, perceptions and insecurities in Europe, XI Edition, February 2019, p.33



Photo by Michael Gaida from Pixabay

1.2 The international laboratory Venice City Solutions 2030

Only after having built up the different levels of national dialogue with stakeholders, in 2018, an international exchange platform involving local governments on Agenda 2030 and decentralized cooperation was created: **Venice City Solutions 2030**. The first edition was launched in Venice and has become an annual event, which brings together as co-organizers UNDP, UN-Habitat and UCLG, through Platforma, and is addressed to governments and local authorities around the world with the invitation to develop strategies to achieve the objectives of Agenda 2030 and to develop decentralized cooperation projects.¹²

Venice City Solutions represents - within the panorama of the SDG's discussion at local level - a place dedicated not only to the exchange of the best international experiences, but also a place where cities and regions of the world can make recommendations to United Nations Agencies and national governments, so that the common effort to implement SDGs leads to the expected results. Through this event, AICCRe is committed even more vigorously to pursue the objectives of Agenda 2030, implementing the local strategic planning of the Sustainable Development Goals, in line with the national strategy, and continuing to train public administration and citizenship officials to ensure its success. This experience has served above all to bridge the large gap in the discussions between local authorities and central government, which up until then was unresolved due to the lack of interaction between the central level and the local level, often considered more representative of civil society, given its proximity

to communities. The Agenda recognizes the ability of every player to contribute to the success of the strategy, also because the lack of involvement of cities, especially in a country like Italy where there are many municipalities, would risk impeding the achievement of the national strategy objectives.¹³

“65% of the Development Goals of Agenda 2030 can only be achieved with the involvement of all stakeholders in society” - Stefano Marta, Coordinator Territorial Approach SDGs, OECD

The relationship between local authorities and the implementation of Agenda 2030 is of great interest to the OECD. The two key elements guiding this reflection are, on the one hand, the role played by regions and cities in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and, on the other hand, the capacity of SDGs to influence and guide local planning. A direct involvement by local authorities is essential to achieve the ambitious objectives of Agenda 2030. It is suffice to say that, as pointed out by OECD, through the development of an indicator to measure the progress made by regions and cities in adopting the Agenda, 169 targets and 65% of the objectives could not be achieved without the contribution of local authorities and other stakeholders in society. Additionally, observing the state of implementation of the Agenda at local level makes it possible to identify territorial disparities, often hidden by national data. The Sustainable Development Objectives, in turn, provide a global reference framework for the planning of local development interventions and the identification of priorities to be addressed, which take into account economic, environmental and social aspects, and create a common language of reference

¹² Platforma, How local & regional government associations bring the SDGs to live the SDGs, 1 September 2019, p. 25

¹³ Platforma, SDGs: How Europe's towns and regions are taking the lead, 15 June 2018.

favouring the birth and strengthening of innovative partnerships. Secondly, it is worth keeping in mind a peculiar aspect of Italian governance, which recognizes the coordinating role between central and local government to the Regions, which do not always exercise this function correctly, deciding individually the level of involvement of cities in strategic choices. In theory, in fact, the regional level is the guarantor and facilitator of local participation regarding national issues but can also constitute a fragmentation of competencies where a more participatory coordination is lacking

1.2.1. UN High Level Political Forum

Thanks to the success of the first edition of **Venice City Solutions**, since January 2019 a constructive and structured dialogue has begun with the Italian Government, which has recognized the role of local authorities in Agenda 2030 and the role of AICCRE as coordinator of training and research actions on SDGs for Italian municipalities, provinces and regions. As confirmation of this statement of interest, the Italian Government has asked AICCRE to organize the Government Side Event on July 16, 2019 for the United Nations High Level Political Forum in New York, based on the conclusions and recommendations of **Venice City Solutions**, 2018 edition.

In terms of diffusion, the High Level Political Forum in New York remains the reference point - both in terms of content and form - of AICCRE's initiative, which has allowed it to gain visibility at international level. AICCRE brought to the United Nations its first recommendations on "Financing the Sustainable Development Goals at Local

Level", in partnership with the Italian Government, together with the Government of Cameroon, the Kingdom of Morocco and the Republic of Madagascar, together with UNDP, UN-Habitat, UNCDF, UCLG, FMDV¹⁴ and Platforma.

The Side Event brought together representatives of central, local and regional governments to exchange experiences on how different countries are dealing with the financial aspects of the SDG's implementation at local level¹⁵.

Participants were: Xavier Michon for UNCDF; Mariangela Zappia, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations; Sergio Costa, Minister of Environment of the Italian Government; Alamine Ousmane Mey, Minister of Economy and Royal Development of Cameroon; Lalaina Raharimboahangy, Government of Madagascar; Carla Rey, AICCRE Secretary General; Maimunah Mohd Sharif Executive Director of UN-Habitat; Thomas Beloe for SDG Finance Hub; Emilia Saiz, UCLG Secretary General; Stefano Manservigi, Director General of DGDEVCO.

1.2.2 Second edition of Venice City Solutions 2030

The theme of the second edition of **Venice City Solutions** arose from the request of the United Nations to consider an issue that concerns local authorities very closely: the link between citizenship and Sustainable Development Goals.

¹⁴ See table Abbreviations and Acronyms.

¹⁵ More information about the previous edition of Venice City Solutions (2018) can be found at: www.venicecitysolutions.com

The event allowed, initially, the existing experiences of participatory good governance to be identified and provide solutions to restore citizens' trust in local institutions, in the perspective of the implementation of SDGs. Secondly, it allowed the analysis of how cities and regions are implementing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals in their local strategic plans, listening to the Italian experiences and the experiences of countries from all continents¹⁶. Unlike the first edition, whose topic focus was limited to the economic and financial aspects, and of those players present, from central governments to the World Bank, were interested in discussing innovative solutions for finding resources to be allocated to the strategic planning of SDGs, the second edition allowed a widening of the discussion and to privilege goal 17: partnership by objectives, without neglecting the others.

The work took place over two days - on 24 and 25 October - and brought together representatives of national governments, United Nations agencies, international networks of local authorities, representatives of the world of associations, universities, the world of solidarity, culture, NGOs and other territorial representatives. The final recommendations will be presented, once again, at the United Nations High Level Political Forum¹⁷.

"A new budget culture to promote sustainability in policies" - Pier Paolo Baretta, Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Economy and Finance of the Italian Government.

During the last edition of **Venice City Solutions**, I had illustrated the tax incentives and ad hoc funding put in place by the Italian Government to

promote sustainability among local authorities and citizens. This year I would like to focus on the changed political framework at European and national level, which makes possible a reinterpretation of policies in a sustainable key. The European elections of May 2019 saw a vision of the future prevail in Europe that is consistent with the Development Goals of Agenda 2030, around which the new President of the European Commission, Ursula von Der Leyen, focused her inauguration speech. Today, Italy can also count on the presence of three institutional figures who are decisive for launching a European dialogue and aligning its policies with European and international trends: Paolo Gentiloni, former Italian Prime Minister and now one of the main European Commissioners, David Sassoli, President of the European Parliament and Roberto Gualtieri, Minister of Economy and Finance, and for the last ten years, President of the Economic Commission of the European Parliament. It is no coincidence, in fact, that the Italian government has taken the Green New Deal as a point of reference for its policies, making concrete commitments, starting with the allocation of 55 billion in investments aimed at reorienting economic choices with a view to sustainability. This is part of the package of 206 billion that the European Union has made available, and which will be increased in the coming years. Moreover, the Italian Government has decided to reconfirm the options on bonuses and incentives already provided and the Ministry of Economy is launching a new budget culture. This will concern not only the economic mechanisms but also the structure of the budget itself, which will have to picture this new development perspective. The decision to make sustainability the reference point for all of the country's cultural and economic policies coincides with the dramatic nature of events and the placing of this important aspect on the agenda,

¹⁶ UCLG, Towards the localization of the SDGs - 3rd Local and Regional Governments' Report to the HLPF 2019, 2019, p. 46.

¹⁷ The following chapters will describe in detail the work of the 2019 edition.

and also that of public opinion. In particular, these issues are at the centre of interest of the new generations, who in recent months have taken to the streets, peacefully demonstrating and getting politicians to face up to their responsibilities. In addition to the power of civil society, it is worth remembering the role played by local authorities as protagonists and partners in the persons of the mayors and governors, who know the needs of their communities and on which the concrete implementation of these policies depends. Finally, it should be reiterated that the Italian Government's approach to sustainability considers environmental dynamics and social aspects, such as work and people's living conditions, to be closely interlinked. Keeping these two issues together is crucial and it means starting a cultural revolution in which we are personally involved as citizens, while at the same time allowing us to think about the future with a little more confidence, while knowing that the commitment required of politicians is strong and can no longer be postponed.

1.2.3 Venice City Solutions at the VI World Congress of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

The most representative event in the world of local governments: the UCLG World Congress¹⁸, founding partner of the **Venice City Solutions** 2030 laboratory, took place in Durban, South Africa, from 11 to 17 November 2019.

¹⁸ On the UCLG website you can consult the section on World Summit of Local and Regional Leaders.

On November 12th, AICCRE organized a session of the Congress based on the Final Recommendations of **Venice City Solutions** edition 2019, whose speakers were: Johannes Krassnitzer, Director of the Art-GOLD project of UNDP, Diana Lopez, Head of Local Governments and Decentralization Unit of UN-Habitat; Carla Rey, Secretary General of AICCRE and Miquel Rodríguez Planas, who deals with Agenda 2030 for the City of Barcelona. The session organized in Durban allowed AICCRE to bring the discussion in Venice back to a forum formed by thousands of local administrators from all over the world, gathered to discuss issues related to the sustainable development of the territories, including the SDGs of Agenda 2030.

The session "The role of Agenda 2030 in the creation of citizenship. How can local governments use SDGs to connect with their citizens?" saw the continuation of the topic launched by **Venice City Solution** on how local governments can use Agenda 2030 to reconnect with citizens. At the same time, it was recalled that local governments are clamouring for the creation of a global approach to be discussed at the World Urban Forum. Not always, enough space is given to cities and regions in international meetings dedicated to national states. Local governments, on the other hand, are ready to take on their role in the implementation of the SDGs and, for this reason, it is necessary that central governments provide them with implementation and financial instruments. A further consideration discussed in Durban was the need for a change of approach by local governments: society is constantly evolving and technological innovation affects the speed of change. To increase the sense of belonging to the community of their citizens, mayors must therefore learn to use ICT tools on a daily basis.

For **Venice City Solutions**, Durban has been a key point in the SDGs localization strategy, having been

recognized by UCLG as an exchange platform, an ideas laboratory and a discussion centre for local authorities¹⁹ and nominated AICCIRE as the Local4Action Hub. This will further push AICCIRE to develop services and tools dedicated to cities and regions, so that they can accelerate their drive to achieve SDGs by sharing them with national associations of local governments around the world.

¹⁹ UCLG, Fifth Global Report on Decentralization and Local Democracy (GOLD V 2019), The Localization of the Global Agendas: how local action is transforming territories and communities, p. 194.





1.3 Participants

The 2019 edition of **Venice City Solutions 2030** was attended by 162 people from 22 countries, located in 4 different continents: Italy, Saudi Arabia, Australia, Portugal, Cyprus, United States, France, Mexico, Brazil, Czech Republic, Madagascar, Benin, Spain, Greece, Cape Verde, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Belgium, Kenya, Senegal, Germany and the United Kingdom. This number takes into account only those who have filled out the registration form to participate in the event but not the many citizens who, interested and intrigued by the issues addressed during the event in Venice, participated in some of the sessions or the entire initiative, but whose access has not been registered.

It is particularly interesting to note the presence of 45 students from the Liceo Benedetti-Tommaseo in Venice, who not only actively took part in the workshop session "In search of the invisible: a sense of belonging" - the collective exercise organized by Cà Foscari University together with local artists, but were also involved in the organizational activities as staff of the event.



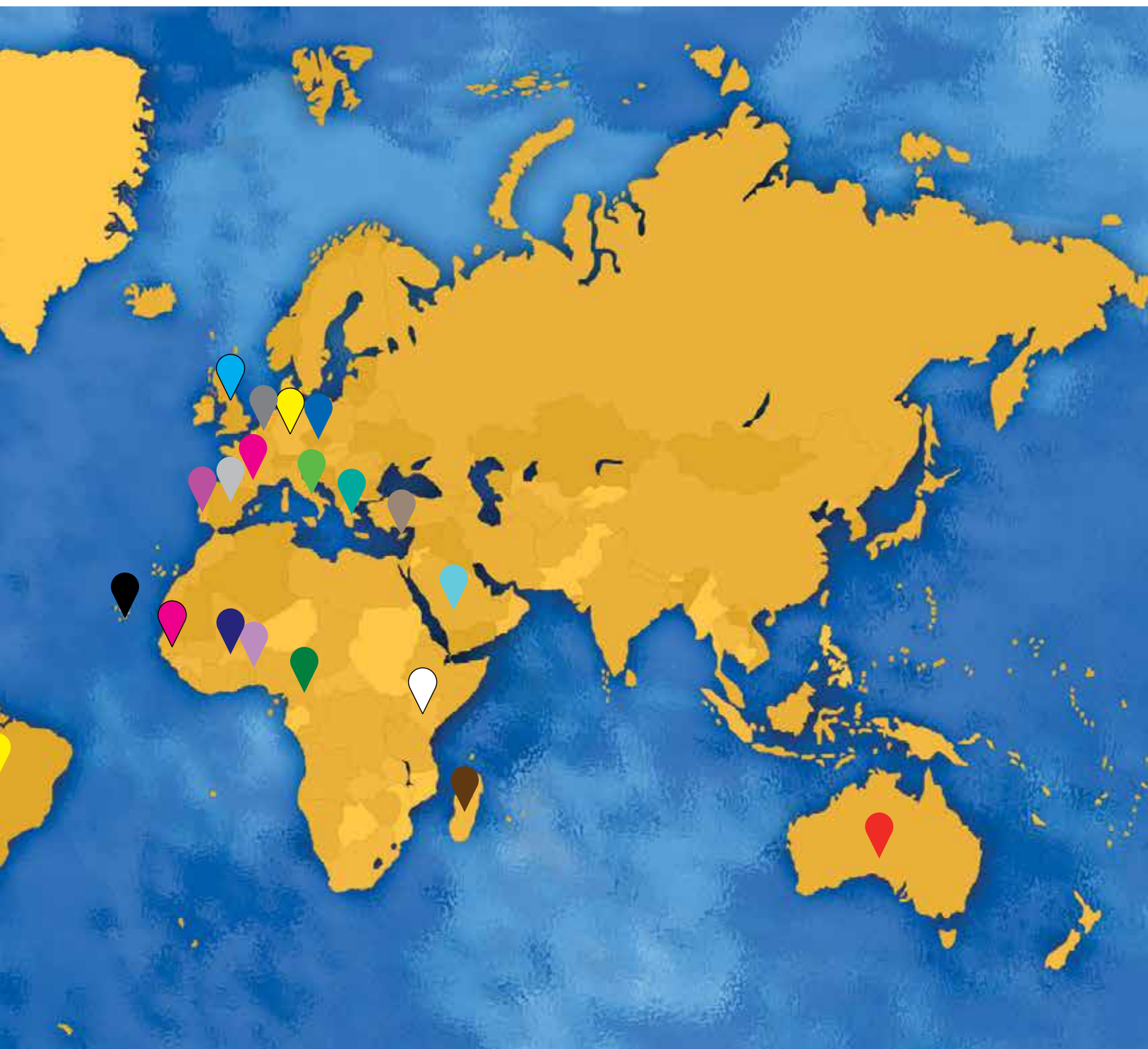


Photo by 1343024 from Pixabay

- Italy
- Saudi Arabia
- Australia
- Portugal
- Cyprus
- USA
- France
- Mexico
- Brazil
- Czech Republic
- Madagascar
- Benin
- Spain
- Greece
- Cape Verde
- Burkina Faso
- Cameron
- Belgium
- Kenya
- Senegal
- Germany
- UK

A further datum to analyze in order to outline a clear picture of the contribution offered by **Venice City Solutions** to the debate on the location of SDGs, concerns the variety of subjects involved, which fully represent the capillarity of the issues addressed by Agenda 2030. In particular, the following took part, either as speakers or from the audience: representatives of international organizations (OECD and United Nations), the European Commission and national governments (in particular, we highlight the presence of the Ministers of Economy, Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Environment, Municipal and Rural Affairs and Regional Development); leading figures of regional, Italian and European administrations; representatives of large, medium and small local authorities; university researchers and lecturers; managers of social impact investment funds, members of think-tanks and private research centres; civil servants representing national institutions; representatives of political movements with a European and federalist vocation; representatives of Third Sector bodies, including those of a supranational nature and non-governmental organizations; students; entrepreneurs and professionals.



