



VOLUNTARY
SUBNATIONAL
REVIEW OF TÜRKİYE
(VSR TÜRKİYE)

KENT
ARAŞTIRMALARI
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OF URBAN
STUDIES

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Localising the Sustainable
Development Goals in Türkiye
(A Decade of Implementation Experience)

Dr. Cemal Baş

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Foreword

Emir Osmanođlu

General Director, Urban Studies Institute

Sustainable development is no longer limited to global policy documents or international commitments. It has evolved into a multidimensional governance issue that directly falls within the implementation domain of local governments. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations in 2015, provide a common framework for all countries toward the 2030 Agenda. However, the success of these goals largely depends on implementation capacity at the local level.

At this stage, as we enter the final five years of the global sustainability agenda, a significant responsibility rests upon us. We have moved beyond a phase focused solely on the production of policy documents into a new period where on-the-ground practices are assessed, challenges are analysed, and solutions are jointly developed.

In response to this need, the VSR Türkiye (Voluntary Subnational Review) has been prepared to present, for the first time, a comprehensive, comparable, and academically framed assessment of local governments' contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals in Türkiye.

VSR Türkiye has been prepared as a reference document that makes local implementation practices visible, identifies common areas of challenge, and contributes to forward-looking policy development processes. The report is not a performance ranking or an institutional evaluation tool; but rather an eviden-

ce-based, impartial, and multi-stakeholder platform for learning and development.

The preparation process of the report went beyond a desk-based assessment approach and was carried out with the active participation of local governments, public institutions, academia, and civil society. Data collected through workshops, field research, and stakeholder consultations form the foundation of the report's analysis and policy recommendation sections. In particular, this inclusive process which brought together participants from diverse areas of expertise, has enabled local challenges to be addressed from a multidimensional perspective.

Another important feature of VSR Türkiye is that, upon completion, it will be shared with international platforms. Therefore, the global visibility of local government practices in Türkiye will be increased, and their contribution to international knowledge exchange will be strengthened.

As the Urban Studies Institute, our core approach is to bridge academic knowledge with the practical needs of local governments and to produce data that is usable, measurable, and comparable for decision-making processes. The work carried out in this direction covers a wide range of areas, from the ecological structure of cities to transportation systems, and from housing policies to cultural heritage.

Sustainable development today provides a framework that includes all aspects of municipal practice. From infrastructure investments to social services, and from spatial planning to governance models, all activities of local governments are directly linked to these goals. Therefore, in the coming period, it is of great importance to move beyond pilot initiatives and develop institutionalised, measurable, and scalable policy approaches.

I hope that this report will contribute to strengthening sustainable development policies at the local level in Türkiye and enhance opportunities for intercity learning and cooperation.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Dr. Cemal Baş, the author of the report and coordinator of the workshop process;

to Hasan Kılca, Mayor of Karatay Municipality (VSR Türkiye Local Government Ambassador), for hosting the workshop and strongly supporting the process; to Professor Dr. Harun Tanrıvermiş for his valuable contributions as VSR Türkiye Academic Ambassador; and to all institutions, experts, and stakeholders who contributed to this work. I wish that the VSR Türkiye Report will provide valuable contributions to local government practice and policy development processes.

Hasan Kılca

Mayor, Karatay Municipality (VSR Türkiye Local Government Ambassador)

In recent years, we have faced interconnected global challenges such as climate change and rising social and economic inequalities. These challenges have changed the role of local governments, which are now key actors turning global sustainability goals into concrete local action.

Karatay Municipality attaches great importance to sustainable development and continues its efforts to be a pioneer in this field. In 2021, within the framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the “Karatay Sustainability Report Voluntary Local Review (VLR)” study was published in Turkish and English. In 2023, the “Karatay Sustainability Voluntary Local Review Progress Report” was published in Turkish, English, and Arabic. In 2026, as the VSR Türkiye Local Government Ambassador, Karatay Municipality hosted the VSR Türkiye Workshop.

As part of Karatay Municipality’s governance approach, we observed that sustainable development is no longer an abstract goal, but a continuous process requiring institutional adaptation, strong leadership, and long-term vision.

Digitalisation has been one of the most transformative elements. Integrating municipal services into digital systems has improved efficiency, strengthened coordination, and increased transparency, replacing separate efforts with more coherent governance in line with the global agenda.

Environmental sustainability has also become a central priority for Karatay Muni-

cipality. Investments in renewable energy, waste management, and recycling systems have expanded. Zero waste initiatives, school awareness programs, and recycling infrastructure demonstrates this growing responsibility.

In this context, Karatay Municipality presents a strong example of integrated local governance. Urban transformation projects, green spaces, and parks support the protection of environmental and cultural heritage. Solar power plants and rooftop solar panels on public buildings and markets show a change toward clean energy.

Social municipality practices also play an essential role. Supporting citizens in need, strengthening social solidarity, and improving access to basic services demonstrate a people-centred approach. Investments in education and school infrastructure reflect a long-term commitment to future generations.

We remain committed to the global sustainability framework and recognize the importance of local experiences in feeding global discussions. In the coming period, we aim to strengthen the role of local governments as proactive leaders in sustainable development through innovation, good governance, and collaboration for a more inclusive and resilient future.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to thank the Urban Studies Institute and all those who contributed to the development of this milestone document.

Prof. Dr. Harun Tanrıvermiş

Vice Rector, Ankara University (VSR Türkiye Academia Ambassador)

The localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has evolved into a field that increasingly benefits from close interaction between academic research and local governance practice. In Türkiye, municipalities have undertaken a wide range of responsibilities that intersect with the SDGs, while academic work has made important contributions by analysing these developments from diverse disciplinary perspectives. The Voluntary Subnational Review (VSR) Türkiye contributes to this field by bringing empirical local experiences into a consolidated format that can be further examined and built upon within academic work.

From an academic perspective, one of the most notable strengths of the VSR is its utilization of field-generated evidence. Direct inputs from municipal representatives provide information on institutional practices, constraints, and decision-making processes, and by doing so complements existing research. In an era when global assessments emphasize the challenges of sustaining progress towards the 2030 Agenda, such empirical data enhances a more comprehensive understanding of implementation dynamics.

The report also presents broader developments in academic thought, with a growing emphasis on the co-production of knowledge and context-sensitive

analysis. Universities continue to play a central role not only in generating knowledge but also in providing practical solutions through engagement with public institutions and local communities. Another important aspect is the report's contribution to interdisciplinary engagement. Urban services, social policy, environmental management, and local economic development are examined within a common analytical framework and the approach provides a common empirical base for different academic fields. The inclusion of stakeholder perspectives further enhances the analytical value of the report. For these reasons, the VSR Türkiye report should also be considered as a complementary resource for academic research.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Urban Studies Institute for its exemplary leadership in this initiative, to the lead author, Dr. Cemal Baş, for his dedicated efforts, and to the sectoral ambassadors and Advisory Committee members for their invaluable contributions.

I will make every effort to support the wider dissemination of this report within the academic community and to encourage further research that builds on its findings.

Dr. Mehmet Duman

Secretary General, UCLG-MEWA

Sustainable development requires a multi-level governance approach in which global frameworks, national policies, and local implementation are effectively coordinated to reach measurable progress. For the Middle East and West Asia (MEWA) region which characterised by rapid urbanisation, climate vulnerabilities, and socio-economic disparities bringing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into local policy and practice has become an essential requirement.

As United Cities and Local Governments Middle East and West Asia Section, we have placed SDG localisation at the centre of our regional agenda. Through our services, we support our member municipalities in adapting global goals into local policies and in measuring their progress. Our work includes the development of SDG-based indices, capacity-building trainings, and technical support for municipalities preparing Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs). Our earlier initiative, the SDG Mapping Project launched in Türkiye, have demonstrated the value of linking municipal activities to the SDGs. These efforts are complemented by analytical outputs such as “Sustainable Development Report 2023: A Snapshot of the MEWA Region”, which provides a data-driven overview of regional performance.

Within this broader regional framework, the preparation of the VSR Türkiye (Voluntary Subnational Review) stands as a significant development. The report provides a comparable assessment of subnational implementation and contributes to stronger policy coordination at the national level.

From the beginning, the VSR Türkiye team engaged closely with us, designing the VSR through a process of consultation and exchange of views. As UCLG-MEWA, we have been pleased to provide space across our platforms for the team to present their work and share their results. With the report now completed, we will continue to support its visibility by promoting it within our global organisation, United Cities and Local Governments, as well as across relevant United Nations platforms.

VSR Türkiye stands as the first Voluntary Subnational Review in the MEWA and sets an important example for other countries across our region. We believe that it will contribute meaningfully to global SDG reporting processes while strengthening the role of local governments in sustainable development.

I commend all contributors to this work and trust that it will support further progress across MEWA.

Preface

Dr. Cemal Baş

Author, VSR Türkiye

The efforts of city representatives to engage in multilateral policymaking began in 1913 with the establishment of the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) in Ghent, Belgium. Two members of the Istanbul municipal council took part in that founding meeting and signed the Union's charter on behalf of Turkish local authorities, as a symbol early interest of Turkish cities on local diplomacy.

Soon after beginning their mission to improve urban living conditions, all members of IULA were confronted with the devastating impacts of the the Great War (1914 – 1918) and later the World War (1939 – 1945). When cities of the world reconvened in Brussels in 1946 in the aftermath of the war, the President of the Turkish Municipal Association (now the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye) was among those present, and he carefully recorded both the proceedings and the interventions of speakers, and later presenting the “Report on Municipal Autonomy in Türkiye”. In fact, the Association had already showed its commitment to international cooperation by becoming a member of IULA in 1945, with a membership contribution of 750 Swiss francs. The first international delegation established by the Association also attended the IULA General Assembly held in Paris in 1947.

When mayors across Europe gathered under the auspices of the Council of Europe in 1957, they were, in essence, acting upon the core recommendation of a decentralisation report prepared in 1956 by a Turkish member of the Parliamentarian Assembly

of the Council of Europe. Decades later, when all United Nations member states convened in Istanbul for the Habitat II Conference in 1996, mayors from around the world simultaneously held their own assembly alongside the official proceedings. At the conclusion of this gathering, it was a Turkish mayor who addressed all UN member states, conveying the collective position of local governments which was the necessity of establishing a local government body accredited to the United Nations, an idea that would later become what is now known as UCLG.

Following this call, the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) organisation was formally established in 2004. During the formation of its regional sections, Istanbul once again became a focal point of local diplomacy by hosting the establishment of the UCLG Middle East and West Asia (UCLG-MEWA) section. Between 2010 and 2016, the presidency of UCLG was held by a Turkish mayor, a period during which the organisation achieved its strongest global recognition.

Each of these milestones represents the contributions of many Turkish individuals who, despite different world-views, life styles, perspectives and experiences, played a role in advancing Turkish local diplomacy. Together, their efforts have strengthened its foundations and supported the position of Türkiye as the active actor in global urban policymaking.

The VSR Türkiye initiative should only be seen as part of this broader story, serving

as an effort to fulfil the responsibilities that fall to our generation. This responsibility has brought together the efforts of the Urban Studies Institute team, our Local Government and Academia Ambassadors, our Advisory Committee members, and my own, as we continue this ongoing journey of Turkish local diplomacy.

I sincerely hope that this work will prove beneficial.

**ADVISORY
COMMITTEE
MEMBERS**

Important Note: The individuals listed below, who have contributed to this report in their capacity as Advisory Committee Members, have provided their expertise, comments, and guidance throughout the process. Their inclusion does not imply full endorsement of all findings, interpretations, or recommendations presented in the report. The author retains full editorial responsibility and final authority over the content.

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BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development	The federal ministry of Germany responsible for shaping and implementing the country's development policy abroad.
COP	Conference of the Parties	The annual decision-making body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change where parties negotiate climate policies and commitments.
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019	A global infectious disease that has significantly impacted public health, economies, and governance systems since 2019.
CUF	Cités Unies France	A network of French local governments engaged in decentralized cooperation.
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council	A principal organ of the United Nations responsible for coordinating economic, social, and development-related policies.
EU	European Union	A political and economic union that covers many European countries and promotes cooperation and common policies.
FRIT	Facility for Refugees in Türkiye	A financial instrument of the European Union designed to support refugees and host communities in Türkiye.
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	A key economic indicator measuring the total value of goods and services produced within a country over a specific period.
GIS	Geographic Information System	A system used to collect, manage, analyse, and visualise spatial and geographic data.
HLPF	High-Level Political Forum	The main platform of the United Nations for monitoring and reviewing progress on sustainable development.
İLBANK	İller Bankası A.Ş.	A public development and investment bank in Türkiye providing financial and technical support to local governments.
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance	A financial mechanism of the European Union supporting reforms in candidate and potential candidate countries.
İSKEP	Coordination and Training for Employment Project	An EU-funded project to develop skills in municipalities for employment and integration.
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency	Japanese development agency that provides technical assistance and financial support for development projects worldwide.
LAR-III	Local Administration Reform Phase III	Third phase project supporting local government reform, funded by the EU and implemented by UNDP Türkiye.
LGA	Local Government Association	An organization that represents local governments, supports their interests, and promotes cooperation and capacity building.
MARUF	Marmara Urban Forum	An international event organized by MMU to bring together stakeholders to discuss urbanisation, sustainability, and local governance.

