

TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION

Iceland is a unitary republic with a single tier of local governments, made up of 74 municipalities (*sveitarfelag*).¹



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

1. NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR SDG IMPLEMENTATION

Various new government policies and programmes have been linked to the SDGs, including a new development cooperation policy, the draft of a new education policy and innovation policy, as well as Iceland's climate action plan.

1.1 NATIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISMS

An **inter-ministerial SDG working group** leads the work of the Icelandic government towards implementing the SDGs, involving all ministries, as well as the Association of Local Authorities, observers from the Youth Council for the SDGs and the UN system in Iceland. The representative of the Prime Minister's Office is chairman of the group and the Foreign Ministry is representative vice-chairman.

1.2 VNR ELABORATION PROCESS

The **SDG working group** has overseen the 2019 VNR process. It has cooperated with various parties on the analysis, implementation and presentation of Iceland's position relative to the SDGs, namely the University of Iceland, the private sector and civil society. The VNR was also made available in the government's electronic consultation portal³ to encourage public debate and invite the opinions of various parties. These opinions were taken into account in writing the final report.

1.3 MONITORING

The **SDG working group** has mapped Iceland's position for all 169 SDG targets and specified 65 priority targets. The selection of priority targets will be reviewed every two years, to ensure that priority is given to targets which are farthest from being met at any given time. Data has been gathered for 70 of the indicators for the SDGs, but more work remains to strengthen the statistical foundation of the SDGs in Iceland. **Statistics Iceland** manages the structure of the SDG statistics in the country. Follow-up mechanisms now include an annual assessment of progress towards priority targets in connection to annual reporting on the government's fiscal strategy policy objectives.

In 2017, the **Institute for Sustainability Studies (ISS)** at the University of Iceland was entrusted with evaluating the data collection that had already taken place. The objective of this project was to prepare two reports, firstly, an assessment of the quality of the data collected by the SDG working group and, secondly, to make proposals on behalf of the Institute on methodology for prioritizing the SDGs in Iceland. Following consultations with government experts, 65 targets were given priority in the government's work in implementing the SDGs in Iceland and in international cooperation for the next few years. The 2019 VNR specifies that "since the suitability of [SDG] targets for local implementation varies, it is up to local authorities to adapt them locally and ensure that their implementation is tailored to local circumstances" (see VNR, 2019, p. 14).

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

2. See: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23408VNR_Iceland_2019_web_final.pdf (2019)

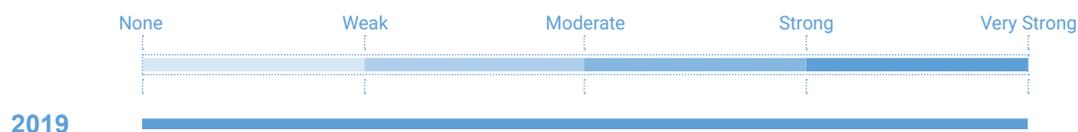
3. See: www.samradsgatt.is. This information portal on the SDGs was launched in 2019. It offers citizens, NGOs, companies, institutions, municipalities and others an opportunity to present projects that contribute to the promotion of the SDGs. The portal is thus a public forum for stakeholders to share information about the goals.

2. LRGs INVOLVEMENT IN SDG LOCALIZATION

Local authorities are increasingly linking their policies and plans to the SDGs. However, municipalities generally differ in how far work has proceeded and are still searching for practical routes and goals to set. According to the conclusion of the 2019 VNR, “a handful of municipalities lead the way in localizing the SDGs, but further efforts are needed to improve implementation at the local level. This will require increased collaboration between local authorities, including enhanced flow of information and knowledge-sharing and possibly defining joint priority objectives and means of implementation. To this end, an SDG forum for active collaboration at the municipal level is scheduled to start operating in the autumn of 2019” (see VNR, 2019, p. 111). A representative of the [Association of Local Authorities](#) participates in the government’s SDG working group.

2.1 LRGs PARTICIPATION

► In the VNR process



Comments: Occasional participation of the Association of Local Authorities (GTF Survey 2021).

► In national coordination mechanisms for SDG implementation



Comments: Regular participation of the Association of Local Authorities at decision-making level (GTF Survey 2021).