LEGEND

- National governments

- European and international institutions and organizations

- Local/regional authorities and their representative associations

- School, university and research world



- Third sector

- Civil society/citizenship

- Private sector

- Political movements



Photo by 1343024 from Pixabay

Agency for Territorial Cohesion (Rome, Italy)

AICCRE (Rome, Italy)

AICCRE PIEDMONT (Piedmont, Italy)

ASviS (Rome, Italy)

Blengini Ghirardelli Srl (Milan, Italy)

Shops in the World (Italy)

Central Union of Greek Municipalities (Greece)

Centre for Studies on the Arts of Russia (CSAR)
(Venice, Italy)

European Commission (Brussels, Belgium)

Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF)
(United Kingdom)

Municipality of Baracarena (Brazil)

Municipality of Bruges (Belgium)

Municipality of Capaci (Palermo, Italy)

Municipality of Carmignano (Prato, Tuscany, Italy)

Municipality of Cascais (Portugal)

Municipality of Castel Maggiore (Emilia-Romagna,
Italy)

Municipality Cornellà de Llobregat (Barcelona,
Spain)

Municipality of Fano (Marche, Italy)

Municipality of Kifissia (Athens, Greece)

Municipality of Legnago (Verona, Italy)

Municipality of Malaga (Malaga, Spain)

Municipality of Ndi affate (Senegal)

Municipality of Nguemelendouka (Cameroon)

Municipality of Nicosia (Cyprus)

Municipality of Pa (Burkina Faso)

Municipality of Partinico (Palermo, Italy)

Municipality of Porto Novo (Benin)

Municipality of Ribera Brava (Cape Verde)

Municipality of Sandiara (Senegal)

Municipality of Savignano Irpino (Campania, Italy)

Municipality of Verona (Veneto, Italy)

Municipality of Yaho (Burkina Faso)

Autonomous Community of Catalonia (Spain)

CONCORD Europe (Brussels, Belgium)

CONFCOMMERCIO (Rome, Italy)

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities
(Strasbourg, France)

Council of European Municipalities and Regions
(CEMR) (Brussels, Belgium)

Barcelona Provincial Council (Barcelona, Spain)

Council of Governors of Kenya

Development Partners Network on
Decentralization and Local Governance (DeLoG)
(Germany)

Directorate-General for International Cooperation
and Development of the European Commission

EMERGENCY (Italy)

Felcos Umbria/UNDP-EU Capdell Programme
Algeria (Italy, Algeria)

ENI Enrico Mattei Foundation (Milan, Italy)

Fraunhofer IAO (Stuttgart, Germany)

Gloabal Call for Action Against Poverty GCAP
(Italy)

Global Campus of Human Rights (Venice, Italy)

Government of Oaxaca (Mexico)

Impact Investment Group (Australia)

INPS (Rome, Italy)

Institute for Strategic Dialogue (United Kingdom)

Liceo Benedetti-Tommaseo (Venice, Italy)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (Rome, Italy)

Ministry of Decentralization and Local Development (Cameroon)

Ministry of Territorial Communities and Spatial Planning (Senegal)

Ministry of Regional Development (Cameroon)

Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs (Saudi Arabia)

Minister of Economy and Finance (Rome, Italy)

European Federalist Movement (Pavia, Lombardy, Italy)

OECD (Paris, France)

Italian Parliament (Rome, Italy)

POLIS-LOMBARDIA (Lombardy, Italy)

Public/Citizens

Emilia-Romagna Region (Italy)

Veneto Region (Italy)

Strong Cities Network

Studio Benvenuti (Italy)

Transparency, Accountability, and Participation (TAP) Network (United States)

UN Resident Coordinator Office (Cameroon)

UN-Habitat (Nairobi, Kenya)

UNDP (New York)

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) (Barcelona, Spain)

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (Nairobi, Kenya)

Ca Foscari University (Venice, Italy)

University of the Republic of San Marino (San Marino)

University of Padua (Veneto, Italy)

La Sapienza University (Rome, Italy)

We Are Here Venice (Venice, Italy)

World Enabled (Germany)



Photo by Stefano Cola

2

Locating
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2.1 The National Strategy for Sustainable Development (SNSvS): the development path

On 25 September 2015, Italy signed the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development, committing itself to integrate into its economic, social and environmental programming the 17 objectives and 169 targets identified by the United Nations and to set in motion a strategy of reform of its development model¹.

The **development** of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development (SNSvS)², the document that commits the signatory countries of the Agenda 2030 to the achievement of the objectives, launched at the beginning of 2016 following a bottom-up route supervised by the central Administrations and composed of three preliminary phases:

- The analysis of the *Italian Position with respect to the 17 Objectives for Sustainable Development of the United Nations*³ to compare the initiatives undertaken by Italy in terms of attention to sustainable development to the targets set by the agenda.
- The identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the Italian situation through the implementation of multi-level consultations, which involved the Central Administrations and the Italian Regions (through the Conference

¹ In order to ensure full and concrete implementation of Agenda 2030, Agenda 2030 signatory states must prepare a National Strategy for Sustainable Development (SNSvS) and monitor its proper implementation at all levels of government.

² The SNSvS has replaced the National Environmental Action Strategy (2002) as required by Legislative Decree 221/2015 Environmental provisions to promote green economy measures and to limit the excessive use of natural resources.

³ The document is available in the section of website of the Ministry of the Environment, Land and Sea (MATTM) dedicated to Agenda 2030.

of Regions), to ensure transversally and full ownership of the SNSvS by those called to implement it. Moreover, the world of knowledge and research and civil society to consolidate the indicators used in the positioning document and lay the foundations for the subsequent monitoring and reporting of the strategy.

- The development of a system of national strategic objectives organized around the 5 areas (5P) of Agenda 2030 - People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership, that bring together all the dimensions of sustainable development.

The verification of the Italian positioning with respect to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which represents the initial phase of the strategy development process, was conducted by the Ministry of the Environment and Protection of Land and Sea (MATTM) and developed through the identification of indicators closer to those identified by the *Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals Indicators (IAEG-SDGs)*⁴ of the United Nations. The analysis took into consideration the first set of indicators published by the National Statistical Institute (ISTAT) on December 14, 2016, (95 Italian indicators, related to 66 of the 241 indicators chosen by the Inter-Agency Expert Group of the United Nations), subsequently updated every six months until the last available survey contained in the *“SDGs Report 2019. Statistical information for Agenda 2030 in Italy”*, in which ISTAT identifies 123 UNIAEG-SDGs indicators and, for these, 303 national statistical

⁴ For more details see box 2. Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals Indicators (IAEG-SDGs).

measures⁵.

The institutional activity continued with the definition of the SNSvS by the MATTM, the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI) and the Ministry of Economy. The involvement of ministries with competencies related to the internal and external dimension of the application of Agenda 2030, has guaranteed the enhancement of the multidimensionality of the sustainable development model promoted by the United Nations, which for the first time places environmental protection and social inclusion alongside economic growth.



Source: *The definition path of the SNSVS - Ministry of the Environment, Land and Sea (MATTM)*

⁵ ISTAT, SDGs Report 2019. Statistical information for Agenda 2030 in Italy, 2019, p. 8.

Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals Indicators (IAEG-SDGs)

The group of experts, composed of Member States and regional and international agencies, was set up on 6 March 2015, to develop a comprehensive framework of indicators for the objectives and targets of Agenda 2030. The definition of a common framework was reached at the 48th session of the UN Statistical Commission in March 2017.

The role of the National Institute of Statistics - ISTAT

In order to understand the further specificities of the Italian approach to the development, implementation and monitoring of the SNSvS, it is appropriate to dwell on the crucial role played by ISTAT in an attempt to reconcile the ambitions set by the SDGs targets and indicators defined at global level with the specific experiences and needs expressed by Italy. This challenge has represented an opportunity for the National Statistical System (Sistan) and for the country because it has facilitated collaboration between different institutions including ISPRA, MATTM, MAECI, Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR), GSE, INGV, ISS⁶ and developed synergies with international agencies. The final objective of the analysis activities carried out has been to enrich the framework of statistical information for measuring sustainable development, expanding the set of available SDGs indicators and working to ensure the 'no one left behind' principle.⁷

⁶ See table acronyms and abbreviations.

⁷ ISTAT, ISTAT Indicators for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals - Methodological Note - 15 December 2017 p. 7.

2.1.2 Structure, implementation and monitoring of the SNSvS

For each of the 5 areas of Agenda 2030 which the SNSvS lists (People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership), the **strategic choices** and **specific objectives** for Italy have been identified, as well as **the related SDGs** and the **implementation instruments** that allow the integration of the strategy in the main programmatic documents (National Reform Programme - PNR, and the Economic and Financial Document - DEF), and guarantee its reconciliation with the commitments already undertaken at Community level⁸.

1. PEOPLE: opposing poverty and social exclusion and promoting health and well-being to ensure the conditions for the development of human capital.

2. PLANET: arresting the loss of biodiversity and ensuring sustainable management of natural resources to create resilient communities and territories, preserve landscapes and cultural heritage

3. PROSPERITY: affirming sustainable patterns of production and consumption and promoting research and innovation to ensure full employment and quality training

4. PEACE: promoting a non-violent and inclusive society, eliminating all forms of discrimination and ensuring legality and justice

5. PARTNERSHIP: to develop the strategy in its external dimension according to the areas of intervention of international cooperation.

⁸ Chamber of Deputies Study Centre, The International Community and the Implementation of the Global Agenda for Sustainable Development, 26 September 2019.

Through the identification of five **cross-cutting sustainability vectors**⁹, the SNSvS also aims to integrate sustainability into existing and future national policies, plans and programmes. The implementation tools from which to execute the strategy have been identified during multilevel consultations and mainly relate to the Cohesion Policy 2014 - 2020 (Partnership Agreement and Development and Cohesion Fund)¹⁰.

The strategy document structured in this way was presented to the second United Nations High Level Political Forum and subsequently approved by the Inter-ministerial Committee for Economic Planning (CIPE) with Resolution 108/2017¹¹, published in the Official Journal on 15 May 2018. This document marks the conclusion of the SNSvS development process and the start of the **implementation phase**.

The coordination for the implementation of the strategy was managed by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers through the National Commission for Sustainable Development, in which the ministers and representatives of the Italian Regions, Provinces and Municipalities took part. The Commission, chaired by the President of the Council of Ministers, discusses and approves an annual progress report on the implementation of the strategy to facilitate its verification and updating.

In order to promote coordination between the policies of the various ministries and facilitate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Objectives, in May 2019 the Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte set up the “Benessere Italia” (Wellbeing Italy) control room, which represents

⁹ For further details on sustainability vectors, see the text National Strategy for Sustainable Development, p. 95.

¹⁰ annex 6 of the SNSvS contains the list of implementation tools identified during the development of the strategy. The synoptic tables are constantly updated.

¹¹ Approval of the national sustainable development strategy.

a concrete initiative of the Italian Government in the process of integration of Agenda 2030¹². While waiting for the government to launch its Control Room, MATTM has established the “Forum for Sustainable Development”, a multi-stakeholder platform that draws from civil society the necessary energy to speed up the implementation of the national strategy¹³. Additionally, in November 2019, the Foreign Affairs Commission launched a fact-finding survey to highlight Italy’s contribution to the achievement of the Agenda 2030 goals and to verify the adequacy and effectiveness of the regulatory instruments available. The survey, which will terminate in December 2020, also aims to verify the functionality of the Italian system of development cooperation, to qualify Italy’s positioning on important global issues and to give visibility to the efforts made in the implementation of Agenda 2030 in European fora¹⁴.

Finally, as already mentioned, ISTAT coordinates the production and updating of indicators for the measurement of sustainable development and monitors the achievement of the objectives of Agenda 2030.

From global to local: the High Level Political Forum

The High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development – HLPF, is the UN platform put forward following the 2012 Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development and regulated by UN

¹² For more information: ASviS 2019 Report, Italy and sustainable development objectives, p. 60.

¹³ The MATTM has published an expression of interest in participating in the Sustainable Development Forum to which civil society players wishing to take part in the implementation of the Strategy may apply.

¹⁴ The survey included a series of hearings involving relevant stakeholders based on the topics covered. Chamber of Deputies Study Centre, The International Community and the Implementation of the Global Agenda for Sustainable Development, 26 September 2019.

Resolution 67/290. It monitors at the global level the adoption of Agenda 2030 and assesses the progress made by States in the implementation of their SNSvS. To fulfil this role, the countries that have signed up to the Agenda 2030 are called upon to draw up the **Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)** - in order to facilitate the reading and comparison of the different results achieved by States at national and sub-national level. Through the Ministry of the Environment and the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Italy submitted its Voluntary National Strategy for Sustainable Development to a national voluntary review in July 2017 at the second meeting of the High Level Political Forum Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity.

2.1.3 Sustainable development in Italy: a possible horizon?

With regard to the long term¹⁵, ISTAT's 2019 Report notes positive developments in the objectives of quality education (Goal 4), industry, innovation and infrastructure (Goal 9), consumption and production (Goal 12), gender inequalities (Goal 5), energy (Goal 7), justice and institutions (Goal 16).

The analysis of data from 2007-2012 clearly shows the effect of the economic crisis, which is revealed by a deterioration for Objectives 8 (work and growth), 1 (poverty), 2 (food and agriculture), 11 (cities), 14 (sea) and 7 (clean and accessible energy).

Finally, over the 2012-2017 period there is

moderate progress: negative but less positive variations in Goals 3 (health), 11 (cities) and 15 (land) and slightly positive variations in Goals 2, 4, 5, 7 and 12; more than 50% of the indicators remain unchanged, particularly for Goals 10 (inequalities) and 15 (land)¹⁶.

In detail:



The risk of poverty and social exclusion in Italy (28.9% of the population) appears to be improving, although strong regional disparities remain.



One third of minors in Italy are overweight but the figure is improving. The share of public spending on agriculture has been reduced. On the other hand, there has been an increase in organic farming even though the use of polluting chemicals is still a cause for concern.



Italy is among the European countries with the lowest infant mortality rate. In 2017 the incidence of HIV infections and mortality rates for diseases such as cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases also fell. However, deaths from road accidents and alcohol consumption are on the rise.



Italy is still in the lowest positions in Europe in terms of number of graduates, drop-out rates and skills. Deep territorial differences remain, to the disadvantage of Southern Italy and the male population.

¹⁵ The period taken as reference is the last 10 years.

¹⁶ ISTAT, SDGs Report 2019. Statistical information for Agenda 2030 in Italy, pp. 15-18, p. 37.



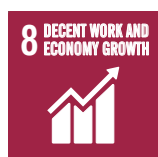
Although violence against women is decreasing, the severity and violence exerted is increasing. The gender gap remains wide and affects the presence of women in decision-making positions, which is slightly increasing but still low. The rate of voluntary abortion is decreasing.



Italy has the highest per capita drinking water use among the 28 countries of the European Union. In addition, the efficiency of the drinking water distribution network is deteriorating.



In 2017, the contribution of renewable energy sources to overall energy consumption (not for electricity) increased again.



Real GDP per capita has grown slightly over the last three years (+1.0% in 2018), but labour productivity remains weak. The unemployment rate continues to fall but remains above pre-crisis levels (10.6% in 2018; -0.6 compared to 2017) and the share of NEETs among 25- to 29-year-olds is the highest in Europe in 2018, reaching the highest value in the EU. Public spending on employment and social protection measures decreased in 2017.



The Research and Innovation system continues to lag behind the European average, although companies have begun to introduce technological innovations into their production systems. ICT is in expansion although with wide territorial gaps.



As a result of the 2008 crisis there was a drop in lower incomes, which only stopped in 2016. The migration phenomenon has changed: entries based upon international protection have increased compared to flows of people looking for job opportunities. Applications for citizenship are decreasing, and long-term residency permits are increasing.



The reduction in the level of air pollution has come to a standstill. There has been a decline in waste going to landfills and better housing conditions for families. Unsatisfactory use of public transport.



Italy is in an honorable position with regard to the consumption of natural resources, but lags behind the targets for separate waste collection. The prevalence of tourism is growing.



There has been a decline in greenhouse gas emissions since 2005. The intensification of natural disasters caused by climate change (e.g. forest fires, landslides, etc.) and the high seismicity of the territory remain worrying.



The surface area of the marine protected areas is 3,020.5 km² and the percentage of the seashore is 66.9%. The majority of fish stocks are over-exploited.



31.6% of the national territory is covered by forests but soil consumption continues to increase.



Over the years, the murder rate in Italy has decreased for men while it remains stable for women. The proportion of adult prisoners in Italian prisons awaiting first trial has decreased but the average time taken to complete civil proceedings in ordinary courts remains high.