MDG	Millennium Development Goals	A set of global development goals implemented between 2000 and 2015 to address poverty and improve living conditions.
MMU	Marmara Municipalities Union	The regional LGA representing municipalities in Marmara Region in Türkiye.
n	Sample Size	A statistical term indicating the number of observations or units included in a dataset or study.
NUTS-1	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics Level 1	The highest level of the EU's regional classification system used for statistical and analytical purposes.
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	An international organisation promoting economic growth, policy coordination, and global trade.
QUDRA	Regional Development and Protection Programme for Syria and the Region	A regional programme supporting resilience and development in response to the Syrian crisis.
RESLOG	Resilience in Local Governance	National programme aimed at strengthening the resilience and capacity of local governments funded by Swedish Development Agency.
ROMACTED	Building Roma Inclusion at Local Level	A joint programme of the Council of Europe and the EU supporting the integration of Roma communities at the local level.
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal	An individual goal within the set of 17 global goals adopted in 2015 to achieve sustainable development by 2030.
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals	A set of 17 global goals adopted in 2015 to achieve sustainable development by 2030.
TR1 / TRC	NUTS Regional Codes (Türkiye)	Statistical regional classification codes used in Türkiye under the NUTS system.
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments	A global network representing local and regional governments worldwide.
UCLG-MEWA	UCLG Middle East and West Asia	The regional section of United Cities and Local Governments covering Middle East and West Asia.
UMT	Union of Municipalities of Türkiye	The national LGA representing municipalities in Türkiye.
UN	United Nations	An international organisation promoting peace, security, and sustainable development worldwide.
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs	A UN organization that supports countries in economic and social policy, sustainable development, and the implementation of the SDGs.
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme	A UN organization that supports countries in development, poverty reduction, and sustainability efforts.
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme	A UN organization that focuses on sustainable urban development and human settlements.
VAT	Value Added Tax	A consumption tax applied to goods and services at each stage of production and distribution.
VLR	Voluntary Local Review	A reporting mechanism through which local governments assess their progress on the SDGs.
VNR	Voluntary National Review	National reports presented at the United Nations to track progress on the SDGs.
VSR	Voluntary Subnational Review	A reporting tool assessing SDG implementation at subnational levels.

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OBJECTIVES OF THE REPORT

It is the last four years of SDG implementation, and global progress remains significantly behind schedule. Showcasing individual good practices therefore, will not contribute meaningfully to closing the gap. The objective of VSR Türkiye is therefore not to present a success narrative, but to provide a problem-oriented assessment of how the existing municipal system operates at the local level and where it faces difficulties in delivering effectively. While municipalities across Türkiye have continued to work with strong dedication to meet the needs of their citizens and improve overall quality of life, the VSR Türkiye adopts a realistic approach that moves attention from what has been achieved to what remains insufficient in practice, and in doing so, issues a call to local governments worldwide to move beyond showcase narratives towards actionable steps in the final four years of SDG implementation.

The first decade of SDG implementation (2015–2025) in Türkiye has been affected by a series of critical turning points. Major shocks such as the Syrian refugee

influx, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the 2023 earthquakes have tested municipal capacity under extreme conditions. These events also exposed structural weaknesses in coordination mechanisms and financial resilience. Same events on the other hand, also accelerated certain forms of institutional learning.

In response to these challenges, a wide range of initiatives have aimed to strengthen local capacity such as governance reforms, social inclusion programmes, climate and energy projects, and participatory mechanisms. Projects at national level (majorly EU-IPA funded) have supported municipalities to follow global frameworks by improving administrative practices and developing technical expertise. Knowledge-sharing platforms and competitions have further contributed to awareness and innovation. However, these efforts have often remained project-based and dependent on external funding which limited their long-term impact.



Given these limitations and the persistence of challenges, the main objective is to identify major constraints that hinder implementation together with governance, institutional mandates, coordination across levels of government, and financial frameworks.

The report however does not limit itself to problem identification. It integrates multi-stakeholder perspectives on potential solutions, based on inputs from municipalities, central institutions, academia, civil society, and international actors. Therefore, the report not only documents the challenges and solution pathways but also provides a reference point for the implementation period at the local level. Accordingly, VSR Türkiye aims to bring the experiences, constraints, and contributions of local governments in Türkiye into the broader United Nations agenda.

It should be noted that the problem areas identified in this report are derived from hundreds of inputs provided by municipal representatives, while the proposed solutions were discussed among a diverse group of 98 stakeholders. If the same process had involved a different set of participants, even with similar institutional representation, the outcomes might have varied. This is the inherent nature of perception-based analysis. Nevertheless, the

issues identified here still represent persistent and widely observed challenges. If the report succeeds in bringing some of the identified problem areas to the attention of policymakers, it will have fulfilled its purpose of conveying the message from the local level to the national, and ultimately to the international agenda.

Finally, as outlined in the section of the report covering legislative changes over the past decade, when dialogue is established on a constructive basis, the central government has taken numerous steps to address implementation-related challenges faced by local governments. In particular, within the process initiated with metropolitan reform (Law No. 6360), various primary and secondary legislative amendments have been introduced to respond to issues encountered in practice. Consequently, the report also aims to facilitate communication between central and local governments within a constructive dialogue framework.

To support the objectives outlined in this section and enhance the overall readability and clarity of the report, AI-assisted language and grammar refinement tools were used during the editing process.

**TARGET
AUDIENCE**

The VSR Türkiye is designed as a contribution to the localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals and addresses a wide range of audiences across different institutional and thematic domains. Its primary focus is on the organisational and operational challenges at the local level. Each target group engages with the report from a different perspective, yet the underlying objective remains consistent with strengthening the implementation of sustainability within multi-level governance systems.

At the global level, the report is primarily addressed to UN-Habitat, which plays a leading role in advancing sustainable urban development and inclusive settlements. Given its direct engagement with local governments and cities, the organisation stands as a natural counterpart for VSR processes. The report contributes to ongoing policy discussions within UN-Habitat by providing information on field realities, while also supporting the organisation's broader efforts to enhance the quality and reach of VSR reporting worldwide.

A second group of international stakeholders includes United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and its regional branch UCLG-MEWA. These organisations are actively involved in promoting VSR processes and supporting national associations in their reporting efforts. The report also addresses other multi-national local government networks that operate within the field of city diplomacy. Through the VSR framework, Türkiye's local sustainability practices and the challenges encountered in implementation will allow knowledge exchange and comparative learning across countries. In parallel, the findings of the report contribute indirectly to global monitoring platforms such as the UN High-Level Political Forum, where national progress on sustainable development is assessed.

Within Türkiye, central government institutions constitute a main audience, particularly in their role as the primary

actors responsible for addressing the issues identified in the report. Ministries and relevant public bodies can use the VSR Türkiye as a reference document to understand the local implications of existing policies. The report supports policy design to facilitate the alignment of national strategies with local needs by stressing on coordination challenges and operational constraints.

Municipalities on the other hand, stand in a dual position as both the subject and a core audience of the report. As the main implementers of SDG-related actions, municipalities are provided with an opportunity to situate their experiences within a wider national and international context, observe how their challenges relate to those faced by others, and identify areas where collective responses may be required.

Local government associations (LGA) at national, regional, and thematic levels are also an important stakeholder group. The report brings these organisations an overview of common challenges, which will enable LGAs to strengthen dialogue with their members and design capacity-building programmes that respond to common needs. In a similar way, universities, think tanks, and research institutions can make use of the report as a source of observation, particularly in relation to problem areas that require further academic exploration.

Financial actors, including national and international development banks, are among the audiences that can benefit from the report's findings. The VSR Türkiye supports investment planning and assist directing financial resources toward areas where they can generate the greatest impact through identifying priority areas at the local level. Development agencies, both domestic and international, can also benefit from the report as a guiding tool in programme design. For international agencies in particular, the report provides an opportunity to identify implementation challenges in

Türkiye before engaging in project activities and improves the relevance and effectiveness of their interventions.

Actors involved in Türkiye's European Union accession process, as well as experts working on EU-funded projects, constitutes another relevant audience. The report supports the analysis of local capacities in relation to SDG implementation and provides a basis for identifying priority areas in project development. For international experts and consultants working with local governments in Türkiye, the report becomes a useful reference to support project design with a strong focus on relevance.

Civil society organisations and community-based groups are also addressed through the report. The findings and recommendations provide a basis for stronger engagement with public institutions, while also supporting advocacy efforts

aimed at improving participation in local governance processes. Private sector actors operating in areas related to local governance may find value in the report's conclusions, as identified problem areas can drive the development of new solutions.

The report also serves as a reference point for future generations, because it does not only document current conditions but also emerging priorities and areas requiring further development. As global sustainability agendas evolve, this type of documentation will provide a basis for assessing progress and identifying persistent challenges.

Finally, VSR Türkiye is a methodological example for national associations of local governments in other countries as its approach can be adapted and applied in different contexts.

**MULTI-LEVEL
METHODOLOGICAL
APPROACH**

The preparation of the VSR Türkiye was initiated in September 2025 with the objective of documenting the challenges encountered in the local implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as identifying potential policy responses. The study's primary design was to build on a decade-long implementation perspective.

The initial phase of the process involved a series of preparatory meetings coordinated by the Urban Studies Institute, with the active contribution of the lead author and UCLG-MEWA. The main objective during this period was to establish a common understanding of the scope, analytical approach, and overall structure of the report. Particular attention was given to keep the study both problem-oriented and policy-relevant, while maintaining a consistent methodological framework across thematic areas. As a result of these discussions, a detailed document of action was developed which outlined structure of SDG chapters and defined the components to be included in each section.

Following the internal agreement on content, the process was expanded to include a broader range of stakeholders. On 13 October 2025, an open call was launched through online platforms and social media channels, inviting experts to apply to join the Advisory Board of VSR Türkiye.

On 9 December 2025, the selection process for the Advisory Committee members was finalised, and notifications were formally communicated to the selected candidates. The final composition of the Advisory Committee was composed of a diverse group of experts representing a broad range of institutional backgrounds and areas of expertise. Members came from international organisations, central government institutions, municipal administrations, development agencies, and academia which gave a balanced representation of both policy and practice.

The Advisory Committee was established as an expert review mechanism to support the preparation of the SDG chapters and to sustain factual accuracy and policy relevance through feedback. Members reviewed draft chapters, identified recent policy developments, emphasised overlooked local practices, and provided input to the author. The Committee operated in

an advisory capacity; author considered the feedback but retained responsibility and editorial discretion over the final content. Members were selected based on pre-defined criteria, including a doctoral degree in relevant fields and/or at least ten years of professional experience in areas such as urban governance, sustainable development, and public policy. Advanced English proficiency was also required and diverse institutional representation was prioritized. In addition, some selected members were assigned honorary ambassador roles to support outreach and visibility of the VSR.

Following the establishment of the Advisory Committee, the author focused on developing the introductory sections of the report. In parallel with the preparation of the SDG chapters, a survey tool was developed to capture field-level perceptions and understand implementation challenges from the perspective of municipal actors. The design of the survey was carried out in close consultation with Advisory Committee members and selected municipal representatives.

The questionnaire was launched on 19 January 2026 and closed on 3 February 2026 and was developed exclusively for municipal personnel and disseminated nationwide through LGAs. The structure of the online form followed a multi-layered design. In the first stage, respondents were asked to indicate the administrative level of their municipality (metropolitan, provincial, metropolitan district, district, or town). This was followed by identifying the municipality's location within Türkiye's 12 major socio-economic regions (NUTS-1), with provinces defined accordingly. In the third stage, respondents' positions within the municipality were categorised as senior management, mid-level management, technical/expert staff, or administrative staff. Subsequently, a brief contextual explanation was provided for each Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), including its relevance to municipal legislation and responsibilities, and respondents were asked to identify the three most important problem areas in service delivery that need to be addressed by 2030.

