

## TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION

Serbia is a unitary republic with a two-tiered subnational government system. It comprises 2 autonomous provinces at the regional level and, at the municipal level, the city of Belgrade, 23 cities and 150 municipalities.<sup>1</sup>



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

## 1. NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR SDG IMPLEMENTATION

The National Strategy of Sustainable Development for the period 2009-2017 clearly set out that sustainable development is a general direction and commitment of the Republic of Serbia. Implementing the 2030 Agenda through achieving the SDGs in Serbia is indivisible from the process of Serbia's accession to the EU. The SDGs are aligned with the **National Plan for Adoption of the EU Acquis (NPAA) 2018-2021** and with the **Development Partnership Framework (DPF)** for the period 2016-2020.

## 1.1 NATIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISMS

Established in 2015, the **Inter-Ministerial Working Group for Implementation of the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (IMWG)** coordinates the overall process of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Serbia, by creating and implementing coherent government policies. It is chaired and coordinated by the minister without portfolio responsible for demography and population policy, and it consists of specially appointed representatives of 26 relevant line ministries, government offices and agencies for monitoring and coordinating activities.

## 1.2 VNR ELABORATION PROCESS

The 2019 VNR process was coordinated by the **IMWG**. All ministries, services, and agencies, as well as provincial, municipal and city governments participated. Consultations were organized with the youth, civil society organizations, and the private sector.

## 1.3 MONITORING

The institution in charge of official statistics in the Republic of Serbia is the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS).<sup>3</sup> The **IMWG** is mandated to propose the foundations for statistical monitoring of the SDGs and their targets as well as to prepare periodic reports on implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In late 2017, the SORS established a **working group for SDG indicators**. Teams have been created to be specifically in charge of each of the 17 goals and their corresponding targets, and they are also in charge of connecting with other institutions for data collection.

1. See: [https://www.sng-wofi.org/reports/SNGWOFI\\_2019\\_report\\_country\\_profiles\\_DEC2019\\_UPDATES.pdf](https://www.sng-wofi.org/reports/SNGWOFI_2019_report_country_profiles_DEC2019_UPDATES.pdf)

2. See: [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23576ISRAEL\\_13191\\_SDGISRAEL.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23576ISRAEL_13191_SDGISRAEL.pdf) (2019)

3. In 2018, the SORS launched a new website ([www.stat.gov.rs](http://www.stat.gov.rs)), which also has a link to the SDG portal on its home page: <http://sdg.indikator.rs/>.

## 2. LRGs INVOLVEMENT IN SDG LOCALIZATION

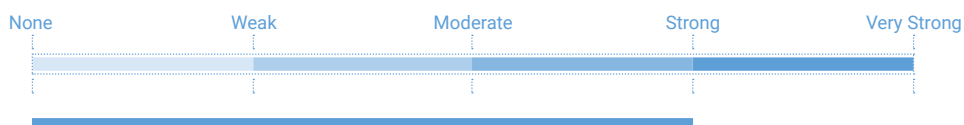
The **Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM)** participates in the Joint National Steering Committee. The local government association was also included in the 2019 VNR process, by providing key information regarding the current situation regarding the SDGs and relevant projects and activities of the organization that contribute to the implementation of SDGs in Serbia. Provincial, municipal and city governments were also involved in the reporting process that led to the 2019 VNR.

In 2019, the **local community-led hub** of the institutional network-integrated mechanism for national implementation of the 2030 Agenda was in the process of being established, a process in which the SCTM plays a key role.

Serbian LRGs and the SCTM have fostered cooperation with national institutions to achieve the SDGs and, with UNDP, they launched the project, 'Support for Improving Governance and Economic Planning at the Local Level for Accelerating the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Republic of Serbia'.<sup>4</sup>

### 2.1 LRGs PARTICIPATION

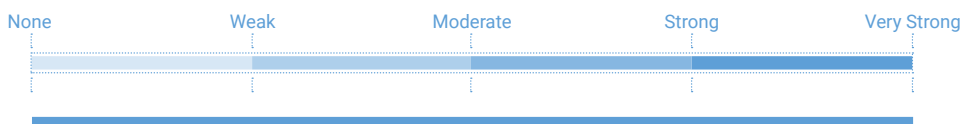
#### ► In the VNR process



2019

Comments: The Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities participated through bilateral meetings. Its contribution was taken into account and mentioned in the 2019 VNR (GTF Survey 2021).

