

High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development – Session “Going Local” (How can we support local authorities in implementing the SDGs and how can we best build on voluntary local reviews?)

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As President of the Congress, representing some 150 000 local and regional authorities over Europe, I can say that we strongly believe that localising the SDGs is key to achieving the Agenda 2030. Over two thirds of the SDG targets can only be implemented if we act at the local or regional level.

Recognising the importance of the local level is a start, but what we need is action. How can we empower towns and regions to implement the SDGs?

First of all, they have to be able to act. At the Congress, we plead for subsidiarity. National governments need to give cities and regions the autonomy, the finances and the support to take action.

Secondly, towns and regions need the skills and tools to implement and monitor the SDGs. Here, national associations of local and regional authorities come into play. They are platforms where towns and regions learn from one another. They can develop tools and avoid double work.

In Germany and Italy, national associations set up portals with city-level indicators to measure SDG implementation. Such tools help local governments understand where they stand, but also what more they can do.

Thirdly, we need to use the insights of local and regional authorities to develop better sustainability in policies. To do so, national governments need to give the subnational level a seat at the table when developing strategies to implement the SDGs. They should also take into account local-level reporting. Voluntary local reviews can help adapt national policies to the reality on the ground.

A good example is that of the Norwegian ‘whole of government’ approach, where KS, the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities conducts a Voluntary Subnational Review and participates in the preparation of the country’s Voluntary National Review.

Finally, local and regional actions for the SDGs need to be highlighted, also internationally. At the Congress, we defend and amplify local and regional voices, make local initiatives for the SDGs visible and encourage our members to take action.

Our message is clear: cities, towns and regions cannot be ignored if we are serious about working towards a sustainable future. They need to be given the authority to act, the skills to implement and the voice to share their experience.

Thank you for your attention.