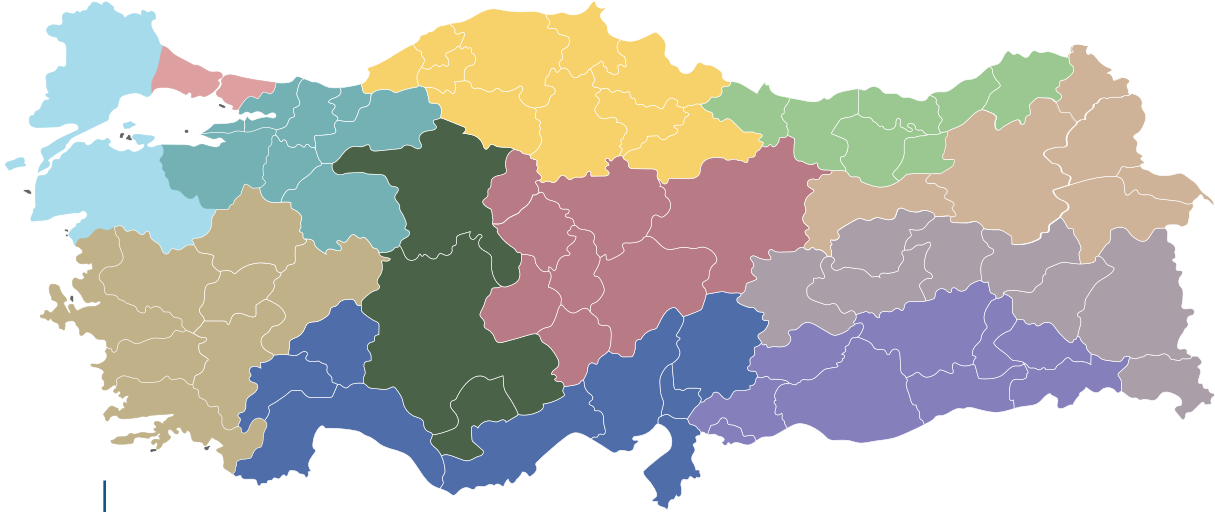


Figure 1. Statistical regions (NUTS-1) of Türkiye

During the analysis phase, a second methodological filter was applied with the focus on challenges arising from external factors, rather than internal municipal capacity issues. Issues such as multi-level coordination, regulatory misalignment, market conditions, and socio-economic pressures were prioritised under external governance dimensions. Before the ex-post sampling process, the dataset was subjected to a quality filter as well. Responses with missing variables, inconsistent classifications, or open-ended answers that could not be analysed were excluded.

The research design was based on a voluntary non-probability sampling approach. This preference came from the fact that the VSR Türkiye was being developed entirely on a voluntary basis in terms of both budget and implementation capacity, therefore, most accessible method was adopted to allow for broader participation. However, since voluntary sampling carries the risk of self-selection bias and potential regional or institutional clustering, an ex-post quota sampling method was applied after data collection to strengthen representativeness. A sub-sample that best represents Türkiye was calculated from the dataset, and analyses were conducted on the sub-sample. The final sample size was determined as $n = 150$ to confirm a balanced and manageable representation across regions, municipal scales, and professional roles. In the stratified selection process, representativeness was strengthened through

balanced inclusion of all NUTS-1 regions (TR1-TRC), municipal scales, and professional categories. Rare strata were preserved, while dominant strata were adjusted to maintain balance.

Following the establishment of a sample group consisting of 150 respondents, SDG-specific problem areas were generated through AI-assisted thematic aggregation of open-ended responses. Similar expressions were grouped, and for each SDG, the three most frequently recurring problem areas were identified.

In order to develop solution-oriented perspectives for the problem areas identified through the survey process, the organisation of a multi-stakeholder workshop was also included in the design of the study. The VSR Türkiye Workshop was held on 5 February 2026 in Konya, hosted by Karatay Municipality. The objective of the workshop was to strengthen the preparation process of Türkiye's first Voluntary Subnational Review through stakeholder participation. Opening remarks were delivered by the Mayor of Karatay Municipality, the Deputy Secretary General of UCLG-MEWA, and the Director General of the Urban Studies Institute. The author of the VSR Türkiye then presented the scope and methodology of the study. Following the opening session, a panel on the Sustainable Development Goals was organised on the local implementation of the SDGs.

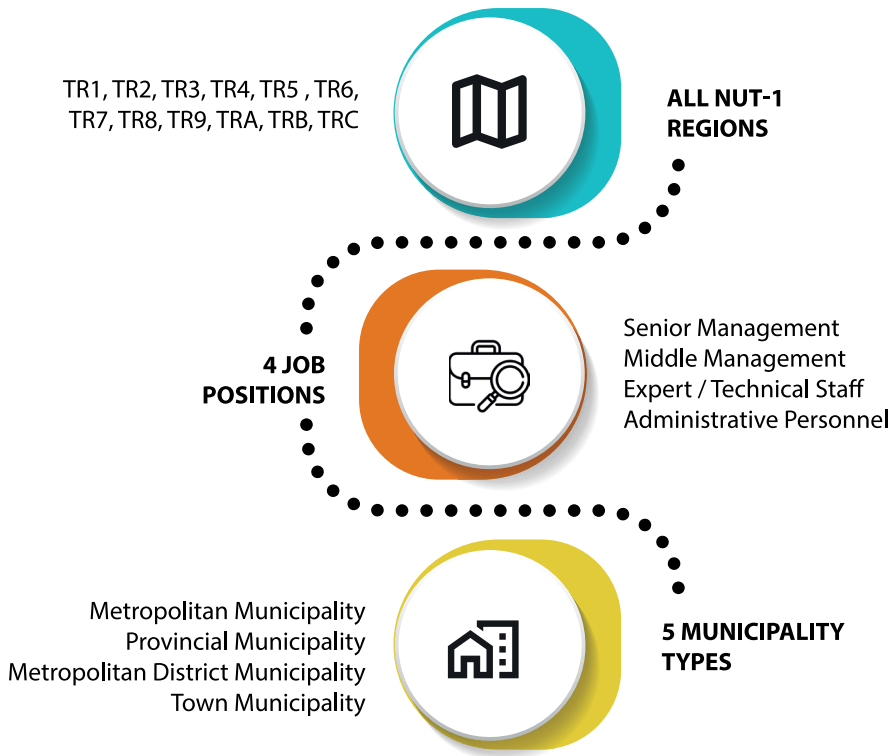


Figure 2. Survey sample distribution

A roundtable session was conducted in the afternoon based on the survey results. Participants reviewed three priority problem areas identified through the survey. Separate tables were established for each SDG, and participants were asked to develop concrete and applicable solution proposals. The workshop methodology was based on a rotation system, with participants moving between tables at set intervals. A total of seven rotation rounds were conducted for each SDG table to receive input from seven different groups and to secure assessment of problem ar-

reas from multiple institutional perspectives.

The workshop brought together 98 participants and included a high level of institutional diversity, with representatives from municipalities, academia, central government, development agencies, international organisations, the private sector, and civil society. Approximately half of the participants (45–50%) consisted of municipal managers and experts.

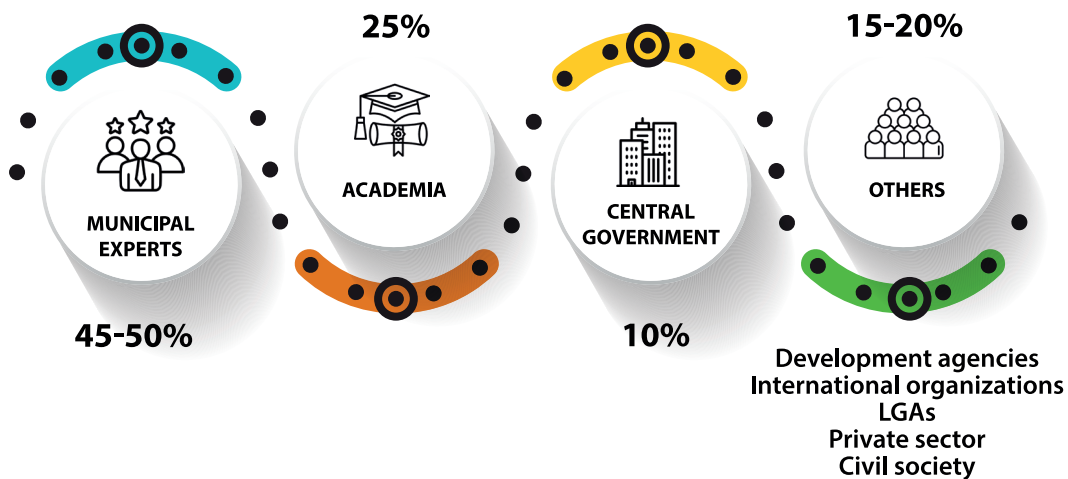


Figure 3. Institutional distribution of workshop participants

Representation from academia was around 25%, with faculty members and researchers from various universities taking part. Participants from central government institutions and affiliated bodies accounted for approximately 10%. In addition, representatives from development agencies, international organisations, regional and thematic LGAs, professional associations, the private sector, and civil society were also present.

All participants were assigned to SDG tables in a manner of balanced representation of different institutional backgrounds, such as municipalities, universities, central government, civil society, and the private sector. Attention was given to distribute participants from the same institution or academic department across different tables to maintain diversity of perspectives within each group.

After the workshop, the findings of the field survey were integrated into the report structure. For each SDG, the three main implementation challenges identified during the survey (amounting to a total of 51 problem areas) were presented under the headings titled “Voices from the Field” which presents the perspectives of practitioners and highlighting the most recurrent issues emerging from local implementation. In parallel, all solu-

tion proposals discussed and developed during the workshop were compiled under the headings titled “Voices at the Table.” Rather than prioritising a single recommendation or presenting a limited set of conclusions, the report incorporates the full range of discussions. The intention is to bring the reader into the workshop environment and allowing them to engage with the diversity of viewpoints and proposals.

The first draft of the report was completed, it was shared with the Advisory Committee for review. Author collected comments and suggestions from the members and incorporated the relevant revisions into the report. Following the completion of the revised draft, the full report was shared once again with the Advisory Committee members for final review and feedback. Members were invited to provide their final approval, acknowledging their contribution to the development of the report within defined framework.

At the end of the process, the report was transferred to a graphic designer for overall layout, and was subsequently finalised and published.

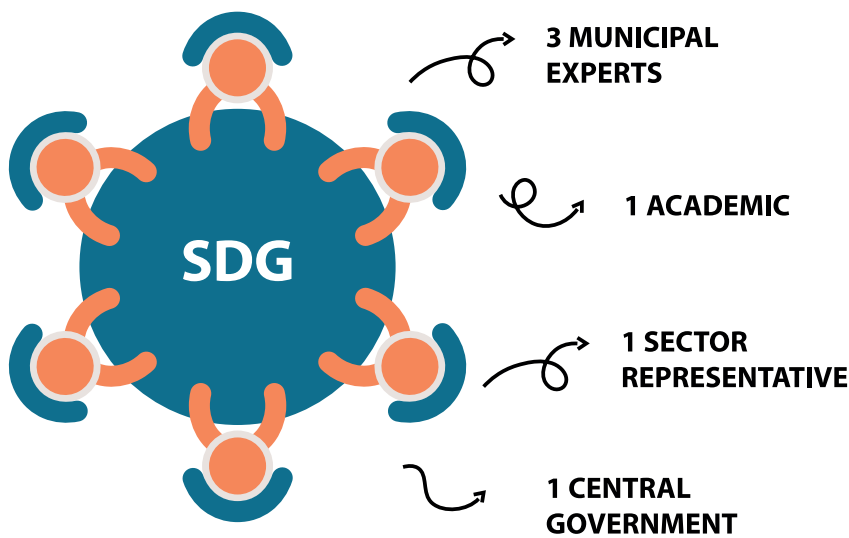


Figure 4. Example SDG solutions workshop table composition

INTRODUCTION

Municipal Structure in Türkiye

The administrative structure of Türkiye is based on a combination of centralisation and decentralisation within constitutional principles that define the state as both unified and governed by the rule of law. While legislative, executive, and judicial powers are separated at the national level, public administration operates through a dual system consisting of central and local authorities. In 2018, the Presidential Government System was introduced in Türkiye following the constitutional referendum held in 2017. Prior to this reform, executive authority was exercised by a Council of Ministers led by a Prime Minister, while the President held a more symbolic and supervisory role. Yet the central administration is still organised through ministries and their territorial branches across provinces and districts. Alongside, local administration is carried out by three main types of elected bodies, name-

ly special provincial administrations, municipalities, and villages.¹ These entities are responsible for delivering local services and responding to community needs, and operate within a framework where the central government maintains oversight through administrative supervision mechanisms. Although the system includes three distinct local administrative structures, more than 95% of the country's population lives within municipal boundaries which stresses their dominant role.