#### ► In national coordination mechanisms for SDG implementation



2019

Comments: Regular (but not decision-making) participation of the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (GTF Survey 2021).

This assessment is based on the information collected in the VNR 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 emphasizes the role of the SCTM (see below). Local governments' perspective and details on the role of the SCTM are included in a specific subsection on each one of the reported SDGs.

### 2.3 SPECIFIC PROJECTS AND CASES

► The **Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM)**, in partnership with the Ministry of Health and public health institutes, is supporting the development of the health care responsibility at the local government level. The priority is the support for development of public health plans, risk assessment for public health and plans for preservation of health in emergencies. The SCTM supports municipalities and cities in providing a functional system of patient rights protection at the local level and guaranteed rights for all, with emphasis on marginalized groups, through strengthening the visibility of patient rights, building the local self-government capacity to implement these responsibilities and networking all stakeholders. One of the localization mechanisms of SDG 3 are also the **Health Councils** – advisory, compulsory bodies at the local level, whose establishment and operation are governed by the Law on Patients' Rights and the Law on Public Health. Through continuous capacity building of LRGs and Health Councils, around 100 LRGs with their Health Councils are actively participating in the work of the SCTM Health Network. In 2018, 60 LRGs went through the cycle of support for the development of public health plans. So far, 25 cities and municipalities have adopted the plans in their local assemblies.

► The SCTM works to improve educational, health care and social support to children, students and adults, and in particular to analyze the existing roles and responsibilities in this area, map challenges and propose possible solutions, define common goals and future activities. Thus, after the adoption of the new Rulebook on additional educational, health care and social support to the child, student and adult, the SCTM in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development prepared a package of model documents and organized a series of trainings and round tables, with the aim of supporting local self-governments in implementation of this responsibility.

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

► The SCTM has actively worked on the promotion of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, and it has by now been adopted in 67 municipalities, while local action plans for its implementation have been adopted in 48 municipalities. New Law on Gender Equality is being prepared and should be adopted soon. The Law will introduce new steps and improve gender equality on the local level, and it is expected that it will significantly improve access to rights, as well as the position and capacities of gender equality mechanisms.

► The SCTM's strategic commitment is to support towns and municipalities in rational resource management, by improving energetic efficiency (EE) and utilizing renewable energy resources. In order to do this, the SCTM will support its members in the process of defining local policies in the field of energy, as well as in introducing the system of energetics management, and will accordingly promote use of renewable resources and improvements in energetic efficiency in public and private sectors. The SCTM also provides support in joining the European initiative Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, which obliges parties thereto to undertake activities to decrease by 40% the emission of CO<sub>2</sub> by 2030, and to adopt an integrative approach to alleviating the consequences of and adjusting to climate change. One of the main mechanisms of the SCTM for supporting the members in this field is the **Network of Energy Managers and Commissioners for Energetic Efficiency**, which gathers local government representatives with the aim to provide support, exchange experiences and build capacities.

► A possible mechanism for achieving greater sustainability of towns and municipalities is the **local green councils**. They consist of representatives of units of local governments and advisory bodies with respect to local acts affecting environmental protection. By providing support to the establishment and operation of green councils in towns and municipalities, the SCTM is promoting the participation of the general public and all stakeholders in the planning and decision-making related to environmental protection at local level. For towns and municipalities to adequately and timely respond to the challenges and tasks in the field of risk management and emergencies, the SCTM is supporting a series of long-term measures and solutions, such as: strengthening the capacities of employees, building a civil protection system at local level, identifying tasks in this field and their introduction in proposed staffing plans of local governments and inclusion of this field in local strategic documents and plans.

► The SCTM recognized the relevance of fighting climate change at local level and is providing support to towns in order to find ways of adjustment to and mitigation of negative effects of climate change in their regions. By publishing the **manual for planning of adaptation to climate change in local communities in Serbia** in 2018, the SCTM has created a single methodological framework for this field in our country, based on global best practice. The first such plan of adaptation to climate change was developed with the support of the SCTM in the municipality of **Bečej** and as such it will serve other towns and municipalities as an example of best practice.

► Through the years 2019-2020 the SCTM organized several awareness raising events intended to bring the SDG localization process closer to LRGs. They were organized in cooperation between relevant government units and the GIZ (project "Public Administration Reform – Financing of the Agenda 2030"). Further close cooperation with LRGs related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is expected to continue during 2021 in an online format. Coordination has been likewise fostered among various project teams supporting the government, LRGs and CSOs. The SCTM also hosted a webinar on human rights approaches, non-discrimination and inclusion at local level.<sup>5</sup>

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

Not applicable.