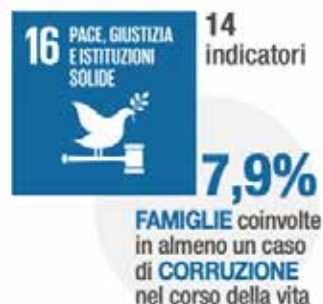
The share of gross national income allocated to public development aid continues to grow but Italy remains far from the 2030 targets set by the Agenda. There is a slight decrease in public administration revenues and an increase in remittances to foreign countries by immigrants in Italy.

Sustainable Development Goals RAPPORTO 2019



Source: SDGs Report 2019. Statistical information for Agenda 2030 in Italy

(SDGs) - Obiettivi di sviluppo sostenibile



2.1.4 Agenda 2030: challenges and critical issues in implementation at national level

From the methodological point of view, Italy is positioned in the right direction with regard to the implementation of Agenda 2030. Ministries with different competencies have been involved to embrace all dimensions of development and the participation of civil society and local authorities has been guaranteed in the drafting of the national strategy. The adoption of a specific resolution that establishes the development path of the document and the crucial role played by ISTAT in the formulation of indicators as close as possible to those expressed at international level are further peculiarities of the approach adopted by Italy in the implementation of Agenda 2030.

Finally, the candidacy for voluntary national review presented by the Italian Government in 2016 was an important recognition for the country, which made it possible to illustrate the National Strategy for Sustainable Development at the second meeting of the United Nations High Level Political Forum together with 43 other countries that signed the Agenda.

So, then, what remains to be done?

Although Italy is moving towards an ever-increasing integration of sustainability into its development model and the Italian government is committed to meeting the SNSvS reporting and monitoring deadlines, some **critical issues** remain:

- The financial requirement necessary to achieve the SDGs, outlined in the Addis Ababa Action Plan (2015), gives **priority to national**

actions, while a concrete implementation of Agenda 2030 is only possible through the active involvement of civil society and local authorities. From this point of view, the Italian regions have shown themselves to be dynamic and interested in participating in the development and implementation of the strategy, while the initiatives coming from cities and local authorities are not homogeneous throughout the national territory.

- The *task force* created by the United Nations (Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development) recently highlighted how international **investments dedicated to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals remain under-financed** and stressed the importance of activating at national level financial instruments capable of implementing development strategies. In Italy, the regions have a budget through which to finance measures in support of Agenda 2030, but local authorities and cities struggle to make an impact because they very often remain tied to regional funding.
- In Italy, the Ministry of the Environment has almost entirely coordinated the preparation and implementation of the National Development Strategy. In order for the three dimensions of sustainable development (environmental, social and economic) to be fully implemented, the entire management of the process must be coordinated by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.

2.2 The Regional Level: the Regional Sustainable Development Strategy (RDS)

The Italian Regions and Autonomous Provinces play a key role in the development and implementation of the SNSvS. In addition to ensuring the cascading of the strategy to the different levels of government, they ensure the alignment of their programming and legislative instruments with the Sustainable Development Objectives identified at national level, promote the involvement of key stakeholders and citizens, promote the exchange of information and monitor the achievement of the Goals and targets. The effectiveness of SNSvS strongly depends on the quality of the development strategies implemented at regional level, also because most of the Agenda 2030 objectives relate to matters of exclusive regional competence.

In order to bring Agenda 2030 down from the central to the regional and, subsequently, provincial and local dimensions, Art.34 of Legislative Decree 152/2006 states that within twelve months of the decision to update the national strategy, the regions must adopt a **Regional Sustainable Development Strategy (SRSvS)** through the involvement of local players and through participatory processes, “without additional burdens on regional budgets”. The strategy must indicate the **contribution** of the region to the national objectives, identify the **instruments** to be activated and define the **priorities and actions** to be taken.

The support to Regions and Autonomous Provinces for the implementation of the SNSvS and the elaboration of the Regional Strategies for Sustainable Development has been entirely supervised and promoted by the MATTM and began

in April 2018 with the establishment of a discussion group between the Ministry of Environment, Regions and Autonomous Provinces in order to activate exchanges and ensure methodological coordination in the definition of individual regional strategies and their contribution to the implementation of the national strategy.

Subsequently, on August 3, 2018, an announcement was published to gather expressions of interest to finance activities related to the development of regional strategies and finally, technical support to regional and provincial processes were promoted through the project funded *CReIAMO PA* from the Structural Funds (PON Governance and Technical Assistance)¹⁷.

2.2.1 Regional State of Play: how are the Italian regions and autonomous provinces positioned in relation to Agenda 2030?

The recent analysis of the SDGs indicators elaborated by ISTAT highlights a deep territorial disparity between the regions of Northern and Southern Italy, which makes Italy's path towards sustainable development¹⁸ arduous. Trento, Bolzano, Valle d'Aosta, Lombardy, Friuli Venezia-Giulia, Emilia Romagna, Tuscany and Piedmont are oriented towards a development perspective

¹⁷ More details at the following link: <http://www.infoparlamento.it/tematiche/ap-profondimenti/strategia-nazionale-sullo-sviluppo-sostenibile-gennaio-2019>

¹⁸ It should be noted that in Italy there are 20 Regions, 15 with ordinary statute and 5 with special statute: Sicilia, Sardegna, Valle d'Aosta, Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Trentino-Alto Adige (made up of the Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano), which differ for a greater degree of autonomy. The Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano have the same powers as the special statute regions.

compatible with the Agenda 2030 goals, while Sicily, Calabria and Campania have the highest concentration of indicators in an area of difficulty. Lazio has a more similar profile to Abruzzo than the other regions of central Italy.

Considering the goals individually, similar situations are found in distant territories. With regard to Goal 1 (poverty), critical elements also emerge in Liguria, Valle d'Aosta and Piedmont, although 44% of the population of Southern Italy is at risk of poverty or exclusion, compared to 18.8% in the North. Bolzano, Campania and Sicilia are problematic in Goal 3 (health) but Northern Italy has a life expectancy and health from birth rate 4 years higher than in the South.

Southern Italy, in particular Campania, Puglia and Calabria are at a disadvantage in Goal 4 (education) while Trento, Friuli Venezia Giulia and Lombardy are more favourable.

The Southern Regions are particularly disadvantaged in Goal 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure) and Goal 8 (work and growth) - which shows an unemployment rate gap between North and South of almost 17 points¹⁹ - Goal 10 (inequalities), Goal 16 (peace, justice and institutions), Goal 17 and Goal 6 (water).

Goal 2 (food and agriculture), Goal 5 (gender equality), Goal 7 (energy), Goal 11 (cities), Goal 12 (production and consumption), Goal 13 (climate), Goal 14 (sea) and Goal 15 (land) show a lower polarity between North and South Italy, but it is worth mentioning, as far as Goal 2 (food and agriculture) is concerned, that there has been an increase of 6.3% in the areas dedicated to organic farming in Southern Italy and the contribution of renewables to the electricity sector is higher in

¹⁹ This value was obtained by taking as reference the highest (Calabria, 21.6%) and lowest (Autonomous Province of Trento, 4.80%) values recorded in Italy, ISTAT Report 2019 p. 139-156.

Southern Italy, where it reaches 41.4% (compared to 27.7% in the North and 26.6% in the Centre)²⁰.

Support to Regions and Autonomous Provinces for the implementation of the SNSvS and the elaboration of the Regional Strategies: the content of the MATTM public notice of 3 August 2018

On August 3, 2018, the Ministry of the Environment (MATTM) issued a public notice for the presentation of expressions of interest and project proposals by Regions and Autonomous Provinces in order to facilitate the definition of the Regional Sustainable Development Strategy (SRSvS)²¹. Funding of 4.000.000 Euros was made available by the Ministry and covered three macro-categories of interventions:

- a) Construction of the governance of the SRSvS;
- b) Involvement of civil society;
- c) Drafting of the SRSvS document²²

The public notice also allowed for a monitoring and evaluation system for the planned activities in order to periodically check the progress of the activities, the results achieved and the opportunities for improvement. On 03/10/2018, on the deadline for sending proposals, 19 expressions of interest were received from 18 Regions and 1 Autonomous Province. The maximum contribution available for each beneficiary amounted to 210,526.00 euro.

²⁰ The data presented were extracted from ISTAT's 2019 Report. p. 18-19 and pp. 39-279.

²¹ The notice intends to give concrete support to the "regional structures engaged in the fulfilments provided for by art. 34 of the Legislative Decree no. 152 of 3 April 2006, as amended and supplemented, regarding the implementation of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development, with particular reference to its transposition into the Regional Strategies for Sustainable Development" p. 3

²² Ibid.

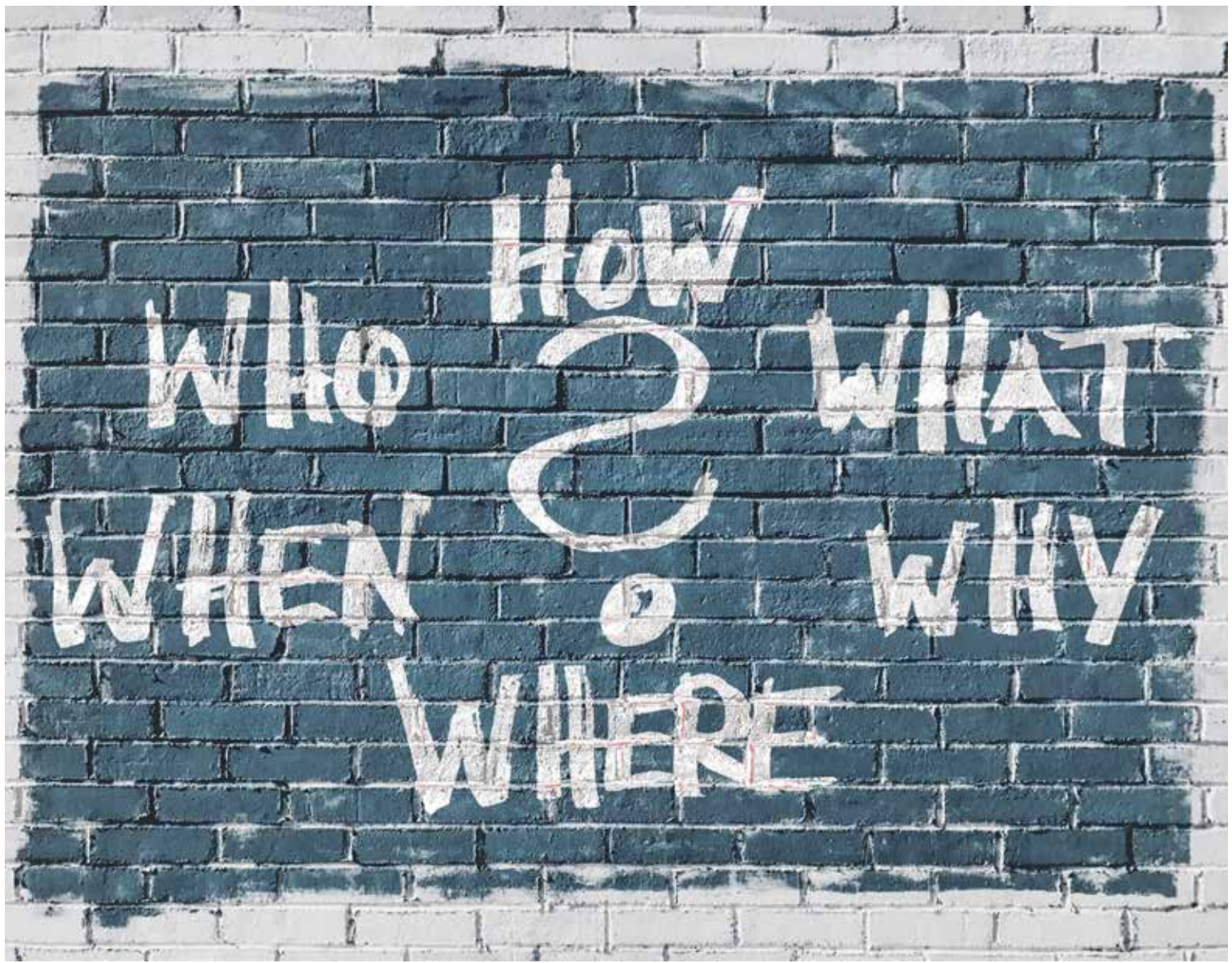


Photo by Gerd Altmann from Pixabay

2.3 Four obstacles to the implementation of Agenda 2030 at local level

As briefly described above, the Italian Regions and Autonomous Provinces have been called upon to implement, also at institutional level, the SNSvS and to equip themselves with a regional strategy to achieve the objectives and targets defined by Agenda 2030. Through a transfer of resources from the State to the Regions, in view of the sending of an expression of interest and a project proposal, the latter have received planning and spending capacity for activities concerning the implementation of Agenda 2030. This path represented a first step for the localization of the SDGs.

Although there is still a wide gap between the Regions of Northern and Southern Italy, the territorialisation of the SDGs can be considered as having started at the regional level. However, it should be underlined that it is at local level, in the daily dialogues with the citizens and in the cascading of the strategy on the basis of the priorities and needs of each territory, that the SDGs express their potential. Localizing the agenda means, in fact, shaping it according to the peculiarities of the different contexts and structuring a path of sustainable development not standardized but representative of the territories. To facilitate this process, it is necessary to set up an institutional framework that guarantees coordination, facilitates the involvement of the main stakeholders and makes integration between different territorial levels (from national to local) effective in order to standardize policies and manage resources effectively²³.

²³ Camilleri G., Localizing the SDGs “The implementation of Agenda 2030 in the territories, 5 June 2019.

The road is still long and this is probably the main challenge for the players involved in the Agenda 2030 implementation process and the missing piece.

The main elements that hinder the participation of local authorities (in particular cities, municipalities and provinces) in the implementation of the Agenda concern, first of all, the **capacity of the policy to create awareness and empower local administrators** in the effort to guide their communities towards a sustainable development path, compatible with the commitments made at national and international level. Municipalities, cities and provinces can be real agents of change, since SDGs are linked to government programmes, including local ones. Additionally, the recognition and proximity of leaders to their territories represents a further element of strengthening and legitimization of Agenda 2030.

Secondly, it is advisable to avoid selecting the SDGs most favourable to a given territory by focusing, for example, on a specific project, but consider the agenda in its entirety, so that it can be fully integrated with government programmes, priorities and needs expressed by citizens.

The **absence of data** providing a snapshot of the situation of the implementation of Agenda 2030 at provincial and municipal level represents the third critical element of the SDGs location path. As seen above, ISTAT has examined the positioning of the Italian Regions and Autonomous Provinces with respect to the Sustainable Development Objectives and it can be assumed that the Regions with greater planning capacity on Agenda 2030 issues have transferred adequate economic resources and tools to local authorities. Apart from some good practices presented in the framework of [Venice City Solutions](#) 2019, and a collection of the good practices of AICCRE, we do not know exactly



Photo by Subham Shome from Pixabay

what the progress of the implementation of SNSvS in the Italian municipalities and provinces is.

The fourth challenge that characterizes the path of localization of SDGs, concerns, as anticipated, the **financial resources**. It is the Regions that promote the activities of local administrations, which do not have their own spending capacity but contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the regional strategy²⁴. A greater responsibility and empowerment of local authorities, also from the economic point of view, could accelerate the implementation of the national and regional strategy also at local level.

“Agenda 2030 must become popular, otherwise we won’t win the bet” - Gianni Bottalico, Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASviS)

As ASviS we firmly believe that the challenges and goals of Agenda 2030 can be fully achieved in territories and communities. Regions, cities and municipalities are moving towards cultural and organizational change, and the Sustainable Alliance is working alongside national and local institutions to support them in this great development project. Agenda 2030 must become “popular”, otherwise we will not win the bet we have set ourselves for the future.

²⁴ Art. 34 paragraph 4 Legislative Decree no. 152/2006 and subsequent amendments and integrations.

2.4 From Italy to the World: Agenda 2030 in local planning

Venice City Solutions 2019 has represented an important opportunity for comparison and exchange of good practices between regional and municipal public administrations all over the world committed to achieving sustainable development objectives. The session dedicated to the localization of SDGs has allowed, on the one hand, to make administrators aware of the use of indicators and targets of sustainable development objectives and, on the other hand, has enhanced the key role of local authorities both in the definition of the national strategy for Agenda 2030 and in the construction of partnerships.