Municipalities in Türkiye represent the most prominent form of local administration and vary in scale from metropolitan municipalities to district and town municipalities, each with legal responsibilities and governance structures. Mayors are directly elected for 5 years mandate, and municipal assemblies function as the main decision-making bodies, supported by executive bureaus.

Table 1. Distribution of municipal types and population in Türkiye (2026, April)

Type	Number	Population
Metropolitan Municipality	30	67,324,359
Metropolitan District Municipality	519	67,324,359
Affiliated Administration	33	—
Provincial Municipality	51	7,852,321
District Municipality	403	5,397,348
Town Municipality	404	1,285,117
Total	1,440	81,859,145

The legal and institutional framework governing local governments in Türkiye consists of constitutional provisions, primary legislation, and secondary regulations. Legal framework establishes the structure, functions,

powers, and financial arrangements of local authorities, and further regulates their relationship with the central administration. The main legal texts in this regard include:

- Article 127 of the Constitution of the Republic of Türkiye
- Municipal Law No. 5393
- Metropolitan Municipality Law No. 5216
- Law No. 6360 on the Establishment of Metropolitan Municipalities in Fourteen Provinces and Twenty-Seven Districts and Amendments to Certain Laws and Decree Laws
- Law No. 2972 on Local Administration Elections, Neighbourhood Headmen (Muhtars), and Councils of Elders
- Law No. 5355 on Unions of Local Authorities
- Law No. 2464 on Municipal Revenues
- Law No. 5779 on the Allocation of Shares from General Budget Tax Revenues to Special Provincial Administrations and Municipalities
- Regulation on the Procedures and Principles of Municipal Council Meetings
- Regulation on City Councils

As stated in Article 3 of the Municipal Law (No. 5393), a municipality is a public legal entity with administrative and financial autonomy, established to meet the common local needs of residents and governed by elected decision-making bodies.² The primary condition for the establishment of a municipality in Türkiye (Article 4 of the Municipal Law) is that the settlement must have a population of at least 5,000. In provincial and district centres, the establishment of a municipality is mandatory regardless of population size. However, not all settlements meeting the population threshold are eligible. Municipalities cannot be es-

tablished in protected areas such as water basins and conservation zones, or in locations situated within 5 kilometres of an existing municipality.

The process typically begins at the local level and may be initiated by a decision of the village council, a written request by more than half of the registered voters, or directly by the governor if deemed necessary. Subsequently, the local election authority organises a vote within the settlement. Residents express their support or opposition, and the results are formally recorded and submitted to the governorship.

The application file is then forwarded to the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change along with the governor's opinion. The final decision is taken at the central level, and if approved, the municipality is formally established. In cases where multiple villages seek to merge into a municipality, their combined population must again exceed 5,000 and their built-up areas must be located within a maximum distance of 5 kilometres from each other.

Becoming a metropolitan municipality follows a different path. This status is not granted through the same local procedure but requires a legislative decision. In practice, provinces with a population of at least 750,000 are considered eligible for metropolitan municipality status.



Figure 5. 30 Metropolitan municipalities in Türkiye

In addition to municipal structures, metropolitan municipalities also include a range of affiliated entities that support service delivery. Affiliated entities are public institutions established to deliver specific services such as water, sewerage, or public transport and these entities have separate legal status, administrative structures, and budgets, however, operate under the oversight of the metropolitan municipality.

Municipalities in Türkiye operates within a comprehensive service framework. As a founding member of the Council of Europe, Türkiye has both contributed to and been influenced by the evolution of local governance competences across Europe. The long-standing continental interaction has supported the development of an extensive set of legal mandates, responsibilities and functions which appear in the national legal framework.

The primary legal basis governing municipalities is Municipal Law, which sets out the institutional structure, powers, and duties of local governments. Within the law, municipal responsibilities are set under “Part Three: Duties, Powers and Responsibilities of the

Municipality”, and Article 14 outlines the core service areas and functional obligations of municipalities. The main responsibilities of municipalities can be summarised as follows:

- Provide and manage urban infrastructure services, including zoning, water supply, sewerage, and transportation.
- Develop and maintain geographical and urban information systems.
- Deliver environmental protection, waste management, cleaning, and public health services.
- Deliver public safety services, including municipal police, fire brigades, emergency response, rescue, and ambulance services.
- Regulate urban traffic and manage transportation systems.
- Oversee cemeteries, burial services, parks, green areas, and urban landscaping.
- Support housing development, culture, arts, tourism, youth and sports activities, and student accommodation services.
- Provide social services and assistance, including services for vulnerable groups, vocational training, and marriage registration.
- Contribute to local economic and com-

mercial development.

- Construct, maintain, and equip public buildings such as schools, and establish and operate health facilities.
- Protect and restore cultural heritage, historical assets, and urban identity, including religious buildings.
- Promote sports activities, support amateur sports clubs, and organise competitions.
- Conduct food banking activities to support disadvantaged populations.

In addition to the duties and responsibilities, Municipal Law also sets out a distinct category of provisions under Article 15, titled “Powers and Privileges of the Municipality.” While duties refer to the services municipalities are expected to deliver, these powers and privileges define the legal authority and instruments through which municipalities carry out those functions. In other words, Article 15 establishes the administrative and financial tools through which municipalities implement their responsibilities. The main powers and privileges of municipalities can be summarised as follows:

- Undertake all necessary activities to meet local collective needs.
- Issue local regulations, enforce municipal rules, and apply legal sanctions where necessary.
- Grant licenses and permits for economic and social activities.
- Collect local taxes, fees, charges, and service-related revenues.
- Provide and manage water supply, wastewater, and stormwater systems.
- Establish and operate public transportation systems, including buses and rail systems.
- Manage solid waste collection, recycling, and disposal systems.
- Acquire, manage, lease, or dispose of municipal property and land.

- Borrow funds and accept donations to support municipal services.
- Establish and regulate markets, terminals, slaughterhouses, and commercial facilities.
- License and inspect public venues, businesses, and environmentally sensitive activities.
- Regulate street vendors and informal economic activities.
- Set standards for advertising and signage in urban areas.
- Designate areas for industrial activities, storage, and waste disposal for environmental protection.
- Regulate transport routes, fares, parking areas, and urban mobility systems.
- Issue permits for electronic communication infrastructure, considering urban aesthetics.
- Inspect and regulate elevators and technical infrastructure systems.
- Plan and implement sustainable mobility solutions, including bicycle lanes and pedestrian infrastructure.

Beyond the scope of duties, responsibilities, powers and privileges, the law also establishes general principles guiding how municipal services are delivered. Service delivery by municipalities, as stated in Municipal Law, is guided by a prioritisation framework that takes into account both financial capacity and the urgency of local needs. Services should be organised with a focus on accessibility, efficiency, and responsiveness to citizens. In practice, municipalities also take into account inclusiveness, developing approaches that address the needs of disadvantaged groups such as the elderly, persons with disabilities, and low-income populations. Municipal services are typically delivered within established administrative boundaries, although in certain cases they may

be extended to adjacent areas based on decisions of the municipal council.

In Türkiye, the decision-making structure of a municipality is composed of three main bodies namely the municipal council, the municipal executive committee, and the mayor. This sequence is also outlined in the law and indicate the order in which these

bodies are listed according to their authority within the municipal structure. Accordingly, the municipal council holds the highest decision-making power, followed by the executive committee, while the mayor is responsible for administration and implementation.



Figure 6. Municipal decision-making structure in Türkiye

The municipal council is the principal decision-making body, formed by directly elected members (Article 18). Council determines the strategic direction of the municipality and its responsibilities include approving strategic plans, investment programmes, and the municipal budget, as well as reviewing final accounts. The council also decides on zoning plans, borrowing, property transactions, and the establishment of municipal companies or partnerships. In addition, council can adopt local regulations, define service fees, and make decisions on administrative structures such as staffing and organisational units.

The size of municipal councils in Türkiye is directly proportional to population, meaning that the number of councillors increases as the population grows. In metropolitan municipalities, the composition follows a different method. The metropolitan municipal council is formed by taking one-fifth of the number of municipal council

members determined for each district within the metropolitan boundary, and combining these numbers would reach to the total number of members.

Table 2. Municipal council size by population³

Population Range	Number of Councillors
up to 10.000	9
10.001 – 20.000	11
20.001 – 50.000	15
50.001 – 100.000	25
100.001 – 250.000	31
250.001 – 500.000	37
500.001 – 1.000.000	45
1.000.000+	55

The municipal executive committee functions as an intermediary body that supports both decision-making and implementation (Article 33). The committee is composed of selected council members and senior municipal officials under the chairmanship

of the mayor. Main role of the executive is to review main documents such as the budget and strategic plans and provide opinions to the council. Committee also takes decisions on more operational matters, including certain budget reallocations, expropriation processes, dispute settlements, and the application of administrative sanctions.

The mayor is the head of the municipal administration and represents the legal entity of the municipality (Article 37). The mayor is directly elected and oversees the organisation and ensures that municipal services are delivered effectively. The mayor implements the decisions of the council and the executive committee, manages municipal assets and finances, appoints personnel, and represents the municipality in legal and official matters. While the mayor has significant executive authority, this role is primarily focused on coordination, management, and execution within the framework defined by the council.

Although not part of the formal municipal organs, there is another institution that needs to be explained here which is the citizen assemblies. Citizen assemblies are participatory platforms that bring together local stakeholders, including civil society organisations, professional chambers, public institutions, and residents, to discuss urban issues and provide recommendations. Assemblies are established within the framework of municipal legislation and function as advisory bodies rather than decision-making authorities. Their main role is to support inclusive governance through dialogue, local knowledge and policy discussions. Despite its potential, citizen assemblies face many challenges, starting with the lack of legal personality limiting their influence.⁴ Financial and administrative

dependence on municipalities also weakens their autonomy. Participation levels are often low, and representation may not fully reflect the diversity of local communities. In some cases, limited awareness and trust reduce engagement from both citizens and civil society.

Another important structure in the Turkish local government system is municipal unions. A local authority union (the equivalent of Local Government Associations in global term) is a public legal entity established by more than one local authority to jointly deliver certain services for which they are responsible. These unions have their own budgets and operate as autonomous public institutions within the local government system. Similar to municipalities, they have three main organs, a council, an executive committee, and a president.

In Türkiye, municipal unions are a widely used form of cooperation among municipalities, and their functioning is regulated under a specific legal framework (Law on Local Authority Unions, No. 5355). The law recognises a single national-level union representing all municipalities, namely the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye (UMT). Membership in UMT is mandatory, and its governed by a council composed of local elected representatives.

In addition, there are geographical region-based unions established through the initiative of municipalities across all regions of Türkiye, such as the Marmara Municipalities Union, the Aegean Coastal Municipalities Union, and the Union of Southeastern Anatolia Municipalities. Regional unions operate on a voluntary basis but remain very active across different geographies of the country. There are also thematic unions focusing on specif-

ic areas, including the Healthy Cities Union, the Historic Cities Union, and the Energy Cities Union, where municipalities participate based on their interests and priorities.

The Union of Municipalities of Türkiye collects membership contributions directly from central government transfers allocated to municipalities, which largely secures its financial position. However, other local authority unions in Türkiye often face financial constraints.⁵ The lack of stable and predictable revenue sources, together with irregular payment of membership fees, remains a common challenge affecting their effective operation.

Municipal finance in Türkiye is centrally influenced structure in which intergovernmental transfers play a dominant role.⁶ Local governments, particularly municipalities, rely heavily on total revenues from national taxes

allocated under the central transfers law (No. 5779), which distributes portions of income tax, corporate tax, and VAT based on population and other criteria. These transfers constitute more than half of total local government revenues and are channelled primarily through İLBANK (municipal bank which finances and supports municipal infrastructure projects). Own-source revenues, including local taxes and user charges, remain relatively limited in comparison to OECD averages. The main municipal tax is the recurrent property tax, while additional revenues are generated from service fees, utilities, and municipal enterprises. However, tax rates and bases are largely determined at the central level which in a way limits the fiscal autonomy.

Table 3. Subnational government expenditure by economic classification⁷

2020	Dollars PPP / Inhabitant	% GDP	% General Government	% Subnational Government
Total expenditure	842	3.0%	8.4%	100%
Inc. current expenditure	668	2.4%	7.4%	79.3%
Compensation of employees	172	0.6%	7.1%	20.5%
Intermediate consumption	389	1.4%	31.7%	46.2%
Social expenditure	37	0.1%	1.0%	4.4%
Subsidies and current transfers	31	0.1%	3.6%	3.7%
Financial charges	38	0.1%	4.2%	4.5%
Others	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Incl. capital expenditure	174	0.6%	16.1%	20.7%
Capital transfers	45	0.2%	69.2%	5.3%
Direct investment (or GFCF)	130	0.5%	12.8%	15.4%

In the Turkish context, this limitation has tangible implications for service quality and investment capacity. Since municipalities rely heavily on centrally determined revenues, their ability to generate flexible resources for large-scale infrastructure projects remains constrained. Borrowing limits, although designed to establish fiscal discipline, often restrict municipalities

from financing long-term investments in transport, water, and urban infrastructure. This is important particularly in rapidly growing metropolitan areas where demand for services expands faster than available resources. As a result, municipalities may postpone or scale down projects, which can directly affect the coverage and timeliness of local service delivery.

