

TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION

Germany is a federal republic with three tiers of subnational government. The country is divided into 10 799 self-governments at municipal level (*Gemeinden*), 401 at intermediary level (*Kreise*), 16 at the regional level (*Länder*). The intermediary level comprises 294 rural districts and 107 district-free cities.¹



Unless otherwise indicated, all the information in this profile is taken from the previously published Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).²

1. NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR SDG IMPLEMENTATION

As early as 2002, the national government presented its first National Sustainable Development Strategy. Since then, it has reported on its implementation status every four years in the form of progress reports that also update the strategy's content. In 2015, Germany has fully committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda. The National Sustainable Development Strategy is the key framework for SDG implementation. In its new **Sustainable Development Strategy** adopted in March 2021 (it updates the previous one and is aligned with SDGs), coordinated by the Federal Chancellery, the government has identified transformative policies and measures for 6 areas, focusing on implementation and effect in Germany, international impact and supporting partner countries. With its **Maßnahmenprogramm Nachhaltigkeit** (programme of measures for sustainability) the federal administration has also undertaken to align its actions with the imperatives of sustainability.

1.1 NATIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISMS

The **State Secretaries' Committee for Sustainable Development (SSCSD)** steers implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy. The 2016 VNR stated that the SSCSD comprises representatives from all the ministries and is chaired by the Head of the Federal Chancellery. It invites external experts from the private sector, the scientific and research community, civil society, and from the federal states and local authorities to attend its meetings. In the 2021 report, this is not mentioned. The VNR only specifies that the SSCSD has been advised by a dialogue group made up of various societal stakeholders. National mechanisms for SDG implementation also comprise the Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development, and the **German Council for Sustainable Development** (an independent advisory panel, which include representatives of a municipal umbrella organization). Additional high-level interministerial liaison officers for sustainable development were appointed in each federal ministry in 2017.

1.2 VNR ELABORATION PROCESS

Following a whole-of-society approach, the 2016 VNR process involved non-governmental stakeholders: representatives of NGOs, churches, local authorities, the scientific and academic community, the business community and the trade unions. For the 2021 VNR, in parallel to the final drafting process for the German Sustainable Development Strategy, the national government began in autumn 2020 to engage a dialogue with civil society, business, trade unions and the research community, as well as the Länder and local authorities, on the drafting and presentation of the report. It also requested input to it. The government organized two national HLPF conferences and a 2030 Agenda Dialogue Forum.

1.3 MONITORING

Since 2017, the three **German associations (of Cities, of Counties and of Towns and Municipalities)**, with the support of several partners created a working group on 'SDG indicators for municipalities', advocating for the application of the SDG indicators in

1. See: https://www.sng-wofi.org/reports/SNGWOFI_2019_report_country_profiles_DEC2019_UPDATES.pdf

2. See: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/10686HLPF-Bericht_final_EN.pdf (2016); https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/279522021_VNR_Report_Germany.pdf (2021)

their respective member municipalities.³ In 2021, indicators were updated and a few new indicators added (e.g. an indicator on cultural heritage and access to culture). As a result, the Strategy now contains 75 indicators which are published by Germany's Federal Statistical Office. A new binding instrument for monitoring and evaluation is being developed by RNE and SKEW – the *Berichtsrahmen Nachhaltige Kommune* (reporting frame sustainable municipality)– and is currently being tested in selected pilot municipalities as of March, 2021.

2. LRGs INVOLVEMENT IN SDG LOCALIZATION

Successful cooperation of the Federal Government, Länder, communities and national associations of local authorities is being continued within the framework of the **National Urban Development Policy** launched in 2007. The aim is to establish integrated urban development that addresses economic, environmental and social challenges in cities and communities and takes account of international experience.

In Germany's federal system, the federal states and local authorities are responsible for making and enforcing laws in important areas relating to sustainable development. As stated by the 2021 VNR, eleven Länder have adopted or are currently working on sustainable development strategies of their own. In 2019, as part of official federal-Länder cooperation, the Federal Chancellor and the heads of government of the 16 Länder adopted the **resolution Working Together to Promote Sustainable Development while Assuming Responsibility for a Bright Future in Germany, Europe and around the World**. The resolution describes sustainable development as a task that the federal government and Länder share.