The testimonies offered have contributed to compose a mosaic of approaches, awareness and specific needs to which Agenda 2030, with its formidable capacity to adapt in different contexts, is able to provide answers. The journey in stages of **Venice City Solutions** 2019 to discover the most interesting experiences in the localization of the SDGs starts from the Veneto Region and continues with the Emilia-Romagna Region, the Municipality of Verona and the Municipality of Capaci (Palermo), and finally moves beyond national borders and overseas to involve the Autonomous Community of Catalonia (Spain), the Municipality of Cascais (Portugal), the Municipality of Nicosia (Cyprus), the City of Bruges (Belgium), the Municipality of Barcarena (Brazil) and the Municipality of Nguemelendouka (Cameroon). The African continent has also been represented by Madagascar and Senegal, where strategies for the integration of the Development Goals and the involvement of populations have been launched.

The questions that guided the speakers' interventions concerned the challenges that obstruct the implementation of SDGs at local level and in terms of *multi-level governance*, how to involve stakeholders in the area, and the tools to measure progress and results of the policies and interventions promoted.

Finally, with regard to the contribution to the localization of the SDGs of international organizations, the presentation of the case studies showed that they are more involved in the African context. This is probably due to institutional fragility and the difficulty of establishing partnerships with local stakeholders and through the involvement of citizens who need external and international stakeholders in order to achieve their goals.

“The European approach to international cooperation is “local” - Paolo Ciccarelli, Head of Unit DG DEVCO, European Commission

Following the adoption by the United Nations of Agenda 2030, the Reflection Paper “Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030” was published at European level. The document laid the foundations of the commitments that the European Union intends to make in order to achieve the Development Goals, and it serves as a guide and support for other countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America that intend to pursue the same path. The achievement of the 2030 objectives requires the sub-national level and the involvement of citizens. This approach, which today seems obvious, is very different from the one adopted previously in the field of international cooperation, when

institutional dialogue took place only at national level. Today, in almost all the countries where the European Union is present, local authorities are the main reference points and several tools have been put in place to support capacity building activities at technical and financial level and to strengthen cooperation at local level.

2.4.1 Localization Experiences of SDGs in Italy

1. Veneto Region, Ilaria Bramezza - Secretary General Veneto Region



Photo by Ernst Weeber from Pixabay

- Located in the north-east of Italy
- One of the most developed regions in the country and the first region in the tourism sector (70 million tourists per year).
- Approximately 5 million inhabitants
- About 450 thousand enterprises (mainly small and medium-sized)
- 9.4% of Italian GDP (year 2017)²⁵

²⁵ The data has been extracted from the website of the Regional Statistical System. Regional Statistical System of the Veneto Region.

- 13.5 % of Italian exports (year 2019)²⁶

Positioning with respect to Agenda 2030: Veneto and Italy in comparison (2018)

In Veneto there are still some challenges in Goal 2 (defeating hunger) and Goal 15 (life on earth), although overall the region is working hard and has reached a good position at national level²⁷.



The SDGs and the territory: Two worthy examples

The Secretary General of the Veneto Region, Bramezza, illustrated two worthy examples of location of the SDGs of Agenda 2030: a policy adopted directly by the Veneto Region that impacts on the social dimension of sustainability and a spontaneous initiative of the territory that impacts on the economic dimension of sustainability and can become a regional integrating with the Regional Strategy for Sustainable Development. Both good practices impact on the environmental dimension of sustainability.

²⁶ The data has been extracted from the website of the Regional Statistical System. Regional Statistical System of the Veneto Region.

²⁷ For the objectives for which the comparison at regional level is available, the Veneto Region has taken from ASVIS the composite indicators and verified the positioning with respect to Italy in the various SDGs (14 indicators available out of 17).

Social and inclusive tourism on the Veneto beaches

The first good practice presented by Secretary General Bramezza concerned “social and inclusive tourism on the Veneto beaches”. This is a regional policy, born in 2017 from a pilot initiative tested on the nine beaches of the Veneto coast. The aim of the initiative, which was launched by the hospital in Jesolo through an important intervention on the beach opposite the hospital, was to promote the social and employment integration of disabled people. After equipping the beaches with the necessary infrastructure and the necessary health and accompanying services, 50 projects for work placement in the accommodation facilities on the coast have been launched, and which have been very successful. The beneficiaries of the initiative were able to experience a separation from their families and greater autonomy, while the private operators who took part in the project responded with positive feedback and, in some cases, prolonged the traineeships activated. Considering the success of the experiment, the Veneto Region has decided to extend it to the entire regional territory, which will soon be equipped with infrastructures and services suitable for customers and staff with disabilities, which will also be in mountain and lake areas. The project has involved many participants from the territory (associations, public administrations, private operators) and generated a strong impact on the social dimension of sustainability affecting in an integrated way four goals of Agenda 2030: SDG 3 health, SDG 8 decent work, SDG 10 reduction of inequalities, SDG 11 sustainable cities and territories.



Re-imagining agriculture in a sustainable way. Vertical farming



The second good practice emerging from the Veneto Region concerns a spontaneous initiative of the territory aimed at re-imagining agriculture in a sustainable way. Considering the progressive loss of arable land on a global level (-33% in the last 40 years) due to urbanization, climate change that also causes water scarcity, on which the agricultural sector depends, and the heavy use of pesticides, the technique of vertical farming (VF) could be revolutionary in providing answers to major environmental emergencies. It is a fast-growing circular economy system, which has already reached \$2.5 trillion of investments internationally and looks set to grow. In VF, the entire cultivation process takes place indoors, without the use of land and water, and on several levels to optimize space. The advantages over traditional agriculture are numerous: the final product is better because no pesticides are used and fertilizers are significantly reduced. The environmental impact is minimal, as is

the use of water, and the plants are grown in a clean and controlled environment without soil contamination, fed with a combination of micro and macro nutrients they would normally find in nature. Additionally, with a short supply chain the product can be consumed freshly harvested, and traceability is complete.

VF reduces soil consumption, does not release pollutants into the environment and allows predictability and production efficiency by eliminating waste. Despite its many advantages, today VF is not very widespread because it is very expensive to build and difficult to manage. The challenge is to make it sustainable for large-scale applications and this is becoming established in Veneto after years of research and development with advanced skills in economics, engineering and digital. The Veneto Region is the ideal place for the development of a sector of this type because there are skills, spaces and green energy in the territory (44% of the energy produced in Veneto comes from renewable sources). In fact, groups of companies in Veneto have already implemented a sustainable VF construction system adopting a modular logic and managed in real time by artificial intelligence, taking up and winning the challenge.

VF can actually affect a territory by creating direct added value and for the spin-off activities, because it was born on the impulse of the productive world of Veneto but it can become a policy that the Veneto Region can insert within in its Regional Strategy for Sustainable Development. This good practice impacts on the economic dimension of sustainability and generates benefits for the purposes of the Development Goals of Agenda 2030. In particular, VF would impact on 6 SDGs: Goal 2 (healthy nutrition), Goal 6 (water saving), Goal 8 (quality work), Goal 9 (industrial innovation),

Goal 11 (urban regeneration) and Goal 12 (circular economy).



2. The Emilia-Romagna Region, Paola Gazzolo - Regional Deputy Governor for Soil and Coastal Protection, Civil Protection and Mountain and Environmental Policies



Photo by Valter Cirillo from Pixabay

- Located in the north-east of Italy
- One of the most industrialized and developed regions in the country
- 4.5 million inhabitants
- 407,514 companies
- 9.2% of Italian GDP²⁸
- 13.4% of Italian exports²⁹

Positioning of the Emilia-Romagna Region with respect to the Objectives of Agenda 2030

In Emilia-Romagna, Agenda 2030 has been an important element in strengthening the sustainable dimension of development and has pushed the regional administration to make significant decisions in this direction. Together with ASviS, the Emilia-Romagna Region is defining

its positioning with respect to SDGs and, on the basis of this, is building the Regional Strategy for Sustainable Development. The analysis conducted has shown a significant growth with regard to objectives 4, 9 and 12 of Agenda 2030, in addition to the positive trends recorded by the health and employment sectors.

The SDGs and the Territory: Three regional policies

The three main good practices selected concern strategic choices that the Regional Administration wanted to make at the beginning of its mandate in 2014. These are institutional actions that have an impact on the environmental dimension of sustainability and affect SDG 12.



*The Circular Economy Act (2015)*³⁰ was passed prior to the adoption of the European package, and works along several lines: good management of the integrated waste cycle, with the aim of directing it towards maximizing recycling and reuse³¹, encouraging municipalities to achieve the objectives by means of regional resources amounting to about 5 million per year; the obligation for precise charging by 2020, which will be the most powerful measure to prevent waste production; the creation of a participatory path; the establishment of a permanent forum for the circular economy and a forum for sustainable development; the stipulation of supply chain agreements with the business system, and the organization of information and education activities on sustainability.

³⁰ Emilia-Romagna Region, Regional Law no. 16/2015 Provisions to support the circular economy, the reduction of urban waste production, the reuse of end-of-life goods, separate collection and amendments to Regional Law no. 31 of 19 August 1996.

³¹ The target is to achieve 73% separate collection by 2020. By 2018 it was 68% and the 2019 data that will be available soon show an increase of over 70%.

²⁸ Statistical data from Invest In Emilia-Romagna website.

²⁹ 2017, Istat-Coeweb.

The Emilia-Romagna Region has also introduced a new urban planning law that provides for *zero land consumption*³², a significant strategy that must also be regulated at national level, as today there is no European law on the prohibition of land consumption and no national law. A green planning season for regional competencies has therefore been launched, which is not yet reported in the ISTAT indicators but which aims to implement all 17 goals of Agenda 2030.



Romagna Region in order to initiate a process of awareness and a strengthening of regional policies for mitigation and adaptation.

Finally, a number of actions concerning *sustainable mobility* have been implemented. First of all, the Emilia-Romagna Region has made public transport free of charge for all railway subscribers in the town of departure and arrival, to encourage the maximum use of integrated mobility. Secondly, 2000 electric charging stations will be located throughout the regional territory by 2020. Cycling mobility will be encouraged (+20%) and the local public transport fleet is being replaced. Integrated rail freight transport is also being increased.



In addition to the three regional policies, Deputy Governor Gazzolo illustrated the Strategy on Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation³³, a multidisciplinary and integrated approach consisting of 250 actions developed by the Emilia-

³² Emilia-Romagna Region, Regional Law n. 24/2017 Regional regulations on the protection and use of the territory.

³³ Mitigation and adaptation strategy for climate change of the Emilia-Romagna Region is available in the dedicated section on the website of the Emilia-Romagna Region.

3. Municipality of Capaci (Palermo, Italy), Pietro Puccio - Mayor



Photo by An Borko from Pixabay

- Italian municipality in the province of Palermo, located on the west coast of the Region of Sicily, in the south of Italy.
- 11.604 inhabitants³⁴



The municipal administration has begun an interesting process of locating the SDGs of Agenda 2030 by structuring the government mandate on the basis of the issues proposed by the agenda. This, with the aim of transforming it into a popular action which is able to integrate with the daily needs and expectations of citizens.

SDGs and the Territory: Some worthy examples in Capaci

Capaci is becoming a “*Cardio-protected City*” through several related initiatives: the creation of a network of five defibrillators throughout the municipal area and the organization of training for operators. In addition, a total smoking ban has been introduced along the entire coast of the Municipality of Capaci to the benefit of adults and children who frequent the beaches. These actions impact on Objective 3 of Agenda 2030 and have met with the support of citizens.



The signing of the *European Charter for equality between men and women in local life* is the second good practice tested in the Municipality of Capaci, and one of the first acts of the current municipal council. Gender equality has also been achieved in the Municipal Council, where the action plan to eliminate gender inequalities to achieve a gender balance will be discussed shortly. The Municipality has also set up a Women’s Consultation, whose opinion is necessary (though not binding) for any municipal resolution involving expenditure by the Municipality.



³⁴ The data concerning the resident population of Capaci was extracted from the portal www.demo.istat.it (survey of 1/1/2019). (survey of 1/1/2019).

The third good practice illustrated concerns the *conversion to LED street lighting* throughout the municipality. This is consistent with Objective 7 of Agenda 2030.



Capaci has become a *plastic free* municipality. Plastic and disposable tableware has been banned in all commercial establishments in the town. This affects SDG 15.

Finally, two important resolutions have been adopted: one concerning *the protection of the Mediterranean maquis* and the other *protecting the natural habitat of Sicilian bees*. Both have an impact on Objective 15 of Agenda 2030 (life on earth).



Photo by Public Domain Pictures from Pixabay

4. Municipality of Verona, Giuseppe Baratta - Deputy municipal secretary



Photo by Alex1965 from Pixabay

- Italian municipality located in the north-east of the country
- Provincial capital located in the Veneto Region
- Located in a highly productive area of the country
- 258.000 inhabitants³⁵

The Deputy Secretary of the Municipality of Verona intervened on the occasion of **Venice City Solutions** 2019, to illustrate an instrument of active citizenship adopted by the current municipal administration which, as for other measures introduced, affects the Objectives of Agenda 2030. The potential of the agenda is precisely that of integrating and responding to the needs of citizens, but very often the fragmentation of interventions (public or private) prevents the development of an overall vision.

³⁵ The figure has been extracted from the 2019 Demographic Balance Sheet (survey of 30/11/2019), available on the website: www.demostat.it

SDGs and the Territory: The regulation on active citizenship

In 2016 the Municipality of Verona launched a public call, inviting citizens to identify the meaning of subsidiarity and to propose to the administration issues on which collaboration between citizens and administration could be effective.

The result is a *Regulation for the implementation of horizontal subsidiarity through active citizenship actions*³⁶, through which 25 cooperation pacts on tangible and intangible assets have been signed.

Among the most significant experiences there are two initiatives carried out by young people aged between 14 and 19 years: the first one concerned a mapping of the city green areas made available to the entire citizenship through an application created by the University, while the second one involved young people in small maintenance interventions of unused public spaces.

In both cases young people had the opportunity to make themselves available to the community and experience an important teaching of citizenship. The regulation was born out of an experience of active participation, thanks to the strong associative fabric of the territory that responded in a very positive way to the public call.

The methodology used has been very rigorous. Each pact has been published and contains the objectives, the duration and the resources allocated, and provides for a point reporting that allows an evaluation of the impact generated on the territory. The introduction of the regulation has an impact on SDG 16, while interventions to promote the landscape context and the enhancement of public spaces through urban regeneration

³⁶ For more details on the regulation on active citizenship you can visit the sezione dedicata of the Municipality of Verona.

interventions have an impact on SDG 11.



Photo by Gerd Altmann from Pixabay

2.4.2 SDGs localization experiences in the rest of the world

1. Municipality of Nguemelendouka, Dafne Capisani - UN Cameroon



Photo by U_3NJS8UAF from Pixabay

- Located in the East Cameroon region, Haut-Nyong Department
- Population: 21.097
- Area: 1,058 km²
- Territory: rural (83.2%), urban (16.8%)³⁷
- Official languages: English and French

The Municipality of Nguemelendouka is located in eastern Cameroon and consists of 4 villages with a total of almost 18,000 inhabitants. The territory

³⁷ Data on the population, area and composition (rural and urban) of the Municipality of Nguemelendouka have been extracted from the portal of the National Institute of Statistics of Cameroon (Bureau Central des Recensements et des Etudes de Population).

of Nguemelendouka is mostly woodland and is characterized by several environmental and social emergencies: deforestation and climate crisis, water cleanliness and the malnutrition rate (35%). Mayor Jean Marie Nguete saw Agenda 2030 as an important resource and started working on the location of SDGs by aligning the local development plan with the objectives of the Agenda. This was particularly the case following his participation in several international conferences such as 'Africities 18' and the conference organized by the European Union and the International Association of French-speaking Mayors.

SDGs and the Territory: Awareness raising and training activities

The Municipality has started to collaborate with civil society associations and the United Nations system to develop *training and awareness raising activities for the municipality's staff with regard to the SDGs, and has set up principals concerning the development objectives for high school students*. The mayor has participated in several initiatives organized in Cameroon and concerning Agenda 2030 and a workshop was organized to review the results of the policies implemented.

As a specific *action against malnutrition*, the Municipality of Nguemelendouka has invested CHF 2 million (EUR 10,000.00) in *awareness-raising activities and breastfeeding training for women*. Additionally, gardens have been installed in schools to promote proper nutrition while respecting the environment (and avoiding deforestation).

As regards reforestation, municipal quotas have been set up to tackle the climate crisis and deforestation. Nguemelendouka is also the first

municipality in Cameroon to have installed street lighting and domestic electrification based on sustainable energy, and the first to trade in solar energy.

Water supplies have been restored to improve water quality within the municipality and lately the mayor has been working on the urban planning of the city in collaboration with UN-HABITAT following the criteria of the new urban planning agenda to try to make Nguemelendouka the most resilient town in Cameroon.