Table 4. Subnational government expenditure by functional classification⁸

2020	Dollars PPP / inhabitant	% GDP	% general government	% subnational government
Total expenditure by economic function	842	3.0%	-	100%
1. General public services	356	1.3%	16.5%	42.3%
2. Defence	2	0.0%	0.3%	0.2%
3. Security and public order	40	0.1%	6.3%	4.8%
4. Economic affairs/transport	129	0.5%	9.4%	15.4%
5. Environmental protection	74	0.3%	91.2%	8.9%
6. Housing and community amenities	118	0.4%	57.0%	14.1%
7. Health	11	0.0%	0.7%	1.3%
8. Recreation, culture and religion	56	0.2%	27.2%	6.6%
9. Education	35	0.1%	3.5%	4.2%
10. Social protection	19	0.1%	0.5%	2.3%

On the expenditure side, municipalities account for the majority of subnational public spending, with a focus on infrastructure, transport, and urban services such as water supply. Investment constitutes a significant share of municipal budgets, especially in metropolitan municipalities, which lead large-scale projects in economic development and environmental services. Despite this fact, overall subnational expenditure and investment levels again remain below OECD averages relative to GDP. Fiscal rules

impose constraints on borrowing and personnel expenditures, with limits tied to previous revenues and budget size. Municipal borrowing is permitted primarily for investment purposes and is subject to central oversight, especially in the case of external financing. While debt levels remain moderate, financial sustainability depends on transfer stability and controlled expenditure growth.

Table 5. Subnational government revenue by category⁹

2020	Dollars PPP / inhabitant	% GDP	% general government	% subnational government
Total revenue	926	3.3%	10.5%	100%
Tax revenue	97	0.3%	1.9%	10.4%
Grants and subsidies	696	2.5%	-	75.2%
Tariffs and fees	104	0.4%	-	11.3%
Income from assets	13	0.0%	-	1.4%
Other revenues	16	0.1%	-	1.8%

Core challenges of the municipal financial system in Türkiye starts with the limited capacity to generate own-source revenues which results in strong dependence on central transfers.¹⁰ The weak revenue base is often combined with inefficient use of existing resources. At the same time, many municipalities carry a heavy debt burden due to reliance on short-term and high-cost borrowing to finance infrastructure investments. Debt management practices do not always match repayment capacity, therefore increases municipal financial risks. Personnel expenditures also place pressure on budgets, especially where staffing levels exceed actual needs. Additionally,

the revenue system itself faces structural limitations. Many taxes and fees are outdated and do not adjust to current economic conditions.¹¹ Tariff-setting authority remains centralised and limits local flexibility and responsiveness. Collection and administrative processes are often inefficient, implemented by outdated methods and weak systems. Limited technological infrastructure further complicates monitoring and collection. In addition, there are clear differences in institutional and technical capacity across municipalities. Finally, the range of revenue sources remains narrow which restricts the development of new and alternative income streams.

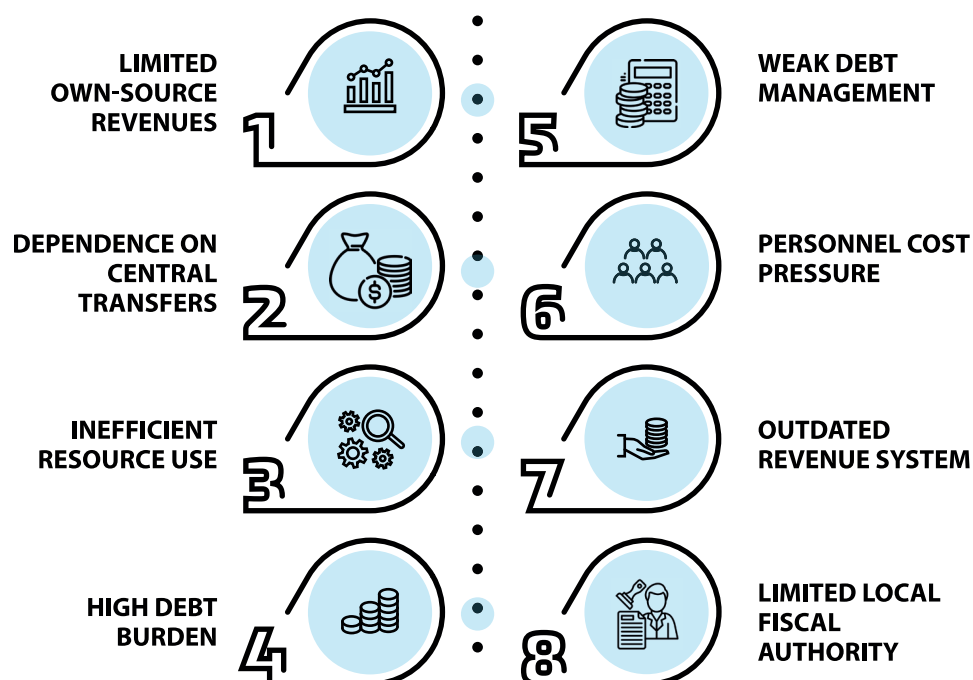


Figure 7. Core challenges of municipal finance in Türkiye

Major Crises Affecting Municipalities

From the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, the period leading up to 2025 has given municipalities in Türkiye with an exceptionally demanding set of challenges. The large-scale influx of refugees that began in 2011 placed fiscal pressure on municipal budgets and absorption capacity problems on service delivery systems. The migration trends forced municipalities to rapidly expand their capacity in areas such as housing, so-

cial services, and infrastructure. This was followed by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, which brought urban life and local economies to a near standstill. Lockdowns negatively affected municipal revenues while increasing expenditure needs. As municipalities were still in the process of recovering from the financial and social impacts of the pandemic, the devastating earthquakes of 2023 further compounded these pressures.

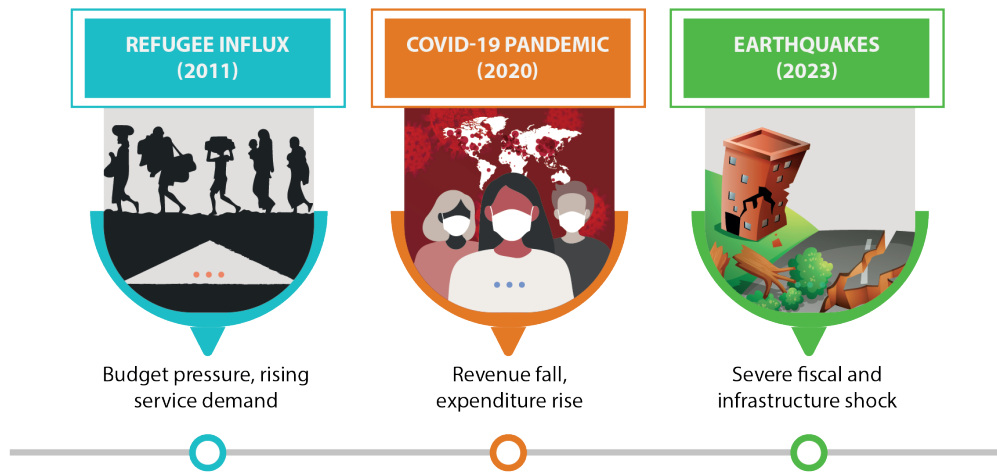


Figure 8. External shocks and their impact on municipal systems

The outbreak of civil war and instability in Syria initiated large-scale migration flows toward neighbouring countries, with Türkiye becoming the primary destination. The number of Syrians under temporary protection increased from 14,237 in 2011 to approximately 3.5 million by 2018 and reached a peak of 3.7 million in 2021.¹² Following the initiation of voluntary return processes and relative stabilisation in parts of Syria, this number declined to around 2.3 million by 2025. However, rapid demographic transformation placed significant pressure on urban

areas, as the vast majority of refugees settled in cities. Along with the national institutions, municipalities had also become one of the main institutions for responding to immediate and long-term needs, including housing, social services, and infrastructure. Legal provisions such as the “citizenship law” under Municipal Law and integration-related clauses in the Law on Foreigners and International Protection provided a partial basis for municipal involvement, although implementation largely depended on local capacity and initiative.

During this era, municipalities faced a range of operational challenges in responding to the refugee influx.¹³ The absence of a legal framework specifically addressing municipal responsibilities toward refugees created uncertainty in decision-making processes. Financial constraints emerged as an issue, as municipal revenues are primarily calculated based on the registered Turkish population and no additional systematic funding was allocated to address the needs of refugees. Language barriers represented one of the most persistent challenges and affected access to services, communication with local communities, and social cohesion.¹⁴ Limited availability of translation and psychosocial support services further complicated service delivery. Coordination gaps between municipalities and the lack of standardised approaches reduced efficiency, whereas data limitations made it difficult to assess needs accurately. Municipalities increasingly relied on field surveys and household visits to identify demographic patterns and service requirements.

Despite these challenges, municipalities developed a range of effective practices that improved service delivery and supported social cohesion. In cooperation with international organisations, UN agencies, and civil society actors, municipalities expanded their traditional service scope to include education, vocational training, and social support programmes for the needs of both refugees and host communities.¹⁵ Language courses, awareness-raising sessions, and skills development activities were implemented to facilitate integration and improve access to services. Specialised centres were established to provide safe spaces for women and vulnerable groups, combining childcare, counselling, and empowerment programmes. Municipalities also adopted data-driven approaches, including household surveys and digital databases, to identify needs and allocate resources. Partnerships with international donors allowed access to additional funding and technical expertise for strengthened institutional capacity.

Table 6. Top 10 cities by number of Syrians under temporary protection (as of 09.04.2026)¹⁶

Province	Number of Syrians under Temporary Protection	% Syrians in City Population
İstanbul	404336	2.50
Gaziantep	322822	12.68
Şanlıurfa	193035	7.85
Adana	174801	7.11
Mersin	145696	6.93
Hatay	139848	8.14
Bursa	135778	3.99
Konya	100243	4.10
İzmir	97394	2.12
Ankara	68915	1.15

The experience of Turkish municipalities during this period provides a number of important lessons for managing large-scale migration at the local level.¹⁷ Cities have emerged as the primary actors not only in responding to immediate humanitarian needs but also in supporting long-term integration processes. Effective responses have relied on multi-actor cooperation and involved public institutions, international organisations, civil society, and migrants themselves.

Following the migration that pressurized local service demands, another major challenge emerged with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected countries worldwide starting in 2020. The pandemic in Türkiye was managed primarily through a centralised framework, with the national government coordinating responses via provincial administrations and health directorates. However, municipalities played an operational role at the local level, particularly in communication, service continuity, and social support.¹⁸ A colour-coded risk classification system was introduced to differentiate restrictions across provinces, therefore municipalities were able to adapt measures based on epidemiological conditions. Metropolitan and provincial municipalities were responsible for informing the public about health measures, operating call centres, and providing psychological support services, especially for vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities. Municipalities also maintained essential urban services, including water supply, sanitation, and waste management for the continuity, despite restrictions and workforce limitations.

Municipal responses also covered economic and social interventions

for local conditions. Several municipalities introduced emergency support measures for households and businesses, such as food distribution, medical supply delivery, and temporary exemptions from rent and utility payments for vulnerable populations. Digitalisation of services accelerated during this period where municipalities introduced online platforms for administrative procedures, library services, and citizen engagement. Some municipalities developed sector-specific responses, such as supporting local agricultural production, whereas others adopted a more comprehensive approach that included accommodation for healthcare workers and virtual cultural activities. At the financial level, however, subnational government expenditure declined due to postponed investments but the revenues remained relatively stable due to the continued flow of central transfers.

Throughout the pandemic, the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye assumed both coordinating and advocacy functions and served as a link between municipalities and the central government.¹⁹ Shortly after the outbreak, the UMT Executive Committee (composed of local elected representatives) convened to identify main financial and administrative challenges faced by municipalities and submitted a set of policy recommendations to national authorities. Recommendations included the suspension of deductions from municipal tax revenue shares, restructuring of outstanding debts, postponement of loan repayments, and provision of low-interest or interest-free financing through public banks. UMT also emphasised the need to support public transport systems through tax reductions and subsidies. The Union also stressed that municipalities should benefit from national

employment support schemes. These proposals were communicated directly to relevant ministries and contributed to subsequent legislative measures.