## 2.5 MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Financing SDG implementation has explicitly received its own first-ever line in the 2019 national budget. It is now part of the budget allocation to the Office of the Minister without portfolio responsible for demography and population policy. The bulk of financial resources for SDG implementation in Serbia is provided through the use of the EU Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA).

## 3. RELEVANT INFORMATION

**General comments: Gender responsive budgeting (GRB)** was introduced to public finance in 2015, obliging all budget beneficiaries to implement by the end of 2020 the principles of GRB (53 budget beneficiaries at national level, 25 at provincial level, and all beneficiaries at local level). GRB has become an integral part of the Budget System Law, and institutions at national, provincial and local levels are subject to its implementation.

The normative and institutional framework for the **protection of the rights of national minorities** differs depending on the town and municipality. LRGs have different responsibilities with respect to the protection mechanisms. There are different mechanisms for ensuring that national minorities enjoy the right to the official use of their language and alphabet. Setbacks in the achievement of this right are caused by lack of capacities of local governments, and typical problems include the lack of funds for the functioning of this mechanisms, for the translation and printing of documents and forms in several languages, road signs for designations and topographical indications, for setting up special services and/or for the employment of

5. Answer of the SCTM to the GTF Survey in 2021.

translators, for setting up e-government services in several languages, and the impossibility to ensure adequate representation of national minorities in local government staff and staff members who speak the language of national minorities and the majority population.

Through the development and implementation of **Local Action Plans (LAP) for Roma Inclusion**, the local governments are directly improving the activity and coordination of local Roma inclusion mechanisms. As of 2019, the number of local governments who have a LAP for Roma inclusion in 2019 stood at 39, and, according to plans, 20 more LAPs were to be adopted. Also, in 2018, 10 local governments established units of **Local Multisectoral Coordination Bodies (LMCB)** as working bodies of the Municipality Council for managing the Roma inclusion policy and improving the position of Roma. This new mechanism in the form of a political body composed of the highest representatives of key institutions in the local community additionally guarantees the sustainability of Roma inclusion at local level.

### 3.1 WOMEN PARTICIPATION

According to the state regulatory framework, provincial and municipal governments have obligations of establishing mechanisms of gender equality and securing participation of women of at least 30% in the authorities. The National Strategy for Gender Equality (2016-2020) states that participation of women in local governments' assemblies has increased from 7% in 2000, to 29% in 2014. The greatest difference between participation of men and that of women is when it comes to the highest position in municipalities/towns, that of mayor. Namely, in the total of 169 local self-government units, there are only 12 women mayors, or 7.1%. Furthermore, there are only 14% women among those occupying the position of president (speaker) of their respective municipal assembly/town council.

### 3.2 COVID 19

The SCTM has not been directly consulted by the government regarding national recovery packages. Nonetheless, it has provided information and data on subnational governments to the national level, which have been the basis for the elaboration of national recovery measures. The SCTM was not in a position to engage in influencing the priorities and resources mobilized by the national government, having in mind limited capacities of its employees and of the representatives of local governments in 2020-2021. Dialogue between the national and local levels regarding this topic is coordinated via the **SCTM Committee for Health and Social Policy**.

Also, there is a regional project implemented by the **Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS)** and involving several LGAs from South East Europe in taking local social-economic recovery measures for disadvantaged groups. This is the project "Enhancing local capacities to implement the 2030 Agenda and the "Leave No One Behind Principle".

Serbian local governments are obtaining support from the SCTM in the form of rapid measures for socio-economic recovery of vulnerable groups (for instance, the municipalities of **Bosilegrad** and **Trgovište**).<sup>6</sup>

## 4. SDG INDICATORS<sup>7</sup>

5.5.1. (b) Proportion of seats held by women (%) in local governments		37.2 (2020)
6.1.1. Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services (%)	Urban	82 (2020)
	Rural	67 (2020)
6.2.1. (a) Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services (%)	Urban	17 (2020)
	Rural	20 (2020)
11.1.1. Proportion of population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing (%)		3.6 (2018)
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)		24.8 (2016)
11.b.2. Proportion of local governments that have adopted local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national strategies (%)		4.6 (2018)

6. Answer of the SCTM to the GTF Survey in 2021.

7. 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/srb>