UNDP and Cameroon for Sustainable Development

Madeleine Ngo Mbock (UNDP) spoke on the occasion of **Venice City Solutions** 2019 as advisor of the Government of Cameroon for the elaboration of the Sustainable Development Strategy, recounting the path of implementation and integration of SDGs in the national, regional and local strategy.

Cameroon is experiencing numerous difficulties regarding its security and identity dimensions, exacerbated by non-inclusive and distributive economic growth, which has seen poverty in the country increase. This is why the United Nations, through the UNDP, has questioned the development model adopted so far in order to integrate the SDGs so as not to leave anyone behind.

First of all, the reasons for such uneven growth were questioned and a study on the National Human Development Report was launched. Through this study, the SDGs to be implemented were identified, localized and contextualized, and an attempt was made to calculate the economic bearing for the development of the Agenda 2030 goals over ten years. The study is ongoing and the process has received the support of the various stakeholders, beginning with the Government and the private sector, who see the SDGs as an opportunity to invest in poverty reduction and wealth creation. Among the strategic partners, which together with the private sector are leading this process, the civil society organizations stand out as being involved in the awareness raising activities, bringing the population closer to the Agenda 2030 issues.

Additionally, together with the Government, an assessment of public policies implemented over the last ten years has been carried out to examine

what has not worked and what could be done to correct and better target SDGs. This assessment revealed the need to identify the elements of acceleration of the development objectives, although at regional and local level this analysis remains problematical because each territory has different priorities and needs.

2. Madagascar, Hanitra Rasamison - General Manager of the Local Development Fund



Photo by Shell300 from Pixabay

- Country of southern Africa, located in the Indian Ocean, east of Mozambique
- The biggest island in the world
- 25,6 million inhabitants
- Growth rate: approx. 4.7% (2019)³⁸
- Official languages: Malagasy, French

In Madagascar, the high level of corruption in the public sphere and institutions has led to a situation of perennial political instability and exacerbated the lack of trust between citizens and governments, both at national and local level. Agenda 2030, which Madagascar is committed to respecting by promoting transparency and accountability at all levels of government, provides an opportunity for consultation between citizens and institutions in order to find shared solutions to complex problems.

³⁸ Data on geographical location, population and growth rate have been extracted from the World Bank website, section The World Bank In Madagascar

SDGs and the territory: More attention to participation

At the local level, *the participatory budgeting process*³⁹ has been tested and, although it is not mandatory, in almost 25% of Madagascar's municipalities it has proven to be a successful experience. Subsequently, it was decided to formalize citizen participation through the creation of *local consultation structures in all municipalities* and this was enshrined in law and made compulsory. Additionally, the new Constitution of Madagascar recognizes the role of decentralized local authorities and the new national plan for the development of business initiatives in Madagascar recommends the structural strengthening of local communities through the *establishment of municipal consultation platforms based on citizen participation*, promoting dialogue and consultation between politics and citizens, compatible with the SDGs. Local consultations are a tool that can help to define, guide and implement the monitoring and evaluation of public policies through direct control by citizens.

The inclusive participation of all development stakeholders, awareness raising and *empowerment activities* of the population were carried out at local level by the Local Development Fund⁴⁰ and the Ministry responsible for decentralization. This intervention also includes the organization of an educational and *awareness raising* campaign to promote a change in society and to implement a better fiscal citizenship, making citizens and institutions mutually responsible.

Through collaboration with the International

Organization of *La Francophonie* (JIEF), a guide to the integration of SDGs in local development planning has been prepared and made available to all municipalities in Madagascar.

Facilitators have been identified in each municipality in order to support participatory planning and integrate SDGs. The path is still under development and will become an integrated and inclusive local development plan. To support the activities, an anonymous complaints management mechanism has been introduced, covering financial aspects at national and local level, to try to eradicate corruption and open a channel of proximity with citizens. What makes this activity relevant is that there is an office that receives these complaints from citizens and the handling of complaints is carried out regularly. In Madagascar, therefore, the development objectives of Agenda 2030 are current and are gradually being integrated into policy planning.



³⁹ Hanitra Rasamison cites the example of the adoption of a programme in line with the National Development Plan which provided for regional consultations prior to the promulgation of the Finance Act and public consultations with civil society organisations to ensure the development of activities at all levels of government.

⁴⁰ The Local Development Fund is a financial instrument designed to support the budget of municipalities that are partners in UNCDF projects.

3. Municipality of Cascais, Joana Balsemão - Cascais Municipal Councillor



Photo by Marion Rotter from Pixabay

- Portuguese municipality located on the Atlantic coast, in the District of Lisbon
- 210.000 inhabitants
- It is the Portuguese municipality with the highest number of different nationalities (134)
- The territory is characterized by 32 km of coastline ⁴¹

Cascais is a city in the Lisbon District and is the Portuguese municipality with the highest number of mixed nationalities. The territory is characterized by a long coastline and national parks, so the preservation of the landscape, the environment and the people is a priority.

For over ten years, the Municipality of Cascais, aware of the growing distrust of citizens towards

⁴¹ Data on the composition of the territory and population of Cascais were provided by Joana Balsemão, Municipal Counselor of Cascais on the occasion of Venice City Solutions 2019.

the institutions, has implemented public policies oriented towards subsidiarity. The quality of a city's life does not depend only on the quality of its infrastructure and services, but is closely linked to a community's sense of belonging to its territory. Public policies capable of connecting with citizens contribute to making society more alive and to providing more effective responses to daily needs.

The SDGs and the Territory: The participatory budget and the municipal plan for adaptation to climate change

Cascais has devised several tools, including digital, to encourage citizens' participation: first of all, the *participatory budget*, introduced more than ten years ago, is the largest in Europe to date for capital. The Municipality of Cascais invests more than 16% of its budget in this activity and follows every phase of the citizens' involvement process. Meetings and consultations, the collection of proposals and finally the voting of the best projects, which are then carried out together with the Council. The second good practice concerns the *bottom-up* approach, used to draw up the municipal climate change adaptation plan. 45 people, from council staff members to external stakeholders, were involved and an operational action plan was drawn up. Every three months stakeholders meet, and the Mayor of Cascais also participates in the meetings. To date, 50% of the existing measures have already been implemented.

These two worthy examples of the creation of participatory public policies and the involvement of citizens were not easy to implement but allowed a change in the *mind-set* of people, and way of working, fostered a sense of belonging and set common goals. For Cascais, Agenda 2030 is becoming a catalyst for change and a societal glue. Although the proximity approach to citizenship predates the introduction of the

Agenda, from 2015 onwards, it is easier to connect the different stakeholders in the territory (the City Council, citizens, local government and public officials). The involvement of civil society as a whole is total: starting from the training activities on SDGs for civil servants, to the administration of questionnaires and the organization of *focus groups* that in a second phase of implementation of the Agenda will be organized to involve citizens. A *task force* composed of people from the Council, the university and other sectors external to politics and administration will also be set up.

Beyond the enthusiasm that characterizes these processes, two elements should be taken into account. On the one hand, it is necessary to avoid focusing solely on reporting and the achievement of sustainable development objectives in order to give importance to the entire process and the qualitative aspects that characterize it. Secondly, it is appropriate to ask how can the entire UN system support the efforts of local and regional governments, valuing the work that local authorities are doing to implement the SDGs?



4. Municipality of Nicosia, Michael Theodoulou - Administrative Manager Municipality of Nicosia



Photo by Dimitris Vetsikas from Pixabay

- Nicosia is the capital of the Cypriot Government (South) and the self-proclaimed Turkish Government of Northern Cyprus (North).
- 116,392 inhabitants (55,000 South and 61,368 North)⁴²

The Municipality of Nicosia (Cyprus) adopted the sustainable development objectives of Agenda 2030 in December 2018 and is implementing an action plan focused on 3 specific SDGs considered as priorities because they are able to give concrete answers to the needs of citizens and territory: **Goal 1 Poverty, Goal 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth and Goal 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities.**

These objectives have been linked to the programmes already in place, to promote a

⁴² Data on the population of Nicosia (north and south part) has been extracted in the sezione dedicata a Cipro of the World Population Review website.

collective and shared effort and make citizens aware of the opportunities offered by Agenda 2030. To meet this prerequisite, a number of existing projects have been identified and categorized according to the reference SDGs.

SDGs and the territory: Nicosia and Agenda 2030

With regard to Objective 1 (poverty), programmes already underway at the multifunctional centre in Nicosia have been identified. The programme includes the ***provision of care for the elderly and low-income people, nursery schools for the children of migrants seeking work, empowerment activities and the development of social skills for third country nationals*** in order to promote integration and facilitate their entry into the labour market⁴³. The Multipurpose Centre also offers support to ensure the same labour market inclusion of men, women and vulnerable groups, such as migrants and disadvantaged families.



SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), is interpreted by the Municipality of Nicosia through the project RISE - Research Centre on Interactive Media Smart System and Emerging Technologies⁴⁴.

The main objective of the project, which works in synergy with Objective 8, is to create a self-financed sustainable Centre of Excellence on research and innovation aimed at enhancing

⁴³ This is the Mingle project, financed by the AMIF programme, with the aim of preventing poverty and social isolation by facilitating active citizenship.

⁴⁴ The project is entirely managed by the municipality in collaboration with the three state universities of Cyprus, the UCL College of London Computer Science University and the Max Planck Institute for Informatics (MPI). The project started in November 2017, has a budget of 55 million and is funded by the European Commission and the Republic of Cyprus. The RISE Centre has 16 research teams with a total of 60 people employed - both researchers and administrative staff - and there is cooperation with both Cypriot and international companies that have already been developed.

emerging technologies and new areas of research.

A secondary objective is to create a sustainable number of job offers in the historic centre of the city of Nicosia and thus stimulate entrepreneurship and economic growth. The project is currently in the initial phase and already with positive implications.



Other ongoing projects in the Municipality of Nicosia are consistent with Objective 11 (sustainable cities) of Agenda 2030:

- ***the Healthy Cities project*** of the World Health Organization, of which Nicosia is an active member, and whose aim is to include health in the decision-making process of the Municipality;
- ***the Smart City initiative*** aimed at improving the sustainability and performance of urban services to create economic development;
- ***a sustainable mobility project for citizens*** through the provision of a low-cost bus service in an area of the city centre not reached by public transport;
- ***the Covenant of Mayors for Climate Change and Energy***, to which Nicosia is a signatory and through which the Municipality intends to promote renewable energy.



The Municipality of Nicosia positively considers the adoption of Agenda 2030, from which it is possible to obtain benefits and new opportunities. In particular, the SDGs have had the merit of outlining a common horizon of sustainable development that has shaped the local development strategy and promoted the coherence of the policies also adopted at municipal level.

5. Autonomous Community of Catalonia (Spain), Javier Sanchez Caño - Responsible for planning, monitoring and evaluation



Photo by Peter Thomas from Pixabay

- Autonomous Community situated in the north-east of Spain
- One of the most developed regions of the Iberian Peninsula
- 7.727,029 inhabitants⁴⁵
- 32,108 Km⁴⁶
- Official languages: Spanish, Catalan, Occitan

During the last year and a half, a new **development cooperation plan** was introduced in Catalonia and it is now possible to report the results, taking into account that this is a single policy and that it is important to examine the relationship between the policy formulation process and regional and national programming.

⁴⁵ The population data was extracted from the Institute of Statistics of Catalonia website (1/1/2020).

⁴⁶ The data concerning the surface area of Catalonia has been extracted from the Institute of Statistics of Catalonia website (2019).

The SDGs and the Territory: The new development cooperation plan

The localization of SDGs presents a key challenge, to ensure that the implementation of Agenda 2030 is able to generate real policy change and obtain the political support needed to implement them. This is a more complex exercise than the one that characterized the *Millennium Development Goals* and, considering the difficulties in gathering a broad consensus, in Catalonia an attempt was made to focus the commitment on a single intervention: the introduction of a new **development cooperation plan**. In order for the SDGs to be effective, it is essential to consider them as opportunities rather than obligations, and to involve stakeholders who, in turn, share their interest.

In this specific case, the two main stakeholders involved were: a company working on new technologies and which can make a very important contribution to the location of the Sustainable Development Goals, and the University of Knowledge, which considers the SDGs as an opportunity to present its role in society not only as a centre for secondary or higher education, but also as a reference point for the creation of opportunities between people, companies and the world of research. NGOs, which have always been interlocutors of the regional government with regard to development policies, have been reluctant to dialogue with other stakeholders and were jealous of the relationship that was being established with other stakeholders of the territorial system.

In Catalonia, internal dialogue (with the main stakeholders of the territory) is a priority over intergovernmental and multilevel dialogue with the central government, also because policy coherence for development is a fundamental

element for the implementation of SDGs. Trade policy interventions or immigration policy should be consistent with development policy. However, in this new globalized world, domestic policy also has an impact on sustainable development at home and abroad.

Having gained expertise in development policy, which is also recognized by the Spanish Government, Catalonia has started a new mode of dialogue with the rest of the central government.

Finally, with regard to the results achieved in the implementation path of the agenda, it is complicated to assess the results according to indicators and targets. Moreover, development cooperation is an area where money spent to achieve a given objective is traditionally used as a measure to assess the success of an intervention. However, with development objectives it is impossible to use this indicator, since only the recipients of international cooperation measures can report to the United Nations on what impact has been generated on Agenda 2030⁴⁷.



⁴⁷ In response to the request of Gianni Bottalico of ASVIS, who asked for further information on the measurement of indicators, Sanchez Caño illustrated his point of view by mentioning, by way of example, the economic contribution allocated to Morocco to support the education sector. In this case it is complex to assess the impact of the SDGs because the design involves other partners and other funding and therefore it is not possible to isolate the contribution of the Region of Catalonia.



6. Municipality of Barcarena (Brazil) - Patricia Menezes, Mayor's Office, Barcarena City Council



Photo by Rolf Koster from Pixabay

- Brazilian municipality located in the North of the country, belonging to the State of Pará in the metropolitan area of Belém.
- 121,190 inhabitants⁴⁸
- Area: 1,310.588 km²

Beginning in 2013, the Municipality of Barcarena has started to align its Multiannual Plan 2014-2017 with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the principles of the post-2015 agenda. This was the first step in the process of institutionalizing the UN development agendas, which was based on multi-sectoral partnerships, capacity building and multi-level governance. Today, the Municipality of Barcarena has become a national and international reference point in the implementation of these international documents.

⁴⁸ The data concerning the population of Barcarena are strategic from the document “Estimates of the population residing in Brazil and units of the Federation with reference date of 1 July 2017”.

The SDGs and the territory: Barcarena, a worthy example

In Barcarena, the integration of Agenda 2030 into local planning has involved the mayor Antonio Carlos Vilaça personally, but it is the public administration as a whole that has sensed the innovative scope of the SDGs. The activities of involving the population concerned several interventions: the undertaking of public hearings, during which citizens were able to indicate the territorial priorities to be addressed and that the public administration has tried to satisfy through the elaboration of dedicated public policies, the translation into Portuguese of the United Nations documents, to promote the dissemination of the principles of Agenda 2030, and the development of school curricula based on the Sustainable Development Objectives along with many other interventions. The city has been fully involved in this process because, as the mayor has repeatedly stated, “everything must be aligned with the SDGs” in order to reduce the strong social and environmental impacts arising from the port, mining and industrial activities that impact on the territory of Barcarena. Last but not least, it is appropriate to point out that significant attention has been paid to the issue of transparency and open government. The population can access the budget of the Municipality and monitor the way public resources are spent. The local government of Barcarena is making a great effort to position itself with determination towards a new model of development, sustainable and inclusive, without receiving concrete support from the Brazilian government⁴⁹.



⁴⁹ To better understand the path undertaken by Barcarena to integrate SDGs to local planning you can visit dedicated website.

7. Municipality of Bruges (Belgium), Annick Vandamme - Coordinator North-South Department/ City of Bruges



Photo by Erin Summer from Pixabay

- Belgian city, capital of West Flanders
- 117.377 inhabitants⁵⁰
- Approx. 9 million tourists a year

The City of Bruges has adopted a “global” local policy. The choices made locally are selected on the basis of international solidarity and sustainable development. In order to involve citizens so that they in turn mobilize for a better world, it is also necessary to motivate them emotionally.

The SDGs and the Territory: Getting citizens excited and closer to Agenda 2030

The strategy put in place is based on three pillars:

1. Global citizenship and awareness raising on international issues (e.g. climate change and poverty);
2. Global partnerships, collaboration with other partners on global issues, in Bruges and abroad;
3. Local policies consistent with major international issues.

Regarding the first pillar - global citizenship - the priority was to explain to people what SDGs were in a simple and interesting way to citizens.