UMT also facilitated knowledge sharing, capacity building, and international cooperation during the pandemic crisis. Union organised nationwide conferences and training programmes to strengthen municipal responses, reaching thousands of municipal staff through remote learning activities. It also engaged with international organisations, including global municipal networks and United Nations agencies, to exchange experiences and promote solidarity. Experts in the Union coordinated data collection from municipalities and compiled reports documenting local responses, which were shared with international platforms. In addition, UMT supported municipalities through project-based funding, including resources mobilised from international programmes.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed several organisational and operational challenges for municipalities in Türkiye.²⁰ One of the most important findings is that financial resilience is central to maintaining service continuity during crises. Disruptions in revenue streams quickly led to broader service limitations and demonstrated once again the interconnected nature of municipal functions. The experience also showed that municipalities benefit significantly from strong coordination mechanisms, both with central government institutions and with local and international partners. Central guidance gave a degree of consistency but also limited the flexibility of municipalities to respond rapidly with local solutions. The increased use of digital tools and alternative service delivery methods showed the impor-

tance of technological readiness in crisis management. At the same time, differences in local socio-economic and demographic conditions underlined that uniform policy responses may not be equally effective across cities.

As the country was still in the process of recovering from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, a devastating earthquake struck and caused a nationwide social and economic crisis. The earthquakes that struck on 6 February 2023 in Pazarcık and Elbistan (Kahramanmaraş), with magnitudes of 7.7 and 7.6, caused massive destruction across 11 provinces, majorly in Southeastern Anatolia Region. The disaster affected approximately 14 million people and resulted in widespread physical and socio-economic damage. According to official assessments in the first month, 1.52 million buildings comprising 4.75 million independent units were inspected which revealed that 202,000 buildings and 582,000 independent units were either collapsed, severely damaged, or required urgent demolition.²¹ In Hatay alone, 60,000 buildings were classified as heavily damaged or destroyed. The level of devastation led to the collapse of urban infrastructure systems, displacement of populations, and the interruption of basic public services which made it one of the most severe disasters in the country's recent history.

The initial needs assessment conducted immediately after the earthquake pointed to a substantial burden on municipal service systems, especially in solid waste and debris management.²² Total construction and demolition waste reached 100–120 million cubic meters, with transport costs alone amounting to approximately USD 1.81

billion. Disposal-related expenditures, including storage and crushing operations, added a further USD 406 million. Total debris management cost therefore was around around USD 2.22 billion. At the operational level, 15–20% of municipal vehicle fleets became unusable which corresponded to financial loss of USD 175–233 million. The damage on municipal infrastructure reached USD 302.5 million. The social impact was equally significant. At least 15 of 55 youth centres sustained heavy damage. Population displacement affected 3.3 million people, with nearly 2 million relocating. This created acute service pressure in receiving cities, including a 40% population increase in Kilis.

During the immediate response phase, municipalities across Türkiye demonstrated a high level of coordination and solidarity.²³ Municipalities from non-affected regions quickly mobilised their personnel and equipment and deployed to the disaster zone. Under the coordination of the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye a centralised crisis management structure was established in close cooperation with AFAD (the national disaster and emergency management authority), which supported by a 7/24 operational system. Municipal teams active-

ly participated in search and rescue operations, debris removal, and the provision of essential services. Large-scale logistical support was delivered, including hundreds of trucks carrying humanitarian aid, as well as equipment such as machinery, service vehicles, and temporary housing units. Municipalities also played a key role for the continuity of basic needs such as shelter, food distribution, sanitation, and waste management. They also coordinated closely with civil society and volunteer networks.

Following the immediate response phase, the UMT initiated a series of project and financing related field assessments to understand needs of municipalities and develop new instruments to address emerging funding gaps. Through negotiations in 2023, the Union was able to mobilise a financing package approaching €100 million (Table 7) within a relatively short period of nine months.²⁴ Portfolio was achieved through different implementation models, with the UMT taking a leading role in some projects while acting as a partner in others with a flexible and demand-driven approach to post-disaster recovery and local capacity strengthening.

Table 7. UMT's earthquake recovery project portfolio

Project Name	Donor	Content
RE-SEED Project	European Union (FRIT), BMZ	SMEs support, employment, local resilience
Community-Based Models for Earthquake Response Project	UK-AID	Employment training, social services, early recovery
Support, Recovery and Reconstruction for Local Governments Project	Giro555 (Netherlands)	Municipal capacity, grants, recovery planning
Participatory, Inclusive and Green Recovery Project	European Union	Service capacity, inclusion, green recovery
Grant Project for Post-Disaster Recovery and Waste Management	JICA	Equipment support, disaster recovery, waste management
Resilient Cities, Strong Communities Project	CUF, UCLG Solidarity Fund	Pilot municipalities, resilience, participatory governance

Municipalities located within the earthquake-affected region faced severe institutional and operational challenges. Many municipal service buildings were destroyed or became unusable which forced local administrations to operate from temporary facilities. Many municipal employees lost their lives or were directly affected by the disaster which further weakened institutional capacity. At the same time, municipalities had to maintain essential public services under extreme conditions, despite damaged infrastructure and limited resources. The disruption of water, sewerage, and transportation systems significantly complicated service delivery. Financial pressures increased as revenues declined while emergency expenditures rose sharply and municipalities effectively became disaster-affected institutions themselves. It should be noted that many municipal employees in the earthquake-affected regions were themselves direct victims of the disaster. Despite experiencing personal losses and trauma, they continued to serve with remarkable dedication and, in a commendable manner, prior-

itized the urgent needs of their communities before attending to their own circumstances.

Municipalities receiving displaced populations from the earthquake region were also largely impacted by the crisis. The large-scale internal displacement led to rapid and unplanned population increases in many cities which added substantial pressure on public services. Demand for social assistance, education, and healthcare services rose dramatically and required municipalities to expand their service capacities in a short period of time. Urban systems such as water supply, transportation, and waste management experienced increased strain. The rental markets faced upward pressure due to sudden demand. Municipalities were compelled to develop immediate adaptation and integration measures for incoming populations, often under conditions of limited data and planning capacity.

Despite the persistence of structural challenges and ongoing socio-economic mobility in the earthquake-affected regions, the reconstruction

process has advanced at an extraordinary pace largely driven by the central administration. Within a relatively short period, large-scale housing and infrastructure programmes have been implemented, resulting in the completion of over 455,000 independent units in 2025, including residential buildings, village houses, and commercial spaces.²⁵ Construction activities have been carried out simultaneously across multiple provinces which covered an area comparable to that of entire countries in scale.

The earthquake experience in Türkiye brought important lessons with it in terms of disaster response and recovery.²⁶ The importance of embedding resilience in urban planning before crises is now widely recognised, as the scale of destruction showed the limits of reactive approaches. Recovery processes should follow a “build back better” principle so that reconstruction improves structural safety and long-term sustainability. Inclusive policies are essential, with priority given to vulnerable groups through expanded social protection and public services. Effective recovery also depends on strong coordination among central and local governments, international partners, and civil society. Integrating climate-sensitive and resource-efficient approaches into reconstruction can support a more sustainable and resilient development.

The combined impacts of migration, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the 2023 earthquakes in Türkiye proved the need to frame urban resilience as an integrated governance and planning package.²⁷ All of the 3 crises exposed constraints in municipal finance, coordination, and service delivery and showed that resilience depends on both institutional flexibility and re-

source capacity. Municipalities must be able to sustain essential services under pressure through data-driven systems and diversified delivery mechanisms. Social cohesion and inclusive access to services proved decisive in maintaining stability, particularly in migration contexts. The earthquake experience further demonstrated that resilience must be embedded in spatial planning and infrastructure decisions. Economic vulnerability linked to external dependency and limited revenue autonomy also remains a risk.

Projects, Partnerships and Knowledge Sharing

In the first ten years of putting the SDGs into action, national organizations came up with many ways to help municipalities get involved and pay attention to global issues. During this time, the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye (UMT) stood out by bringing together project-based efforts and making sure global goals fit with local priorities.

A major milestone in this process was the creation of the Project and Financing Unit within UMT in 2018. This new unit developed the institutional capacity and memory for the Union to design, manage, and carry out projects funded from outside sources. After 2018, both the number and variety of projects, as well as the overall budget, grew significantly.²⁸ Between 2018 and 2023, UMT built up a project portfolio worth about €186 million (Table 8). In these projects, the Union took on different roles; sometimes leading, sometimes partnering, and sometimes supporting as a co-beneficiary.

The growth in project activities after 2018 shows that the institution became better at working with interna-

tional donors and teaming up with different partners on key priorities. During this period, the European Union was the main supporter of projects for municipalities across the country.²⁹ A significant number of the programs outlined below were implemented under EU-funded Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) frameworks, which provided both financial resources and methodological guidance. The IPA process also supported municipalities in Türkiye in aligning the EU *acquis* at the local level.³⁰ Beyond EU, a range of implementing actors have played a visible role in this process, including UN agencies (particularly the United Nations Development Program Türkiye) and development agencies from Sweden, the Netherlands, and Germany.

During the period 2015–2025, the most prominent projects³¹ in Türkiye targeting municipalities as the primary beneficiary group and focusing on capacity building at the national level are listed below:

- Local Administration Reform Project Phase III (LAR III)
LAR III was built on metropolitan reform to make municipal institutions stronger. The project worked on ways to boost municipal revenues, improve cooperation between different levels of government, and raise service standards. The project reviewed laws and administrative practices, comparing them to those in EU countries, and supported tools like the YERELBİLGİ system (a centrally managed municipal information system) to make data collection and reporting easier. Municipal staff and central institutions joined training sessions and technical studies. The project also provided policy recommendations and

encouraged better performance management.

- Town Twinning between Türkiye and the EU (TWIN)
TWIN project was implemented from April 2018 to December 2020. The beneficiary was the Directorate for EU Affairs, with the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye as a co-beneficiary. The project focused on building cooperation between local authorities in Türkiye and EU member states in areas linked to the EU accession process. Activities included town twinning meetings, four capacity-building trainings, two thematic workshops, and four study visits. A two-week internship programme was organized at the European Institute of Public Administration. The project created an impact assessment, a legal and financial analysis, and an online tool to help match partners. A total of 24 joint projects were funded through grants ranging from €60,000 to €120,000.
- Promoting Good Governance and Roma Empowerment at the Local Level (ROMACTED Programme)
The ROMACTED Programme was run in Türkiye and the Western Balkans through EU and Council of Europe cooperation. In Türkiye, the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye acted as the national implementing body. The programme aimed to support Roma citizen participation in local decision-making and improve municipal governance. Main outcomes included the formation of Working Groups and Community Action Groups in five pilot municipalities, the development and implementation of joint action plans, and the initiation of specific projects addressing identified community needs.
- Resilience in Local Governance (RESLOG Türkiye)

RESLOG Türkiye has been implemented with support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). The programme focused on local governance in the context of migration, with an emphasis on Syrian refugees and host communities. The programme was a joint effort between municipalities and their unions, with SALAR International leading and UMT and MMU helping to put plans into action. Activities included open conversations about policy, hands-on research, and training to build skills.

- **Technical Assistance for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency for Municipalities and Universities (YEVEDS)**

The YEVEDS project, led by the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources with UMT as a main stakeholder, ran from March 2019 to April 2022 with a €4.5 million budget. Project provided technical support for renewable energy and energy efficiency in municipalities and universities. Activities included training, study visits, field studies, and feasibility reports. Engineering services and tender documents were prepared for pilot projects. The project also supported academic research.

- **Technical Assistance for Increasing Ethical Awareness among Local Government Officials**

The project started in 2019 and was implemented by the Council of Ethics for Public Officials with UMT being the main partner. The project focused on ethics in local service areas, including zoning, licensing, procurement, recruitment, and social services. A series of workshops were held across cities and brought together municipal officials, ministry representatives, and civil society actors to develop ethical codes and raise awareness on transparen-

cy and accountability in local governance.

- **Qudra 2 Türkiye Programme**

The Qudra 2 Türkiye Programme was implemented from 2019 to 2023 as a regional response to the Syrian crisis. Programme was financed by the EU Madad Fund, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation. GIZ implemented the programme with the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye. The focus was on strengthening the resilience of refugees and host communities and the programme supported municipalities in service delivery and social cohesion. As a result, municipalities improved access to municipal services, enhanced cooperation between refugees and host community members, and increased the capacity of local actors. In total, 49 projects in 23 municipalities received small-scale grants.