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

The 2019 VNR considers SDG implementation as ‘a joint project of the state and municipalities, as they have an important role for successful implementation of the SDGs.’ A subsection is dedicated to local governments- without reference to specific mechanisms or initiatives (see VNR, 2019, p. 13-14). Another subsection emphasizes the local government association’s role for awareness-raising in the municipalities and SDG implementation (see VNR, 2019, p. 16). There is also a box on LRG sports and recreation grants, and another on the municipalities of Kópavogur and Mosfellsbær (see VNR, 2019, p. 72 and 77-78).

2.3 SPECIFIC PROJECTS AND CASES

► The [Icelandic association of local authorities](#) has established an SDG cooperation platform between municipalities and a municipal SDG working group. Work is underway on defining common municipal subgoals and indicators, as well as a tool box.⁴ In 2019, the association organized a seminar to encourage the country’s 72 municipalities to promote the SDGs. As a result, cities such as [Kopavogur](#), [Mosfellsbaer](#), [Reykjavik](#) and [Akureyri](#) worked to integrate the SDGs into their local plans.

► Since 2000, a growing number of local authorities has offered grants to pay for participation of children in constructive leisure activities regardless of their economic or social situation. The grants are intended to increase equality in the local community, strengthen the social environment and positively impact children’s development, as well as to promote diversity in sports, arts and leisure activities. In recent years, the development of this unique funding system has been rapid, and it is now rare for a local authority not to provide some sort of support for constructive sports and leisure activities to 6-16 years old children.

► Municipalities take the initiative of becoming a Health-promoting Community, which is a holistic, interdisciplinary program managed by the Directorate of Health in collaboration and consultation with local authorities and other stakeholders.⁵ The mayor, on behalf of the local authority, signs a cooperation agreement to systematically work towards the well-being of all residents and a framework for implementation is consolidated by establishing a multi-stakeholder steering committee and nominating contact persons.

4. Answer of the Association of Local Authorities to the GTF Survey in 2020.

5. The primary goal of this program is to support communities in creating an environment and conditions that promote healthy lifestyles, health and well-being of all residents.

► **Kópavogur** is Iceland's second largest municipality and has integrated the SDGs into the municipality's overall policy. In selecting priority targets for its local strategy the municipality of Kópavogur considered three factors: the Icelandic government's priority targets, the position of UCLG as to what targets fit well with the municipality's tasks, and finally the projects which the municipality of Kópavogur is committed to, such as the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. In connection with formulating the municipality's policy, it has been decided to implement measurements of the municipality's activities according to the ISO 37120 standard, which has been linked to the SDGs. This is a recent standard, the first standard in the world to measure the services of local authorities.⁶

► The municipality of **Mosfellsbær** has integrated the goals into its environmental policy. In this process, residents were mobilized to participate in a community meeting to set targets and prioritize projects. The result was then linked to the SDGs. Among the goals is to develop in a sustainable and progressive way, with nature conservation and increased welfare of its residents as guiding principles. The goals will be achieved through action in ten areas, all linked to one or more SDGs, such as environmental education, sustainable transport and waste management.

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

Not applicable.

2.5 MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

The SDGs are linked to the government's **five-year fiscal strategy**. Also, a software solution is being implemented for the drafting of the fiscal strategy and its linkage to the SDGs. Such a database will provide an overview of the SDGs for policy experts and thereby increase the coordination of strategies and programmes in different areas of operation.

3. RELEVANT INFORMATION

General comments: The 2019 VNR places special emphasis on children. The **Icelandic Youth Council for the SDGs** gives young people a platform to express their voice to policy makers (more information in the VNR, 2019, p. 19).

3.1 WOMEN PARTICIPATION

The Gender Equality Act stipulates that when appointing committees, councils and boards the state and municipalities shall take care to have their gender balance as equal as possible and not less than 40% of each gender. This also applies to the boards of public corporations and companies where the state or municipality is the main owner. It also states that both men and women shall be nominated as candidates for committees, councils and boards on behalf of the state and local authorities. The proportion of women in local government in 2018 was 47.2% and has never been higher. At the beginning of 2019 the proportion of women who were managing directors of local authorities was 36%.

3.2 COVID 19

Not applicable.

6. See: <https://www.dataforcities.org/>

4. SDG INDICATORS⁷

5.5.1. (b) Proportion of seats held by women (%) in local governments		47.0 (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	-
	Rural	-
11.1.1. Proportion of population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing (%)		-
11.6.1. Proportion of municipal solid waste collected and managed (%)		-
11.6.2. Air pollution – annual means of particulate matter in cities (population weighted)		5.8 (2016)
11.b.2. Proportion of local governments that have adopted local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national strategies (%)		-

⁷The 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/isl>