In order to stimulate the interest of citizens towards SDGs, the City of Bruges has undertaken three concrete initiatives: testimonials from the world of football have been involved, the “GPS city game” has been created that allows residents and tourists to visit the city and at the same time answer some questions about Bruges and sustainability, and, finally, civil society stakeholders have been invited to share their experiences with SDGs.

Finally, the Association of Flemish Municipalities organized a meeting of the sustainable municipalities, which in turn selected the mayors as “heroes of sustainability”, local faces symbolizing the municipalities’ commitment to Agenda 2030.

With regard to Pillar 3, global partnerships, the

⁵⁰ The date is set out in the document entitled ‘Legal Population by municipality on 1 January 2018’.

City of Bruges is experimenting with partnerships with other cities in Cameroon. A lot of chocolate is produced in Belgium, made with cocoa that also comes from Cameroon, so the intention of this partnership is to work on a more sustainable cocoa supply chain.



OPEN DI BATE

“Partnerships between local authorities in developing countries and local authorities in developed countries, and implementation of the GDD: are there experiences and/or good practices of decentralized cooperation in Cameroon and Madagascar? Stefano Marta, OECD

Hanitra Rasamison, General Manager of the Municipal Development Fund, Madagascar

Madagascar is currently working with German cooperation through the KFW⁵¹. In the case of German cooperation a partnership is in place which has made it possible to establish an inclusive programme of community development and decentralization. The aim of this programme is to improve the provision of basic public services. The actions and activities carried out are based on the needs of the population, including the construction of schools and rural roadways. All this in the context of SDG-oriented planning.

Diaw Seynabou, UNDP Senegal

While African countries have established cooperation relationships with European countries, it should be pointed out that the UNDP has a cooperation network of more than 170 countries through which experiences are exchanged, thus forming an even richer partnership than the European-Africa cooperation.

Concerning UNDP Senegal, the integration of the SDGs takes place at three levels:

1. Alignment of development objectives with the

⁵¹ KFW is the Credit Institute for Reconstruction established in Germany following the Second World War.

Country Planning Document. In Senegal there is the “Emerging Plan”, which is the reference document for development policy to which the central government, with the support of the UNDP, is aligning the SDGs.

2. The collection of data at central and local level and the implementation of mechanisms to measure progress. With regard to planning, the UNDP facilitates interaction between the central and local levels because the two areas of government do not communicate. Additionally, the UNDP is supporting the central government in the development of a local planning guide, integrating the SDGs that will be made available to local authorities when the planning document is drafted.

3. The last aspect concerns all the development actions that have been affected in all areas to implement Agenda 2030.

Citizens participate: The example of the Complaints Office in Madagascar

Ngo Pouga Suzanne Native, Cameroon

- How can African countries involved in the SDG implementation process equip themselves with a complaint's office?
- At what level of government are complaints made?
- How are they implemented so that they can help African countries? Cameroon, for example, is at the moment, very far from this situation.

Hanitra Rasamison, Director General of the Madagascar Municipal Development Fund

A campaign is underway in Madagascar to restore confidence between the population and the government at both national and local levels. Different types of complaint handling offices have been set up. There is a presidency office which receives complaints from citizens and civil servants. Therefore, anyone can send complaints about the management of public affairs at national and local level to this office and there is a director and ad hoc teams that collect complaints. It is important to collect complaints, but it is necessary to develop measures for grouping complaints and to have a means of verification for the effective handling of such complaints.

“The White”, the independent anti-corruption control office, has also been set up. If complaints are found to be illegal, the office sends the file to ‘The White’ to be dealt with in a legal manner. For any investment project at both national and local level, a toll-free number has been set up for all citizens who see or suspect that illegal actions have occurred. The toll-free number is also linked to the complaints handling office within the Presidency. The Presidency and “The White” act together to investigate possible dysfunctions at local level.



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What if art could also help solve problems? It can happen sometimes. Let's give an example: citizens, all the more so in a situation of a very serious emergency like the one we are going through, see their confidence in public institutions diminish.

The main cause is the growing disconnection between the way people perceive the public sector and the impact it has on their lives. More and more people feel abandoned and this represents a high level of risk to the system based on democracy and the provision of public services.

It is clear that art and artists alone cannot develop a new climate of trust, of a sense of belonging. But they can make us understand the need not to look superficially at what surrounds us, and the need to represent the life of the individual and that of a civilized community, which is the history of all.

In this sense the procedure that was carried out on 24 November 2019 on the occasion of **Venice City Solutions** 2030 is quite exemplary. The workshop activity that Ca' Foscari proposed on that occasion was in fact one of the most participative outcomes of the workshop dedicated to museum didactics that Dr. Angela Bianco had conceived for the Summer School of Orientation of the university, for a group of 20 students of fifth year superior.

Then, after a brief training, the students had visited the exhibition of the Russian painter Gely Korzhev Back to Venice, an artist who throughout his life had stressed the fundamental importance of the individual, but also his constant and necessary contact with society.

With this interpretation key - not the only one, for a figure of such great depth - they had then tried their hand, both in sub-groups and individually, in creating a workshop for the exhibition. The best project proposed for an adult audience was

presented to the participants of the **Venice City Solutions** 2030 conference.

For them too, it began with a brief introductory lecture on the exhibition, followed by a visit. The participants were then asked to choose one of the works on display and in turn to produce a work of art (a drawing, a painting, a poem) with which to express the emotions that the original painting had aroused in them. The young students' project also included a parallel exhibition in which the participants would explain their creations to the public, thus sharing their life experience.

Artists have always shown what we don't see. Their works, if we strive to understand them, belong to us and are handed down from generation to generation, from teenage students to adults and to the elderly.

Ca' Foscari has been experimenting for over ten years with new forms of use of the work of art, communication and reflection on artistic practice. Not a corollary of everyday existence but rather a lens that outlines its contours, reveals its critical aspects, preserves and transmits values.



“Human sustainability and knowledge drive fear away” - Silvia Burini, PhD Comparative History of Contemporary Art, Director CSAR - Centre for Studies on the Arts of Russia, Cà Foscari University

As an expert on Russian art and “museum education” I have always tried to make people understand that the knowledge of “the other” leads us to appreciate it, and remove the fear of diversity. In my opinion, human sustainability, even before environmental or economic sustainability, springs from mutual knowledge and a willingness to know each other, just as the beauty of art can only be grasped with open and inclusive eyes. **Venice City Solution** is an initiative that invites us to observe reality with an open eye, and as a University we find ourselves in this way observing the world.

“Agenda 2030 and University: Ca’ Foscari’s commitment” - Flavio Gregori, Pro-Rector of Ca’ Foscari University

Sustainability, Agenda 2030 and the creation of citizenship, are issues that have always been of interest to Cà Foscari University and have become particularly important in recent years. The mission of Universities is to educate, train and inform citizens about the fundamental issues of living in society and Cà Foscari is one of the first Universities to have set up a department dedicated to the study of sustainability aimed at producing activities not only for teachers or students, but for all citizens. Sustainability is in fact present both within its teaching activities and in its third mission activities, i.e. those that involve a transfer of knowledge to society as a whole. Moreover, when Cà Foscari’s teachers compile the educational plans and study programmes of the disciplines they are going to teach, they are required to indicate the level of interest and importance that the topic of sustainability has within the course, and this fulfilment is valid both for teaching directly related to these themes and for courses of different types. This approach ensures that the theme of sustainability is not only understood as a scientific dimension, but that it takes on an all-embracing character, taking into account economic planning and the social aspects within which the behaviour of an aware citizen is placed. This is our and your commitment.





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Creating citizenship means creating citizens, and citizens are the protagonists of Agenda 2030. For no one to feel excluded and for everyone to be part of the global effort towards sustainable development, it is necessary to strengthen the relationship between citizens and the institutions, and between the institutions themselves, worn out by the growing disaffection with politics, which is often considered inadequate to deal with the crises of our time, and by the excessive bureaucratization of public procedures, which makes access by the population complex and cumbersome.

So how do we do that?

To try to contextualize the main obstacles to the creation of an aware citizenship and identify new solutions, **Venice City Solutions** 2019 invited interlocutors from civil society organizations and local governments with the aim of setting up a debate around four themes:

1. Open government: SDGs as a tool to bring citizens closer to local institutions - transparency and accountability of institutions to build new and stronger relationships;

2. New generations: Creating the citizenship of the future - the involvement of young people in Agenda 2030 integration activities in local planning;

3. Business: how can social and economic stakeholders contribute to the implementation of SDGs at the local level?

The role of social and economic stakeholders in the creation of shared value, through partnerships and collaborations that allow the networking of different expertise to achieve common goals;

4. Building trust at local level: key stakeholders and innovative tools.

Renewed trust between institutions and citizens, including through the use of innovative tools.



4.1 Open government: SDGs as a tool to bring citizens closer to local institutions

Through Development Goal 16 “Peace, justice and strong institutions”, Agenda 2030 recognizes, with respect to the protection of the rule of law and of human rights, the conditions necessary to build effective *governance* that can guarantee peace and stability to communities, fundamental elements to promote sustainable development.

The topic discussed in the first working group, moderated by **Diana Lopez Caramazana** - Head of Unit Local Government and Decentralization of **UN-HABITAT** - concerned the issue of **open government**, intended as a tool of transparency and openness towards citizens, and the **role of SDGs as facilitators of the relationship** between

citizenship and institutions. In this perspective, the communication of public action becomes the means through which it is possible to make the work of local governments more accessible.

Patrícia Menezes, Head of Agenda 2030 at the Office of the Mayor of the **City of Barcarena** (Brazil) recounted the story of the integration of SDGs in the local planning of her Municipality, strongly encouraged by the Mayor Antonio Carlos Vilça and the municipal administration as a whole. The Development Goals have been conveyed in every context of public life: from schools to hospitals to public meetings, all under the sign of maximum transparency between administrators and citizens. The methodology used provided for the organization of hearings, during which the population defined priorities, and the City Council subsequently drew up policies aimed at meeting these demands.

The theme of new ways of relationships between civil society and local authorities was addressed by **Massimo Renno**, President of **Botteghe del Mondo**, the Italian Association for Fair Trade. Mr. Renno recalled that there are currently 1.6 million certified farmers and 991 Botteghe nel Mondo branded organizations in Europe. In Italy there are 72 organizations and they involve five thousand volunteers and members. The concept of sustainability is in his opinion a harbinger of contradictions, suffice it to say that fair trade, born with the aim of making “economics with the defeated”, was considered by the traditional economy little or not at all sustainable. Renno is convinced that it is not the economy that should be questioned but its ability to penetrate every aspect of our lives. In his opinion it is necessary to rethink our development model, question the concept of growth and re-evaluate the theme of decreased growth in order to renew the

relationship with the citizen¹. At the base of this reflection, there is the microsystem that links the producer to the distributor, in a relationship of mutual trust, support and respect. Returning to the common good is therefore possible and to do so local authorities must equip themselves with courageous administrative tools. The subsidiarity pacts, for example, help to create citizenship because they involve citizens and make them active and dynamic players in their communities. Communication must also go back to grassroots relations, social networks and IT platforms can help but they too must become responsible and can in no way replace the relationship between people.

In the debate on open government, the issue of *accountability*, central to the speech by **John Romano**, Coordinator of the International Network for **Transparency, Accountability and Participation** (TAP)², cannot be ignored. TAP has produced the *SDG Accountability Handbook: A Practical Guide for Civil Society*, which aims to support civil society organizations that hold their government accountable for the commitments made by signing Agenda 2030. Romano is convinced that local authorities can influence central governments in terms of accountability and that civil society organizations, being close to citizens, can be valuable allies³. The issue of public action communication becomes central again if we consider, on the one hand, that we cannot take for granted that awareness of SDGs is vast

¹ Frédéric Vallier, Secretary General of the CEMR Council, intervened by saying that we cannot think that society is better or worse only according to the growth rates of each country. In his view, there is opposition between growth and development and we need to rethink the development model in Europe as well, so that we can guarantee well-being for our citizens.

² TAP - Transparency, Accountability, Participation is a broad international coalition of 450 civil society organisations based in 80 different countries working together to promote peace, justice and inclusion (SDG 16) and to help strengthen and localise Agenda 2030.

³ Although the Brazilian government is not sensitive to the issues of sustainable development, the municipality of Barcarena is making a huge effort to inform the public and to set programmes on the basis of the development objectives of Agenda 2030, as demonstrated by the strength of the local authorities.

and widespread at all levels of government, while on the other hand, using the “local” language and therefore connecting SDGs to concrete issues, guarantees greater *ownership* by citizens of Agenda 2030.

The localization of SDGs can also take place in a diametrically opposite way, starting at a high political level and affecting regional governments in a cascade. This is what happened in **Kenya**, where the Board of Governors, represented in **Venice City Solutions** by **Eunice Daritsu**, involved the counties in the planning activities, “locking down” the alignment of policies to SDGs at all levels of government. Although the path has begun, there is still a long way to go because not all the issues covered by Agenda 2030 stimulate interest in Kenyan politics and the involvement of civil society is recent. For the moment, only three counties have policies in place to regulate citizen participation, and citizens are involved in all stages of local planning. Cape Verde has also started a *top-down* integration process of SDGs, from central government to local authorities. **Pedro José Morais**, Mayor of **Ribera Brava** (Capo Verde) spoke on behalf of the Government of Cape Verde and at the invitation of the UNDP to illustrate the highly sustainable strategic plans adopted to implement Agenda 2030 at national and local level. In order to ensure the concrete implementation of the Agenda, platforms for multidisciplinary dialogue, discussion and awareness-raising of citizens on sustainable development issues have been established. These platforms, led by Mayor Morais, identified needs and proposals and selected SDGs on which to focus efforts in the Ribeira Brava area (2, Fighting hunger; 5, Gender equality; 6, Clean water and sanitation).

4.2 New generations. Creating the citizenship of the future

Agenda 2030 is about citizens and about the future. For this reason, the involvement of the new generations in the implementation of SDGs at local level and in the planning of sustainable development interventions is central to achieving the objectives and targets set by the agenda, but above all to imagining a new society after 2030. The questions that the second working group “Creating the citizenship of the future” has tried to answer, concern the challenges to be faced today to have a more sustainable world in 2030, the actions that should start to be implemented now and how to ensure the involvement of young people in these processes. The session was moderated by **Pablo Fernandez Marmissolle Daguerre**, Head of Cabinet of the **United Cities and Local Governments** (UCLG), who tried to weave together abstract aspects such as inspiration, resilience, strength of example, and the accountability of institutions, with concrete tools and strategies to promote empowerment and involvement of citizens.

Batista Poitier, Director of Foreign Affairs and **World Enable**⁴ Partnerships, pointed out that citizenship is based on two pillars: inclusion and accessibility. Not only for people with disabilities, but in a universal perspective. Participation in society depends on the peculiarities and diversities of each one, which is why, for example, if we want to plan a service for immigrants, we will have to adopt an accessible language. Breaking down barriers and ensuring dignity in participation is one of the objectives of Agenda 2030 and can begin at the local level thanks to earnest collaborations

⁴ World Enable is an international organization engaged in advocacy activities on inclusion.

between civil society and institutions. World Enable has started a collaboration with Microsoft because the digital world can promote social inclusion. Building resilient societies, recalls Batista Poitier, means equipping them with the ability to adapt to the changes that occur in the course of everyone's life and prepare them to face new challenges through the introduction of innovative tools, including digital.

Flexibility and adaptability were at the heart of the intervention of **Marina Ponti**, Director of the **UN SDG Action Campaign**, who highlighted the extraordinary nature of Agenda 2030. For the first time in fact, the debate on the future is universal and no longer fragmented into actions aimed at the countries of the South and North of the globe. The issues addressed by the Agenda have international relevance and at the same time give local governments the opportunity to ensure that the needs of their citizens are not disregarded. Ponti believes that there is an urgent need to create a new, global citizenship, in order to give hope to people and in particular to young people. The key performers in the testimony given by **Julio Andrade**, Mayor's Councillor for Foreign Action and Development Cooperation of the **City of Malaga**, are young people and participation. Andrade illustrated the participatory trail started by the Municipality that led to the creation of an "SDGs network", a group of citizen-stakeholders involved in the implementation of Agenda 2030. For several decades Malaga had already experienced the involvement of young people in local planning, and over the years has aggregated ten thousand activists who in turn train new volunteers. This has also been possible thanks to the training tools made available to the United Nations and available online. In order to reach as many people as possible, it is necessary to identify an engaging methodology for citizens that includes the use

of digital platforms. The dynamism of the City of Malaga with regard to Agenda 2030 issues is demonstrated by the decision to equip itself for the first time with a global strategic plan to which is added the action of aligning the SDGs with the Urban Agenda. Finally, Andrade highlighted the importance of measuring the impact of local indicators and involving politicians and private sector representatives in the monitoring so that they are aware of the progress and difficulties of their territory on the road towards sustainable development.