The Federal-Länder Exchange on Sustainable Development provides a forum for the federal and Land levels to discuss their activities in this field on a regular basis. Federal Länder representatives participate (and co-chair) the Federal Länder Experience Exchange for Sustainable Development that is also co-chaired by a representative from the Federal Chancellery.

The drafting of the edition of the National Sustainable Development Strategy scheduled to be adopted in 2016 involved consultations with LRGs, along with parliaments, federal states and non-governmental stakeholders. Local authorities are also invited to participate in SSCSD's meetings. Between 2019 and 2021, the German Sustainable Development Strategy was revised by means of a participatory process and ultimately adopted by the Federal Cabinet on 10 March 2021.

The **German Council for Sustainable Development** gathers 30 German cities in the OB-Dialog to develop joint position papers or 'roadmaps' related to municipal sustainability policy. LRG representatives participate in working groups at an advisory level: LGAs take part in the **InterMinisterial Working Group on Sustainable Urban Development ('IMA-STadt')**.

In Germany's first VNR, published in 2016, cities were not involved at all. In 2021, the three LGAs -Association of German Cities, the German Association of Towns and Municipalities and the Association of German Counties- contributed through a specific annex included into the 2021 VNR.

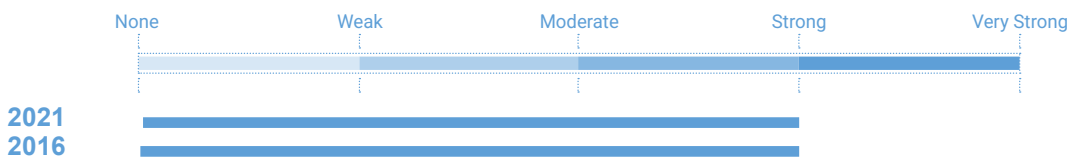
2.1 LRGs PARTICIPATION

► In the VNR process



Comments: The Deutsche Städtetag has contributed to the 2021 VNR with its own contribution.

► In national coordination mechanisms for SDG implementation



Comments: Punctual participation of the Deutsche Städtetag (but stronger compared to precedent years).

This assessment is based on the information collected in the VNRs and in the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments' annual survey on the localization of the SDGs.

2.2 VNR REFERENCES

Local authorities and federal states are mentioned in the 2016 VNR, although without specific and concrete references to their role in localizing the SDGs. The progress made for each SDG is presented at the national and international levels, without mentioning the local level. In 2021, a summary of the VSR presented by LGAs has been included as an annex in the report.

3. The two most important products are an SDG indicator set and an SDG portal (see www.wegweiser-kommune.de and www.sdg-portal.de). See: https://gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/germany_2021_0.pdf

2.3 SPECIFIC PROJECTS AND CASES

- ▶ LGAs have been active from the outset and 175 municipalities signed the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Building Sustainability at the Local Level Declaration**, calling on 'federal and state governments to involve local authorities and their representatives as equals when developing strategies to achieve the SDGs'. With the support of the Federal Ministry (BMZ) and the Service Agency Communities in One World (SKEW), LGAs are assisting German municipalities in developing their local strategies to introduce the SDGs.⁴
- ▶ The Association of German Cities and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, around 200 local authorities across the country, have committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda. They form a network known as the **Club of 2030 Agenda Municipalities**.
- ▶ The German Government supports the Länder and local authorities in their role as sustainability stakeholders through the **Municipalities for Global Sustainability** programme.
- ▶ Since 2019, model projects and implementation of the Smart City Charter have been supported within the framework of the national Smart Cities Dialogue Platform. The City of the Future Innovation Platform feeds the findings on sustainable urban development into the international context.
- ▶ The **Stadt.Land.Digital initiative** ("Urban.Rural.Digital") aims to improve people's quality of life, particularly in the fields of education, energy, healthcare, transport and administration, by fostering networks using digital technologies.
- ▶ Adopted in 2019, the Stadtnatur master plan is being implemented to support local authorities in protecting and creating high-quality natural spaces in urban areas.
- ▶ The city of **Münster** has involved the whole local administration (22 offices) in planning and implementation of SDG strategies, both from a political and technical perspective, and produced changes in the local governance approach.⁵