- **Realizing Alliances with Citizen Assemblies (MATRA-CA)**

The MATRA-CA project ran from 2020 to 2022, funded by €287,560 from the Royal Netherlands Embassy. Project focused on participatory governance and citizen involvement in local decision-making. The project involved the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye and three pilot municipalities in Ankara. A Team of Trainers was formed within UMT and received tailored training on participatory governance. Pilot municipalities conducted participation processes through task forces and citizen assemblies. Policy proposals from these processes went to municipal councils. The project produced a participation module, held a public outreach conference, and developed a sustainability framework.

- Promoting Good Governance and Roma Empowerment at the Local Level (ROMACTED II)
The ROMACTED II Programme ran from 2021 to 2024 as an EU and Council of Europe initiative across Türkiye and the Western Balkans. In Türkiye, the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye acted as a local political partner. The programme ran in 10 pilot municipalities. As a result, municipalities established inclusive local action groups and developed participatory local action plans. Main activities involved training, coaching, participatory planning, and advocacy. Baseline assessments and mapping studies were done for each municipality.
- Town Twinning Between Türkiye and the EU – II: Twinning for a Green Future
TT-II programme started in March 2023 and was implemented over 24 months under the coordination of the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye. The programme was financed with a total budget of €4 million and focused on climate change and environmental cooperation between local authorities in Türkiye and EU member states. A total of 26 joint projects were funded through grants ranging from €60,000 to €100,000.
- EU Support for Promoting Sustainable Urban Mobility in Turkish Cities (SUMP Türkiye)
The SUMP Türkiye project began in August 2022 and implemented over three years, with co-financing from the European Union and the Republic of Türkiye. The Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure acted as the contracting authority and the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye was the final beneficiary. The project focused on sustainable urban mobility and promoted a moving away from private car use toward accessible, inclusive transport systems. Key outputs included Green and White Policy Papers, translated ELTIS guides, and practical handbooks for municipalities. The project also supported awareness activities such as European Mobility Week.
- Strengthening Civic Engagement for Enhancing Democratic Local Governance in Türkiye (Civic Engagement Project)
The Civic Engagement Project was implemented from January 2023 to September 2025, with financing from the European Union under IPA II and implementation by UNDP. The Union of Municipalities of Türkiye was the main beneficiary and the Ministry of Interior Directorate General for Relations with Civil Society was the co-beneficiary. The project focused on civic participation, public-civil society cooperation, and volunteerism. Project included strategy and action plan development in seven pilot provinces, a small grants programme for joint local projects, and studies on a legal framework for volunteerism, as well as capacity development activities for public institutions and local stakeholders, supported by data collection and policy dialogue processes.
- Today's Youth Future Jobs Project (Digi-Youth)
The Digi-Youth started in March 2023 and was planned for four years. Project was financed by the European Union, implemented by UNDP, with the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye as the main beneficiary and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security as co-beneficiary. The project focuses on digital skills for young people aged 15–25 and operates in 45 pilot municipalities where Digital Youth Centres have been established. Training covers

coding, robotics, digital marketing, and design thinking. The project also includes a digital solutions competition for youth. A Vocational Centre of Excellence will be established in UMT to train instructors and support long-term capacity building.

- Support to Local Governments Response, Recovery, and Reconstruction following the Earthquakes in Türkiye

The project was implemented between August 2023 and January 2025 with a budget of €1 million, financed through Giro555, in partnership with the VNG (Association of Dutch Municipalities) and the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye. Main objective of the project was the post-earthquake recovery in the municipalities. The project supported the preparation of Participatory Local Recovery Plans and the implementation of strategies in line with local priorities. Municipal task forces were established with representatives from public institutions, civil society, and local communities. The project included emergency subsidies, urban planning support, and project pipeline development. Experts also reviewed and strengthened disaster management plans and municipal service capacity for recovery and future preparedness.

- EU4 Energy: Covenant of Mayors in the Western Balkans and Türkiye

The EU4 Energy: Covenant of Mayors project is a multi-donor programme co-financed by the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. The project is implemented by GIZ in the Western Balkans and by CPMA in Türkiye and focuses on climate action and energy transition at the local level. Main objective is to promote the Covenant of Mayors ini-

tiative and support municipalities in developing and implementing energy and climate policies. The project includes capacity development and awareness-raising activities. Multi-Level Governance Platform is also developed during the project to improve coordination between national and local institutions in climate policy design and implementation. Several grant contracts were also signed with partner municipalities for the development of local climate action plans.

- Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) – Türkiye

The Child Friendly Cities Initiative is implemented in cooperation with UNICEF and has been active in Türkiye since 2014. CFCI focuses on integrating child rights into local governance and municipal services. The programme works with municipalities to improve policies on child participation, early childhood services, and protection issues such as child labour and early marriage. Training materials and guidelines were developed and applied across municipalities. The initiative has reached 40 provinces and 94 municipalities at different levels of engagement. A child-focused database was introduced to track municipal expenditures related to children.

- Capacity Building for Local Municipalities on Disaster Risk Reduction and Waste Management

The project focused on post-earthquake capacity development following the earthquakes in Kahramanmaraş. It was implemented in cooperation with JICA, the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye, the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, and municipalities. The project covered urban planning, recovery and reconstruction planning, seismic retrofitting,

and debris waste management. Training programmes were organised in Japan for technical staff from relevant institutions. Japanese experts were assigned to support activities in Türkiye.

- Resilient Cities Strong Societies Project

The project was initiated after the 2023 earthquakes through the support of the Union of French Cities (CUF) and the UCLG where UMT is the implementing agency and partner. The project is based on a solidarity fund established to support recovery efforts in affected regions. Within project framework, approximately €230,000 in financial support was allocated to 2 small municipalities to procure equipment and essential goods.

- Supporting the local municipalities in earthquake-affected areas through procuring equipment and materials necessary for “Build Back Better”

Within the JICA financed programme, the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye takes part as an executing agency focusing on local-level recovery and reconstruction. The programme supports municipalities in earthquake-affected provinces through the provision of vehicles, equipment and materials required for post-disaster response and recovery.

- Sustainable Urban Mobility and Reliable Transport Project (SUMART)

The SUMART project is financed under IPA III through a combination of European Union grants and a loan programme from the French Development Agency. It is implemented in partnership with ILBANK and the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye. The main objective is on the sustainable and smart urban transport systems in municipalities. Project includes technical assistance, pol-

icy dialogue, and awareness activities targeting key stakeholders. The project also supports the preparation of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans and promotes exchange of practices with EU countries.

- Local Zero Waste Initiatives Programme

The EU financed Local Zero Waste Initiatives Programme is implemented by UNDP Türkiye over a 36-month period. The Union of Municipalities of Türkiye is the main beneficiary and the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change is the co-beneficiary. The project provides technical assistance and grant support to municipalities for developing and applying zero-waste systems. Activities include preparing provincial zero-waste action plans, piloting initiatives, and disseminating best practices. The programme also includes capacity development for institutions and awareness activities targeting municipalities and the public.

- Women-Friendly Cities Programme (Phase III)

The WFC Programme aims to promote gender equality in urban governance and service delivery. The third phase started at the end of 2024 with financing from the European Union. WFC is coordinated by the Directorate for EU Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and implemented by UNFPA in partnership with the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye. The programme has 25 pilot municipalities and civil society organisations. Women’s access to services such as health, education, and employment, as well as participation in local decision-making is the main objective of the programme. Main activities include institutional capacity development, gender-sensitive planning, and

support for equality-based local policies.

- Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities Programme

The Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities Programme is implemented over 36 months with the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye as the main beneficiary and several national institutions as co-beneficiaries, including the Directorate for EU Affairs and the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change. The project is financed by the European Union with a budget of €5 million. The main objective is to increase awareness on climate mitigation and adaptation at the local level. Activities include establishing a national mission on climate-neutral and smart cities, supporting at least 10 municipalities with planning and project development, and preparing urban action plans.

- Fostering Resilient Socio-Economic Opportunities for Refugees and Host Communities (RESEED)

The RESEED project started December 2024, financed by the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, and implemented by GIZ. The Union of Municipalities of Türkiye is the main partner in the project. The project addresses employment, local economic recovery, and social cohesion in earthquake-affected cities. Main activities are support to small businesses, vocational training, and employment programmes for refugees and host communities.

- Supporting Participatory, Inclusive and Green Recovery in Türkiye (PACE Project)

The PACE Project is implemented between 2023 and 2027 with financing from the European Union and the German Federal Ministry

for Economic Cooperation and Development, and implementation by GIZ. The project is coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Directorate for EU Affairs, with the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye as one of the key partners. The project supports municipalities in post-earthquake recovery by restoring essential services such as water, sanitation, and social services, while also providing advisory support on participatory governance and civic engagement.

- Building Community-Based Models for Earthquake Recovery through Vocational Training, Employment and Social Services

The project started in February 2024 with funding from the United Kingdom and is implemented by UNDP, with the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye as the main partner. The project supports early recovery in earthquake-affected regions by strengthening community-based approaches that link vocational training, employment, and social services. It also promotes entrepreneurship, improves access to jobs, and integrates gender-sensitive service delivery into local interventions. Municipal capacity is reinforced in areas such as waste management, while vulnerable groups are supported in accessing essential services and sustainable livelihoods in post-disaster conditions.

Table 8. UMT project portfolio overview (2015 – 2025)

Project Name	Budget (€)	Donor	Implementation
Local Authority Reform Project – III	5,600,000	EU	2018–2023
Town Twinning Between Türkiye and the EU	4,000,000	EU (IPA)	2018–2021
Promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at local level (ROMACTED)	100,000	EU	2018–2020
Resilience in Local Governance Project (RESLOG)	10,000,000	SIDA (Sweden)	2018–2025
Technical assistance for increasing ethical awareness among elected and non-elected local government officials	1,700,000	EU	2019 - 2021
Technical Assistance Project for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency in Municipalities and Universities (YEVEDS)	4,500,000	EU	2019 - 2022
QUDRA II	8,500,000	EU	2019–2023
Realizing Alliances with Citizen Assemblies	287,560	MATRA (Netherlands)	2020 – 2022
Promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at local level (ROMACTED - II)	725,000	EU	2021–2024
Town Twinning Between Türkiye and the EU - II	4,000,000	EU	2023–2025
EU Support for Promoting Sustainable Urban Mobility in Turkish Cities Project	2,290,000	EU	2022–2025
Strengthened Civic Engagement and Volunteerism for Enhanced Democratic Local Governance in Türkiye	6,000,000	EU	2023–2027
Today's Youth Future Jobs Project	7,900,000	EU	2023–2027
Support to Local Governments Response, Recovery, and Reconstruction following the Earthquakes in Türkiye	1,000,000	MATRA (Netherlands)	2023–2025
EU4 Energy Transition: Covenant of Mayors in the Western Balkans and Turkey	5,000,000	EU	2022–2025
Child Friendly Cities	650,000	UNICEF	2023–2025
Building Community Resilience to Natural Hazards and Climate Change in Local and Regional Areas	500,000	EU	2023–2025
Capacity Building for Local Municipalities on Disaster Risk Reduction and Waste Management	1,000,000	JICA (Japan)	2023–2026
Resilient Cities, Strong Societies	250,000	CUF–UCLG (France)	2023–2024
Supporting the local municipalities in earthquake-affected areas through procuring equipment and materials necessary for “Build Back Better”	10,000,000	JICA (Japan)	2023–2024
Sustainable Urban Mobility and Reliable Transport Project (SUMART)	14,000,000	EU	2023–2029
Local Zero Waste Initiatives	8,910,000	EU	2023–2027
Women Friendly Cities	5,000,000	EU	2024–2027

Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities Programme	5,000,000	EU	2024–2027
Fostering Resilient Socio-Economic Opportunities for Refugees and Host Community Members in Türkiye	65,000,000	EU	2024–2027
Participatory, Inclusive and Green Recovery for Local Public Services in the Earthquake-Affected Region (PACE) Project	13,600,000	EU	2024–2027
Building community-based models for earthquake recovery through vocational training, employment and social services	1,650,000	United Kingdom	2023–2025

In Türkiye, a wide range of national projects targeting municipalities have been implemented by different institutions and organisations beyond those outlined above. However, it should be noted that projects within the portfolio of the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye generate a significant multiplier effect. As a central platform for local governments, UMT facilitates the transfer of implementation experience across projects and supports direct interaction among pilot municipalities. Consequently, knowledge and practices derived from both national and international initiatives are effectively disseminated among its members.