An example of successful collaboration between institutions and new generations was presented by **Kontxi Odriozola Eizagirre**, Head of the European and International Strategy Office of the **Province of Barcelona**, who brought the case of Cornellà de Llobregat Municipality to the attention of participants. Here, the city council and the high schools collaborated in the activities of implementation and awareness raising among the citizens on issues related to Agenda 2030. The students undertook to carry out a two-year research project on aspects related to the Sustainable Development Objectives, on which the mayor and the municipal administration subsequently undertook to define local policies. The innovative aspect of this approach lies in the ability of institutions to network and involve young people, transforming them into participants able to influence administrative decisions taken at local level. From being mere addressees, citizens have thus become co-creators of policies and have helped to spread the knowledge of Agenda 2030 in their community.

Martina Gonano, Delegate Lecturer for Sustainability at **Ca' Foscari University** in Venice, dealt with young people and the future in her speech, about with the fact that young people are

not the citizens of the future, but are the citizens of the present, and are well aware of what concerns and interests them. For this reason, the University must earn their trust by engaging in concrete actions that involve their active involvement. Education is transformation, but for it to be able to imagine a better future, it is necessary to adopt universal thinking that creates connections between different disciplines.

4.3 Business. How social and economic players can contribute to SDGs at local level

The third working group was moderated by **Lucy Slack**, Deputy Secretary General of the **Commonwealth Local Government Forum** (CLGF)⁵, and focused on the role of social and economic stakeholders in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals at the local level. As mentioned by Slack, stakeholders with different interests can undertake joint initiatives to achieve common objectives consistent with Agenda 2030, thus promoting a genuine and concrete localization of SDGs. The role of partnerships and networks is therefore essential to ensuring the full satisfaction of the three areas of economic, environmental and social sustainability, and to inaugurate a new relationship with citizens, of which the first intervention is a good practice.

Yolanda Martinez, Secretary for Social Development of the **Government of Oaxaca**, spoke about the ways in which the participation of citizens and stakeholders in the area on the issues covered by Agenda 2030 has been promoted. The experiment aimed to address three specific issues: the lack of knowledge of SDGs by citizens, the frequent renewals in the government of local administrations, which did not guarantee continuity in policy planning, and the willingness of the Government of Oaxaca to work to promote a more active and responsible citizenship on the aspects of sustainable development. To respond to these needs, the Council for the Implementation of SDGs was established, a political body chaired by the Governor of the State, in which Cabinet members, secretaries, social and economic players of the territory and citizens participate.

⁵ The Commonwealth Local Government Forum is a global organisation that brings together local authorities, their national associations and local government ministries from Commonwealth member countries.

It is divided into three working groups dedicated to social inclusion, economic growth and sustainability. The final objective is to promote better public policies and raise an awareness of Agenda 2030 among all communities in the State of Oaxaca. Madagascar is also one of those countries that have integrated SDGs into the vision and programming of their development model.

Hanitra Rasamison, Director General of the **Municipal Development Fund of Madagascar**, spoke at the session highlighting the progressive tendency of the national government to promote administrative decentralization and the empowerment of local governments with respect to Agenda 2030, with the dual objective of providing basic services to citizens and encouraging forms of public participation. The socio-economic stakeholders of the territory were also involved through the establishment of the *National Equalization Fund*, which helps to reduce disparities between the various areas of the country and promotes solidarity and social cohesion. The second tool put in place to involve the various stakeholders in the development path undertaken is the “*local economic game*”, which aims to support the creation of infrastructure, open spaces for dialogue with the private sector in the context of economic events and launch public-private partnerships⁶. The dialogue between municipalities and economic operators has been positive because public administrations have been stimulated to continue investments, while investors have been able to receive information and assistance on the procedures necessary to launch activities in specific areas of the country.

The second part of the session dealt with the role of finance, which appears to be more and more decisive in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the basis for thinking about

the impact finance that binds investments to the social fallout of a project or initiative. In this regard, **Mitra Anderson-Oliver**, Head of Urban Design and Strategy, **Impact Investment Group** (Australia) said that it is necessary to demonstrate that finance can strengthen the common good and create a path towards a significant and positive environmental and social impact.

The relationship that binds communities, understood as groups of people linked by reciprocal relationships, to the “money market”, and therefore to finance, was at the centre of the speech by **Riccardo Moro**, Global Co-Chair of **Global Call to Action Against Poverty** (GCAP)⁷. Taking up the issues addressed by Massimo Renno from Botteghe nel Mondo at the working group dedicated to the relationship between citizens and local administrators, Moro said that although it is difficult to imagine a world without monetary exchanges, the degeneration of the financial system contributes to creating inequality and poverty. Fair trade, in his view, represents the “real” economy, the model of exchange that contributes to achieving the goals of Agenda 2030.

⁶ Madagascar has recently enacted the law on public partnership.

⁷ Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP) is a network of more than 11,000 civil society organisations organised in 58 national coalitions and electoral groups of women, young people and socially excluded people and aims, among others, to support people in their struggles for justice.





4.4 Creating trust at the local level: Principal stakeholders and innovative tools

The fourth session on the theme of VSC2019, moderated by **Johannes Krassnitzer**, Director of the **UNDP's Art-GOLD** initiative, began with two questions: how to build trust at the local level? What contribution can the Sustainable Development Goals make?

Local governments are daily at the forefront between an increasingly complex and informed citizenship and a public sector that communicates with languages and tools that are still not easily accessible. This is why dialogue with international associations of mayors and local administrators, companies and NGOs working in the field of innovation, including digital innovation, can help to identify strategies to reconnect with citizens and their needs, always focusing on the key issues of Agenda 2030.

The first speech concerned the relationship between citizens and the European Union. Over the last 10 years, as reported by **Frédéric Vallier**, Secretary General of the **Council of European Municipalities and Regions** (CEMR)⁸, Euro-scepticism has grown exponentially and populist parties have gained support. The reasons for this distrust are to be found in the frequent crises that have crossed the continent in recent years: the economic crisis, the environmental emergency, international conflicts and, last but not least, the migration crisis. In order to rebuild the relationship between European citizens and institutions, it is essential to create a “*governance partnership*”, which consists of sharing the search

for solutions to the challenges of our time. To go in this direction it is necessary to restore trust between the different levels of government, promoting cooperation and strengthening the capacities of local governments, not only through training for civil servants and politicians, but also by addressing the issue of fiscal decentralization to give local authorities the possibility to have their own resources and develop action plans. The second step must be about openness towards citizens, who are no longer willing to observe the work of politics, but want to participate. From Europe to Africa, the issue of trust in institutions is central to local politics.

Emmanuel Djima Zossou, Mayor of **Porto-Novo**, the capital of Benin, is working in this direction, convinced that involving the people means facilitating their greater understanding of the decisions taken by governments. This is particularly true in countries like Benin, which has experienced a period of strong political instability, which ended in 1990 with the return to democracy, and which subsequently adopted decentralization policies with the aim of strengthening local authorities and re-establishing a relationship of trust with citizens. The first participatory mechanism put in place by the Municipality of Porto-Novo concerned the development of the Municipal Development Plan, which collected the needs and requests of the population through popular consultations in the districts and quarters of the city. Subsequently, the document was adopted by the institutions that are now bound by it. The theme of responsibility is linked to the creation of trust: in order to keep the citizens constantly informed about the progress of the Municipality, every 3 months “ordinary sessions” are organized, involving all the municipal councillors of Porto-Novo. Additionally, at the instigation of civil society organizations, the municipal administration has

⁸ CEMR has been working for a long time to recreate trust between local institutions and citizens, including through SDGs.

started to collect ideas and proposals, report on the activities carried out and draw up reports on important and current issues for the territory. Finally, Emmanuel Djima Zossou pointed out that digital tools and social networks allow them to reach a large number of citizens and are therefore valid allies in strategies for involving the population.

A concrete example of how digital tools can contribute to sustainable development and empowerment of populations was provided by **Petr Suska**, Competence Team Leader at the **Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Engineering (IAO)**⁹. Suska brought to **Venice City Solutions** 2019 examples of applied research that have increased the capacity of a territory and its inhabitants. The first project presented concerned an initiative financed by the German Ministry of the Environment and carried out in Piura in Peru, Saltillo in Mexico and Kochi in India, with the goal of developing sustainable development plans and launching projects compatible with Objective 11 of Agenda 2030. The second research project was implemented in a small town south of Stuttgart, Germany, where citizens complained about the lack of clothing outlets and large shopping centres. The objective of the research was to simulate, through the use of 3D virtual reality and citizen participation, what kind of fallout in terms of traffic congestion and pollution this high-impact intervention would entail. The methodology proved to be very powerful because it defused the discontent of the population through data collected directly from citizens, who during the experiment used apps and other digital tools to make an emotional analysis of their city's spaces.

Finally, **Marta Lopes**, Coordinator of the **Institute for Strategic Dialogue**, that manages the *Strong*

⁹ The Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Engineering (IAO) is a European non-profit organisation 30% funded by the German Ministry of Research and Education.

Cities Network, the first global network of mayors, politicians and professionals from all countries around the world, united in building social cohesion and resilience against extremism. Lopes has brought to the attention of **Venice City Solutions** 2019 a concrete example of local confidence building: the experience of Isiolo, one of Kenya's 47 counties that is developing an action plan to counter violent extremism¹⁰. Isiolo has established a *multi-stakeholder* group composed of the county commission representing the national government, the county governor and civil society organizations (including community recognized religious leaders). The interesting element of the "Isiolo model" is that the planned actions have been incorporated into the local action plan and the integrated development plan, because security issues are closely linked to development policies. A further aspect that characterizes the relationship between citizens and institutions is the proliferation of information that often turns out to be fake news, whose aim is to feed distrust and mistrust towards institutions. To address this problem, the network has created the solidarity index, which consists of mapping political conversations online in order to analyze and geo-localize perceived vulnerabilities in different districts of the city and bring evidence of interventions and policies to citizens.

The session ended with a speech by **Paola Berbeglia**, Representative of **CONCORD**¹¹, who stressed that the crisis of confidence also affects civil society organizations and the whole European community. Where does this distrust come from?

¹⁰ The United Nations has mandated all countries to develop national strategies to prevent and combat violent extremism. Very often, as is the case in Kenya, security policies are the responsibility of the national government but radicalisation takes place at the local level and terrorism has a strong impact on communities. For this reason, national and local governments must cooperate to combat the phenomenon.

¹¹ CONCORD is the European confederation of relief and development NGOs composed of 28 national associations, 25 international networks and 4 associate members representing more than 2,600 NGOs and is the main interlocutor with the EU institutions on development policy.

From 1970 to 2008, economic output in Europe quadrupled and millions of people emerged from poverty in developing countries. European democracies are consolidated and civil society can now express itself. So, where does the need for direct democracy and greater participation come from? The answer lies in the growth of “populist sovereignty”, which has been able to spread through the media and ride out phenomena such as globalization and societal change. Only through a constant commitment to global and conscious citizenship education, strongly supported by UNESCO, is it possible to mend our communities, become global citizens and fully share the system of values promoted by Agenda 2030.

“Agenda 2030 can inaugurate a new social contract”- Emilia Saiz, Secretary General, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

The Development Goals of Agenda 2030 are not only macro-objectives designed for major policies, they are deeply linked to everyday life and territories. Very often, however, even in the presence of a strong political will and leadership capacity on the part of local authorities, local and regional governments encounter difficulties in applying innovative instruments and introducing new policies, due to the legal framework in which they operate. Like the UCLG, we believe that Agenda 2030 can restore trust between civil society and institutions, inaugurate a new social contract capable of finding innovative solutions to overcome limitations and rigidities and establish a new relationship between man and the planet, bringing about a profound change in the way we live, consume and produce. Beauty, knowledge and citizenship are the essence of our being part of a community, and we believe that the 17 Development Goals can truly transform the world. Events like **Venice City Solutions** take an important step in this direction, helping to generate hope and confidence in the future.





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Recommendations on a Digital Solution for the Security of the United Nations Political in 2020

Firstly, we have begun to identify Agenda 2030 not only as the United Nations Agenda, but also, and above all, as a **collective agenda designed for humanity**. Being “ours”, it can be shaped at the local level to fit the needs and expectations of communities. In fact, SDGs impact on our daily view of citizens, who are the undisputed protagonists of sustainable development and, through participation in public life, can influence decision-making processes. Today, civil society holds the same level of information as *stakeholders* or organized institutions but does not have the tools to count on in decision-making processes. Moreover, the perception has matured that people are no longer able to make decisions, and that the world has become too complex to understand how institutions work and to link international dynamics to the impact they have on the private lives of each individual.

What emerged very clearly in Venice is that Agenda 2030 is not a simple collection of objectives and indicators, but a **truly transformative mechanism** that can help us connect distant dimensions, primarily the global and local dimensions. It is necessary to work together, with common objectives, to solve complex issues, giving the new generations and the most vulnerable groups the chance to be the authors of the change and transformations that society needs if we want to build a fairer and more sustainable world. Although the conviction has now matured that this is the ground on which we must move, that active citizenship is what we are looking for, we have not yet been able to take concrete action in this direction. This new citizenship must be the basis for sustainability, understood as a different way of life. It is not a question of creating new data, but of setting aside the sense of “*business as usual*” and concentrating on the concrete aspects of our daily life that need to change.

Another aspect that has become clear from the debate is the urgent need for a **different approach to our economic model**. The paradox between formal and informal economy is no longer valid, there are many other “types of economy” that cannot be classified in a binary way. The idea that growth and development are two different concepts is gaining ground, and that even the concept of decreasing growth can no longer have a negative connotation and can become a topic of discussion. There is no doubt that Agenda 2030 talks about development and not just economic growth.

Coming to the subject of the localization of SDGs, it should be stressed that it does not mean that everyone should remain in their own territory or community, but that local thinking should be adopted to generate a concrete impact on people’s lives, and consequently on societies. Many of the issues discussed here go beyond the traditional narrative and unfortunately are not normally part of local development projects. Being able to **adapt the priorities of the Agenda to local budget strategies** is the best approach to broaden the results of local action by giving it the right solidity, thanks to the result indicators of the SDGs.

We also talked about trust, and during the edition of **Venice City Solutions** 2019 we wondered if data generates trust, because in the digital world information is too much and difficult to understand. The answer is that trust is created with information and knowledge, but we must distinguish data from knowledge, because we must also consider the impact of data processing on the final result. On a local level, we are generating more and more data and we know for sure that this data will increase exponentially over the next 20 years: we need to protect the owners of the data and the way they are processed. At the moment, cities all

over the world are rather confused as to what to do about it, because they recognize the benefits of digitalization, but at the same time they are aware that the use of private data can conflict with the right to privacy. The Venice debate has proposed an approach that balances the need for development and the need for protection, two elements that public administrations must bear in mind.

Venice City Solutions is helping to create this **multi-stakeholder partnership** to advance the implementation of Agenda 2030, just as the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments is helping to develop this coalition partnership. There is a need to broaden the participation of the private sector and civil society, which remain key players especially on the 2019 issues. As local authorities, we must focus our action on protecting the community in order to combat inequalities. Only in an egalitarian world can we hope to give a future to future generations, not only in terms of fighting poverty, but also in terms of equal opportunities.

Other points that emerged from the debate were, briefly.

- It is necessary to include what was discussed at **Venice City Solutions** 2030, 2019 edition, in the Declaration that the *Global Task Force* presents annually to the HLPF to give voice to local authorities.
- It would be opportune to make the Venice platform permanent, making it a laboratory of experiences and results that can be applied locally in a global dimension.
- There are tools such as the website www.localizingsdgs.org that guarantee *follow up* actions, but it is important to continue

to collect concrete local stories about the SDGs implementation activities by cities and communities, as is undertaken in Venice with **Venice City Solutions**.

- The research world should work more closely with local governments to provide study and data support to help the SDGs implementation process. Similarly, the private sector should be included more and more decisively in the partnership to ensure its contribution to technological innovation and simplification. When reference is made to the private sector, small businesses are often forgotten, but they are key players in the economic and social fabric of communities.
- We cannot forget that spatial planning and urban planning are two essential tools of local government public action. SDGs become a unique tool for local administrators who want to start planning their territory pursuing the objectives of economic, social and environmental development. Only in this perspective can local policy guarantee the active participation of citizens, both in the consultation phase and in the choice of priorities, and in the monitoring of the actions undertaken.
- At the same time, citizens, in addition to the right to participate in the definition of objectives, must take responsibility, because the actions that each person takes on a daily basis at local level have an impact on the community and its future. Citizenship must therefore be characterized by equal rights and duties.
- It is necessary to document the experiences of implementing SDGs at local level more and more accurately. To do this, civil society

can be a valuable ally, stimulating local governments to map successful experiences and achievements. In order to ensure greater participation of citizens worldwide, it is necessary to promote the translation of documents and debates launched on these issues into as many local languages as possible, not just the official languages of the United Nations.