2.4 VOLUNTARY SUBNATIONAL AND/OR LOCAL REVIEWS (VSRs / VLRs)

Many VLRs were developed in Germany: **North Rhine-Westphalia** (2016), **Mannheim** (2019), **Bonn** (2020), and **Stuttgart** (2020 and 2021).⁶ Bonn's VLR illustrates the state of SDG implementation along six fields of municipal action: mobility, climate and energy, natural resources and environment, labour and business, social participation and gender, global responsibility and One World. Mannheim's VLR was one of the first VLRs published in Germany in 2019 and was based on the mission statement as representative of the whole community's commitment to implementing the SDGs, according to the motto "Think global, act local". Stuttgart's report in 2019 is called a baseline study depicting the SDGs' and is an executive summary of the making of the city's extensive, SDG-oriented sustainability report that was published in the same year. In 2021, the **Deutsche Städtetag** foresaw a Voluntary Local Governments Review (VLGR), as a Voluntary Subnational Review (VSR).⁷

2.5 MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

The capabilities of German municipalities and districts, in terms of budget and personal resources, vary dramatically within and between federal states. Thus, the degrees of localization and implementation of the SDGs on the local level are quite diverse.⁸ With its urban development assistance, the German government has supported cities and communities in their sustainable urban development, including action to mitigate and/or adapt to climate change. As in previous years, it made EUR 790 million available for 2020. Integrated rural development is intended to foster attractive villages with accessible basic services, vibrant centres and the reactivation of vacant buildings. Strong cultural and creative industries will also help to revitalise cities and communities.

The 2021 VNR mentions that as part of the Ending Violence against Women Together initiative, the German Government is providing EUR 140 million from 2019 to 2023 to assist the Länder and local authorities in further developing their aid structures for women affected by violence.

4. UCLG, 2019, GOLD V Report, <https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/ENG-GOLD-V-2020.pdf>

5. UCLG, 2019, GOLD V Report, <https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/ENG-GOLD-V-2020.pdf>

6. See: [https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/North%20Rhine-Westphalia%20\(2016\)_0.pdf](https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/North%20Rhine-Westphalia%20(2016)_0.pdf) ;

[https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/Mannheim%20\(2019\)_0.pdf](https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/Mannheim%20(2019)_0.pdf) ;

https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/bonn_2020_en.pdf ;

https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/stuttgart_2020.pdf ;

https://gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/stuttgart_2021.pdf

7. See: https://gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/germany_2021_0.pdf. It focuses on municipal and district levels and does not take into consideration federal states.

8. See: https://gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/germany_2021_0.pdf

3. RELEVANT INFORMATION

General comments: In addition to the VNRs, German cities' and communities' commitment to sustainable development also comes to the fore in Germany's first progress report on implementation of the New Urban Agenda (May 2021).

3.1 WOMEN PARTICIPATION

The equal participation of women in shaping society and in political decision-making in the Bundestag, in the Länder parliaments and in local politics is being reinforced, for example, by means of mentoring programmes.

3.2 COVID 19

The 2021 VNR does not contain specific information on the local responses to the crisis. Nonetheless, it states that during the pandemic, city administrations have been receiving support and training for the move to digital tools and formats within the framework of the C40 Cities Finance Facility (CFF).

4. SDG INDICATORS⁹

5.5.1. (b) Proportion of seats held by women (%) in local governments		29 (2020)
6.1.1. Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services (%)	Urban	-
	Rural	-
6.2.1. (a) Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services (%)	Urban	99 (2020)
	Rural	92 (2020)
11.1.1. Proportion of population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing (%)		0.01 (2018)
11.6.1. Proportion of municipal solid waste collected and managed (%)		100 (2015, Berlin)
11.6.2. Air pollution – annual means of particulate matter in cities (population weighted)		11.5 (2016)
11.b.2. Proportion of local governments that have adopted local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national strategies (%)		100 (2015)

⁹ The data used for this table come from the UN SDG Indicators Database. See: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/UNSDG/IndDatabasePage>. More information on the country's progress towards the SDGs here: <https://country-profiles.unstatshub.org/deu>