- It is urgent to restore trust not only between citizens and institutions, but also between the institutions themselves.

Transparency continues to be an important topic of discussion also in **Venice City Solutions**: excessive bureaucracy in the public sector remains one of the greatest causes of distrust on the part of citizens, and it is therefore urgent to make local governments increasingly open and transparent.

- Mayors and local administrators remain key players in the implementation of Agenda 2030, both for the local strategies they adopt and their direct relationship with citizens, and for their ability to bring together the many stakeholders that need to be involved. For this, it is necessary that their role is recognized by national and international institutions, and that they are guaranteed sufficient resources to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

The issues that need to be included in the recommendations of the *High Level Political Forum* can be summed up in a few key words: the notion of **shared responsibility** must be part of the new narrative on citizenship, because

the empowerment of people can help generate trust in institutions and facilitate the pursuit of sustainable goals for the benefit of all. In this sense, it is appropriate to refer to the concept of **co-creation of value in society**, to indicate the contribution that economic and social players, as well as segments of civil society, can make to innovate our development model.

In conclusion, local authorities, through the SDGs, can rethink the local development model to be adopted, draw strength from the contribution that citizenship can make in terms of driving change and, last but not least, create a renewed social pact with citizenship.





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The 2019 edition of Venice City Solutions in 5 keywords

AICCRE recognizes the value of the “Venice Laboratory” as a source of growth for its members. Even if there are no immediate and certain solutions to the problems that have emerged, it is fundamental to have the willingness to propose reflections and ideas to tackle global issues together. **Venice City Solutions 2030** intends to offer opportunities for interaction through a platform for the creative exchange of ideas and worthy experiences between local authorities around the world, member States and international institutions, with the participation of universities, private companies, representatives of the Third Sector and civil society. Venice’s strength lies not only in its wide participation at global level, but also in its ability to develop issues that do not present pre-packaged solutions, leaving room for dialogue and exchange between the different *stakeholders* of the Agenda. Specifically, the 2019 edition emphasized the need to **start again from a sense of community** in order to fully realize the goals of Agenda 2030 and take care of the common goods. Only from this renewed involvement of citizens will it be possible to recover the sense of belonging that is necessary to rebuild social ties. The UN Agenda, in fact, provides us with tools and indications to move from the current danger of individualism to the necessary sense of community. Here are AICCRE recommendations and key words of the 2019 edition.

1. The necessary change of course

The 2019 edition of **Venice City Solutions 2030** opened with the words of Martin Luther King: “*you may not be responsible for the situation you are in, but you will be if you do nothing to change it*”.

The first keyword for AICCRE is **change**. The change called for by Agenda 2030 must aim simultaneously at two objectives: **the creation of a new knowledge**, related to the challenges that countries, local governments, the private sector and civil society have in common on a global level, and **the development of a new conscience**, which pushes the human being to try to face the new challenges with greater responsibility. *The change towards the knowledge* in our case means openness to different realities and contexts, as happens with international cooperation. In order to approach this sector, we need to acquire a versatile and multicultural mentality, which is able to cascade itself into different socio-cultural environments and connect the different cultures of the world, and from which we can learn, because from discussion comes mutual enrichment. Phenomena such as migration or climate change represent challenges in which a dynamic and open-minded eye can seize stimuli and opportunities through which to try to improve the quality of life and to experience new ways of living.

The change in our consciousness is to be understood, instead, as a greater tendency to personal empowerment. In this, the holistic approach of science that conceives reality as a complex and mutual interaction between its parts can help us. Beyond the project of global consciousness, there is an urgent need to transform our own consciousness from a fragmented to a unitary mode. The awakening of a global consciousness

should be read as one of the keys necessary to the resolution of the current world crisis and an essential element for a future of sustainable development.

In fact, the Sustainable Development Goals provide a new shared model of strategic planning, and represent an innovative mechanism of transformation, not only for the holistic approach of the Agenda, but also for the definition of the real *agents of transformation* for the next 10 years: young people, who claim their future, and the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people of the world, who strongly demand fairer living conditions and more opportunities.

2. The value of partnership (SDG 17)



Partnership is an essential element in the social sciences, in joint actions and in cooperation between bodies coming from different countries in the political, economic and social fields.

The work in Venice has shown that the only sure recipe for the success of the UN Agenda is cooperation and the creation of partnerships that do not exclude anyone. International cooperation is based on a method of action that requires, at national level, new forms of cooperation between the public, private and voluntary sectors, which prefigure a cross-sectoral approach.

Public and private have been considered distinct areas of life since the '*Pericles*' vision, but they must be related to each other for the sake of the '*polis*'. **The private sector**, which often finds

itself in positions far from the logic of public administration, must be involved in the definition of sustainable development actions. Not only at the level of large international companies, but also by involving territorial realities of all dimensions. The role of SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises), which, with their main reference institutions, the local authorities, offer, and can increasingly guarantee, support to cities, particularly for the achievement of Objective 17 of Agenda 2030. This objective calls for the promotion of partnerships between public and private stakeholders and with segments of civil society, becomes crucial. In all the main countries participating in Venice - whether they are places of widespread industrialization, urban systems, areas of high environmental value - it emerged that the SMEs are chiefly are meeting the current challenges indicated by the *green economy*, digitalization and demographic dynamics in progress. On the other hand, it is always the SMEs that are the most sustainable economic realities and that insistently seek innovation.

The contribution of the **Third Sector** reopens the discussion on the models to be pursued: the comparison between "growth model" and "development model" is extremely topical. The Agenda emphasizes the existing diversity between the two models, promoting a new idea of development that does not even exclude the concept of decreased growth.

3. The Common Good

An issue intrinsic to Agenda 2030 concerns the ethical sense that must be pursued in the local management of public administrations, i.e. the interconnection between economy, ethics and sustainable development that emerges from the

approach of the 17 Sustainable Development Objectives. The link between the three factors is the principle of the **common good**, understood as a universal common good.

With a contemporary and simplified language to make the best use of it, Agenda 2030 proposes an ambitious and subtle reasoning, as it defines ethical guidelines for sustainable development, and does so internationally. The management of common goods must become the way to achieve the objectives: this requires the abandonment of economic and political thinking that still today measures the wealth of nations and individuals with the GDP figure, to move to indicators that take into account alternative aspects, such as quality production and quality consumption, including the ability to respect and enhancing social relations between individuals. *The SDGs Indicators* can make a contribution if cascaded on the basis of the transformations of daily life. Elinor Ostrom, winner of the Nobel Prize for Economics for her studies on economic *governance*, with particular reference to the *Governing the Commons*¹, considers the management of natural resources and, specifically, how to ensure their long-term economic sustainability. Ostrom wonders how a group of subjects, called “*principals*”, interdependent among themselves, can self-organize and self-govern in order to obtain long-term collective benefits, overcoming the temptation of *free-riding* and, more generally, opportunistic behaviour.

In Italy, a change of perspective, also at a regulatory level, on this issue was proposed by the Rodotà Commission, which was responsible for preparing a draft delegated bill for the reform of the Civil Code rules on public assets. Stefano

Rodotà introduced a new fundamental category of *common goods*, which do not fall *stricto sensu* into the classes of public goods, or public property (natural resources, air, parks, forests, glaciers, protected wildlife and flora, archaeological, cultural, environmental goods), but indicate those goods that suffer from a highly critical situation, due to problems of scarcity and impoverishment, and the absolute insufficiency of legal protection. In 2007, the Commission defined them as elements that express utility, and are functional to the exercise of fundamental rights and the free development of the person, and are aligned with the principle of intergenerational protection of an utility. Public goods, on the other hand, are often not fully exploited in economic terms and are not even perceived as potential sources of wealth by the public administrations concerned.

Skills and resources, therefore, remain the determining variables for the definition of the level of implementation of SDGs at local level, but not only. This requires a quantum leap on the part of local administrators, who find themselves experimenting with innovative solutions in the Public affairs management arena. The change requested by the SDGs necessarily involves the willingness to invest, stimulating a transformation process that does not end with an increase in infrastructure works, but with a change of approach that must now start from **new models of governance**.

¹ Ostrom E., *Governing the commons. The evolutions of institutions for collective actions*, Cambridge University Press, Massachusetts, 1988



Photo by Stefano Cola

4. Trust in Reciprocity



Trust must once again distinguish, first and foremost, the relationship between citizens and institutions. Goal 16 highlights the need to tackle the problem of excessive bureaucracy, which for local authorities represents an insurmountable wall in the dialogue with citizens and the private sector. To tackle it, in the 21st century, new tools offered by digitalization can and must be used, whose opportunities are not yet fully explored.

At the heart of administrative activity there is transparency, together with the principles of economy, efficiency, impartiality and publicity. In Italy, with the entry into force of Law 241/1990, the principle of transparency and publicity has become the main source of guarantee for the citizen, who can know about the activity of the administration through “access to the data and information of the latter”. At the international level, the multilateral *Open Government Partnership* (OGP) initiative, launched in September 2011 by eight countries (Brazil, Great Britain, Indonesia, Mexico, Norway, the Philippines, South Africa and the United States of America), now seventy-five, is based on the assumption that there is a growing demand from citizens worldwide for greater involvement in public affairs, and for greater transparent, more attention to their needs and expectations, and more accountability and effective administration. This path, while worthy, has not yet been completed and has not yet achieved the expected results. In this unexplored world, the value of relationships and narrative compared to the power of data must be taken into account, because trust relationships cannot be built only on the basis of Indicators.

Sissela Bok writes: “(...) *trust is a social good to be protected as much as the air we breathe or the water we drink. If it is damaged, the community as a whole suffers and if it is destroyed, societies falter and collapse*”.²

In the cooperation field, mutual trust is the cornerstone of social cooperation. If it were to fail, the very idea of the pact that it presupposes would lose its meaning, and its inverse demonstrates it.

As the Dalai Lama claims, “dishonesty is destructive, because it undermines the trust of others”. Therefore, the concept of trust needs to be linked to the common interest or to the common good.

How can local administrators recover this trust from citizens? First of all, by promoting processes of administrative transparency, making citizens participate in policies and decision-making processes, fighting corruption, ensuring the use of new technologies to ensure greater monitoring and control of public management. In this case, transparency in administrative activity, recommended by Goal 16 of the Agenda, seeks to restore trust between citizens and public administration.

On 14 December 2017, the OECD Council adopted the new Recommendation on Open Government, which calls for a culture of government that promotes transparency, integrity, *accountability* and *stakeholder* participation in support of democracy and inclusive growth³. This is in accordance with Agenda 2030, which promotes the same principles of accountability, citizenship involvement, administrative transparency and *open government*, that are considered necessary at all

² Bok S., *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*, Quartet Books, London, 1989.

³ OECD, Recommendation of the Council on Open Government, 14 December 2017.

stages of the design, implementation, monitoring and assessment of public administration policy strategies at the local level.

5. A new Citizenship for new Administrators

The change of approach to urban issues requested by the 2030 vision, which is mandatory for public administrators, cannot fail to involve stakeholders and citizens, if the objectives of sustainability, inclusion, resilience, and good local *governance* are to be achieved. This new approach required by the UN Agenda is based on the reciprocity principle, which requires burdens and honors on both sides, local administrators and citizens. The new citizenship that will be created with this Agenda, as a consequence of this cultural change, will have a complex role, because it should dismantle the old cultural models that it always has held, bearing in mind that change is easier where there are no past models to refer to. Building from scratch is easier, as Frederick Douglass argued, “it is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men”. A radical change in the new citizenship, required by the UN Agenda, mostly concerns its accountability, both in decision-making processes and in monitoring results. Too often citizens felt involved at the beginning of electoral mandates in the choice of mayor or governor candidates, but left the definition of strategic planning to the elected ones without actively participating in subsequent implementations. Today the Agenda clearly defines the levels of participation, ranging from the mere sharing and the knowledge of local policies, to full involvement in decision-making and monitoring of results. In doing so, citizens would be guaranteed the possibility of directly influencing the sustainable development of their

cities, avoiding manipulation due to lack of direct access to information. If, on the one hand, there are worthy experiences of local governments that guarantee wide participation (this is the case of the participatory budget of the city of Barcelona⁴, through the *Decidim* platform, and of Bologna with *Partecipazione*, or the even more worthy examples of Porto Alegre e Mundo Novo in Brazil and Cotacachi in Ecuador⁵, which allocate 100% of their budget to public discussion), in the rest of the world this earnest practice is not frequently followed.

New expressions of participatory interest by the citizens can be recognized in Italy with the birth of the *Sardine* movement, with regard to social issues, and internationally with the *Extinction rebellion*, on climate change, or through individual figures such as the young Swedish Greta Thunberg, who wanted to bring her voice to supranational institutions. *Shaking consciences to counter the globalization of indifference*, as Pope Francesco urged, however, is not enough, just as it is not enough to loudly demand that the SDGs be implemented by local administrators, since the responsible involvement of citizens in policies, whose presence must be guaranteed, as well as their interest in following their implementation and development, has become indispensable. It is now established that worthy processes that affect everyday life, such as separate waste collection or sustainable mobility, do not lead to any result if they are not adopted and endorsed by citizens as priority and essential objectives. This entails a completely new attitude and cultural change: the acquisition of citizenship itself should entail both rights and duties, including the laborious obligation to govern processes and actively intervene in the management of ‘res publica’. As

⁴ Info Barcelona, Primeros presupuestos participativos: la ciudadanía decide cómo mejorar los barrios, 03/02/2020.

⁵ UN-Habitat, Participatory Budgeting in Africa – A Training Companion with cases from eastern and southern Africa, 2008.

Carlo Levi wrote in 1944, *“the fear of freedom is the feeling that generated fascism”*. The fear of facing important issues, letting oneself be accredited by a centralizing power that promises easy protection, but that expropriates political decision, is what has transformed the people into a uniform mass, annulling the concept of the conscious citizen. The Agenda becomes an opportunity for citizens to resume their role in society, committing themselves personally to improving the living conditions of the area where they live and, at the same time, contributing to improving the quality of life of their fellow human beings in the world. The year 2030 is a very near goal, which leads us to accelerate the drive to achieve SDGs: we have only 10 years to transform the world we live in. And we all have to do it together.

6. Venice City Solutions 2030 first Local4ActionHub in the world

What's a **Local4Action Hub**?



It is a research centre whose mission is the communication of experiences from cities all over the world in an innovative way, discussing with national and international institutions and local governments, and adapting a narrative capacity according to the partners through a narrative made of stimuli, visualizations and linguistic creativity. Local and regional governments are at the forefront of the implementation of Agenda 2030.

Therefore, all *Local4Action Hubs* are contributing to the triple impact of localization of SDGs:

- Local-Global: as the Hub contributes to the global dialogue on sustainability from the local dimension;
- Acceleration: accelerate the implementation of global agendas through networked localization efforts in the UCLG community;
- Synchronization: increases opportunities for collaboration and synchronization and identifies new ways of relationship between members/partners.

Following the 2019 edition, **Venice City Solutions 2030** has been recognized by the UCLG as the world's first *Local4Action Hub*. The Venice event was envisaged as a place to meet, build and model from the skills of each participant, just like in a craftsman's workshop, where everyone is ready to put their skills, ideas and willingness to create. This workshop, which in Venice would have historically been called a *“Bottega Artigianale”*, the core of the work was created with an increasingly shared objective: to develop useful strategies to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations Agenda 2030 and to share experiences, and the path that must lead to the common goal. **Venice City Solutions 2030**, in line with its laboratory philosophy, is an open place that intends to carry out a widespread action, involving all citizens, awakening their civic sense and promoting respect for the environment in which we live. The result, after three editions, has been the creation of an international community of local authorities, national governments, universities, businesses, Third Sector associations, NGOs, citizens and young people who exchange local experiences on the topics of the 2030 agenda. **Venice City Solutions** does not indicate solutions,

it promotes success stories of local realities, transforms stimuli into concrete actions, accelerates cooperation between stakeholders to achieve common results, and provides recommendations to the HLPF.

As in an orchestra, the symphony requires the perfect synchronicity of all the musicians, so Venice will grow in the synchronization of local UCLG *Hubs* without leaving anyone behind.

We would like to thank all the participants of **Venice City Solutions** 2030 who, by our side, continue to believe in the strength of dialogue as an engine for change.





Disclaimer:

The analysis, results, and recommendations are those of the author only and do not represent the official position of PLATFORMA or any of the local and regional governments, their associations or the multilateral institutions whose case studies are compiled in this Study.

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