The UMT’s engagement with EU financing processes has increased its institutional capacity to understand funding mechanisms, then improved its ability to link national and international policy priorities with financial instruments. Between 2021 – 2022, the Union implemented a series of project and idea competitions as part of its broader efforts to raise awareness and engage municipalities with emerging global policy agendas.³²

These competitions (such as competitions on Animal-Friendly Cities, Accessible Cities, Youth-Friendly Cities, Child-Friendly Cities, food waste re-

duction under the “Protect Your Food” theme, and the use of proper Turkish in urban signage) were all designed with the intention of encouraging municipalities to develop innovative and socially responsive solutions. Beyond generating project ideas, the initiative also functioned as a soft policy tool to foster a culture of innovation and encouraging municipalities to internalise global development principles through locally driven actions. Each idea and project competition was implemented in collaboration with the relevant ministries, while the evaluation committees were composed of representatives from academia, relevant civil society organisations, and public institutions.

Despite the expansion of EU-funded initiatives however, the sustainability of project outcomes remains a concern. While IPA frameworks are designed to deliver effective and sustainable results in principle, implementation realities indicate important limitations.³³ Monitoring and evaluation systems remain underdeveloped, and existing mechanisms are not yet fully operational, therefore the ability to track long-term impact is limited. At the same time, direct effects are often not observable at programme level,

raising questions about the continuity of outcomes beyond the project life-cycle. Variations in institutional ownership and administrative capacity further weaken sustainability prospects, particularly among smaller municipalities. In the Turkish context, implementation delays and structural inefficiencies

also affect overall effectiveness. Based on the findings of post-project evaluation reports, there is still a need to move beyond short-term project cycles toward longer-term, institutionalised approaches that promotes continuity, ownership, and impact.

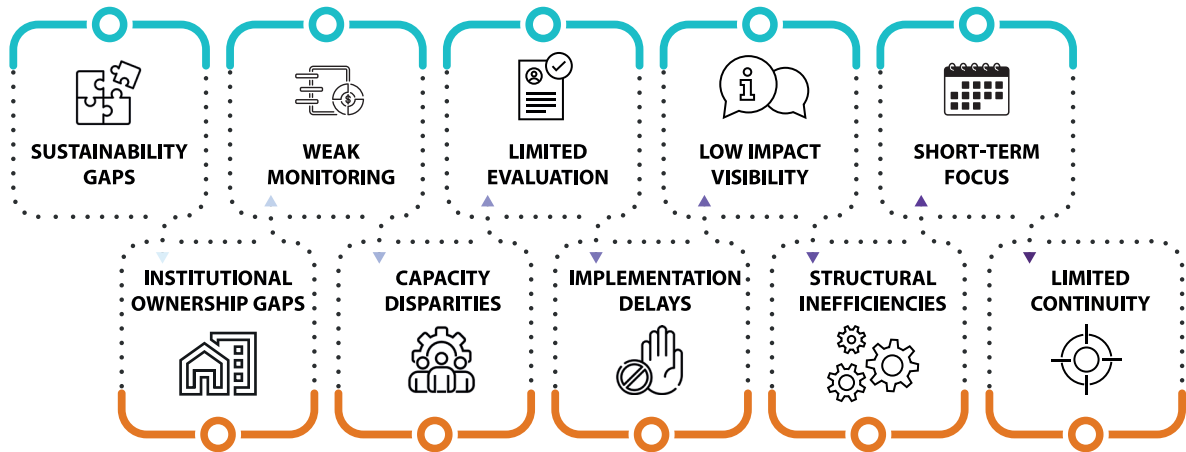


Figure 9. Barriers to sustainable project outcomes

A wide range of international organisations, particularly the European Union, have supported capacity building and institutional development of Turkish municipalities through various grant mechanisms. However, especially metropolitan municipalities required significantly larger financing needs that extend beyond grant-based capacity building projects.

ILBANK is a development and investment bank operating under private law provisions, with legal personality and a special budget. The Bank operates under its own law (Law No. 6107) and is also subject to the Banking Law. Its mandate is to support provincial administrations and municipalities through financing and project development. ILBANK also acts as an intermediary in the transfer of central government resources to local authorities

and performs core development and investment banking functions in the field of local services. In addition to national role, it also works in cooperation with major international financial institutions and development partners such as the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Japan International Cooperation Agency, German Development Bank, French Development Agency, the Asian Development Bank, and the European Investment Bank. Within joint operations, bank provides municipalities with different financing instruments, including grants, blended finance (grant + loan), and concessional investment loans. The ILBANK-supported large scale investment support projects that have had a direct impact particularly during the first decade of SDG implementation are as follows:

- Municipal Services Project I
- Municipal Services Project II
- Water Circularity and Efficiency Improvement Project (WCEIP)
- Public and Municipal Renewable Energy Project (PUMREP)
- Türkiye Earthquake Recovery and Reconstruction Project (TERRP)
- FRIT-II / World Bank-Financed Projects
- FRIT-II / French Development Agency (AFD)-Financed Projects
- Türkiye Earthquake Reconstruction Framework Project
- Post-Disaster Municipal Services Improvement and Resilience Project
- Post-Earthquake Reconstruction Project
- Sustainable Cities Project – Component A: Sustainable City Planning and Management Systems
- Green and Future Cities Project
- Sustainable Cities Project I (SCP-I)
- Sustainable Cities Project II (SCP-II)
- Sustainable Cities Project II – Additional Financing (SCP-II AF)
- Facility for Refugees in Türkiye (FRIT II)
- Türkiye Earthquake, Flood and Wildfire Emergency Reconstruction Project (TEFWER)
- Climate and Disaster Resilient Cities Project (CDRC)

In parallel with project-based interventions, knowledge and experience-sharing mechanisms have played a role in increasing local governance capacities in Türkiye. Marmara Municipalities Union (MMU), the regional LGA, has been one of the key actors through initiatives that foster inter-municipal learning. Among these initiatives, the Marmara Urban Forum (MARUF) stands out as a major platform to bring public institutions, international organizations, local gov-

ernments, NGOs, private sector, universities, and think tanks together in order to discuss urban challenges and promote global agendas.³⁴ Complementing this, the Golden Ant Awards organized biennially by the MMU promotes municipal practices and encourage the development and replication of successful implementation. Another good practice of experience sharing is the Mentor Program implemented by the MMU which is an experience-sharing platform designed to strengthen inter-municipal cooperation, institutional capacity, and staff competencies.³⁵ The program matches municipalities that offer and need expertise through online or in-person meetings across areas such as planning, environment, mobility, migration, disaster management, projects, and global policy localization.

Central government initiatives have also played an important role during the first decade of SDG implementation. Through nationwide policy frameworks and central systems, municipalities have been supported in emerging governance and sustainability standards. Several key projects implemented by the central government, which have become integral to municipal practice, are outlined below.

- National Geographic Information System (TUCBS)³⁶

Developed and coordinated by the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, TUCBS establishes a national spatial data infrastructure. Application standardises how municipalities produce, store, and share geographic data through e-government integration. The system supports interoperability between institutions and supports evidence-based planning, monitoring, and deci-

sion-making across different administrative levels.

- e-Plan Automation System³⁷
Implemented by the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, the e-Plan system digitalises zoning plan preparation, approval, and monitoring processes. Municipalities submit and manage plans through a central platform for compliance with planning hierarchy. The system also increases transparency and traceability, and also reduces inconsistencies in spatial planning.
- Spatial Address Registration System (MAKS)³⁸
Managed by the General Directorate of Land Registry and Cadastre, MAKS integrates address, building, and spatial data within a unified system. Municipalities continuously update address and numbering information, which is synchronised with national databases. The system supports municipalities in accurate service delivery, improved tax collection, and better identification of unregistered or informal structures.
- BELBİS (Municipal Information System)³⁹
Developed by the Ministry of Interior and UMT, BELBİS provides a centrally managed digital platform for municipal administrative and financial operations. System supports municipal management standardisation in accounting, personnel management, and service delivery. The system is particularly important for smaller municipalities for the compliance with national administrative procedures.
- Bicycle Lane Support Programme⁴⁰
The Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change provides financial support for municipal bicycle lanes, green walking

routes, and environmentally friendly street projects. Municipalities submit project proposals through İLBANK, and up to 45% of total costs are covered through grants.

- Public Gardens Programme⁴¹
Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change supports development of large-scale urban green spaces in cooperation with municipalities. Projects are financed and implemented through central-local coordination. The initiative aims to improve urban environmental quality and access to public green areas.
- Infrastructure Support for Municipalities Below 200,000 Population⁴²
Implemented through a protocol between the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change and İLBANK, the programme provides 100% grant financing for important infrastructure projects. Programme covers water supply, wastewater, solid waste, and drainage systems for smaller municipalities to develop essential infrastructure through centrally coordinated project development.
- Animal Care Facility Support Programme⁴³
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry financial support to municipalities for establishing and operating animal care facilities under. Funding covers construction, equipment, medical supplies, and sterilisation activities, allocated through a formal application and approval process.

When the past decade is assessed, the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye has emerged as a central actor in encouraging EU priorities and globally prominent themes to the attention of municipalities through project-based initiatives. At the same time, as the

decade of implementation was majorly affected by multiple crises and disasters, the financial constraints became one of the primary challenges faced by municipalities. UMT's efforts to increase financial resources have therefore created new areas of action beyond core municipal functions. Among regional LGAs, the MMU has distinguished itself as a significant actor in strengthening local government capacities through its extensive international network. UN agencies and international development partners, have played an important complementary role in strengthening local capacities. In parallel, ILBANK has expanded its role in developing credit financing mechanisms, particularly for large-scale municipal infrastructure investments, thereby supporting municipalities in accessing long-term and structured funding solutions.

The 2014 Metropolitan Reform

The metropolitan municipality reform in Türkiye was introduced with the adoption of "Law on the Establishment of Metropolitan Municipalities and Twenty-Seven Districts in Fourteen Provinces and Amendments to Certain Laws and Decree Laws" (Law No. 6360) in 2012 which came into force following the 2014 local elections. The reform emerged from a need to address gaps and lack of coordination in local service delivery, improve coordination across administrative levels, and enable more efficient use of resources through economies of scale. Another major challenge at the local level was the gap in service provision between rural and urban areas, as rural areas in metropolitan cities remained outside the authority of metropolitan municipalities.

Table 9. Number of local government units before and after Law No. 6360⁴⁴

Municipality type	Before Law No. 6360 (2024)	After Law No. 6360 (2024)
Metropolitan municipality	16	30
Metropolitan district municipality	143	501
Provincial municipality	65	51
District municipality	749	416
Town municipality	1977	395
Total	2950	1392

Under the former system, multiple local government units operated within provincial boundaries. In the provincial centre, the metropolitan municipality and metropolitan district municipalities were in place, while outside the central urban area there were district/town municipalities and villages. Services for rural areas were mainly delivered by Special Provincial Administrations, and villages received services from these structures,

primarily through Unions for Bringing Services to Villages.

Within the scope of the reform, the boundaries of metropolitan municipalities were equalised with provincial administrative borders, thus the entire province became the jurisdiction of a single metropolitan municipality (Figure 10). District municipalities were transformed into metropolitan district municipalities, while small-scale town

municipalities were abolished and incorporated into these districts. Villages lost their legal personality and were converted into rural neighbourhoods. As a result of this transformation, Special Provincial Administrations were abolished in 30 metropolitan municipalities, as no service area remained for them. With the new structure, the provision of services to rural areas became directly the responsibility of metropolitan and metropolitan district municipalities.

The intention of the new model was to create a more integrated governance structure by expanding metropolitan municipalities to provincial boundaries and incorporating smaller local units into a unified system. One of the most comprehensive assessments in this area was conducted under the EU-funded LAR-III project, implemented by UNDP. The main objective of the project was to examine the new metropolitan municipality model and identify its strengths and shortcomings. One of the key outputs of this project was the report published in 2020 that analyzed the ongoing impact of the metropolitan reform process.⁴⁵

According to the report of the most visible outcomes of the reform has been the restructuring of local government finances. The share allocated to local governments from central tax revenues was increased, which expanded the overall resource pool available to

municipalities. However, the report also argues that this increase did not turn into a significant rise in municipalities' own-source revenues. Instead, dependency on central transfers remained a defining feature of the system. Therefore, financial capacity has improved in absolute terms, but fiscal autonomy has not strengthened to the same extent.

Changes in expenditure patterns after 2014 also point to an adaptation in service delivery practices. Maintenance costs for equipment remained relatively stable, while outsourcing and rental expenditures increased. At the same time, spending on areas such as school maintenance declined, and payments to consultancy services rose. The change indicates a move towards more flexible and externally supported service provision models, especially in the expanded geographical scope of metropolitan municipalities. Indicators such as per capita water and wastewater treatment improved in newly established metropolitan areas and began to converge with more established metropolitan municipalities, meaning that the reform contributed positively to certain infrastructure services. At the same time, the transformation of villages into neighbourhoods did not lead to significant demographic changes in rural areas and administrative restructuring alone did not alter settlement patterns.

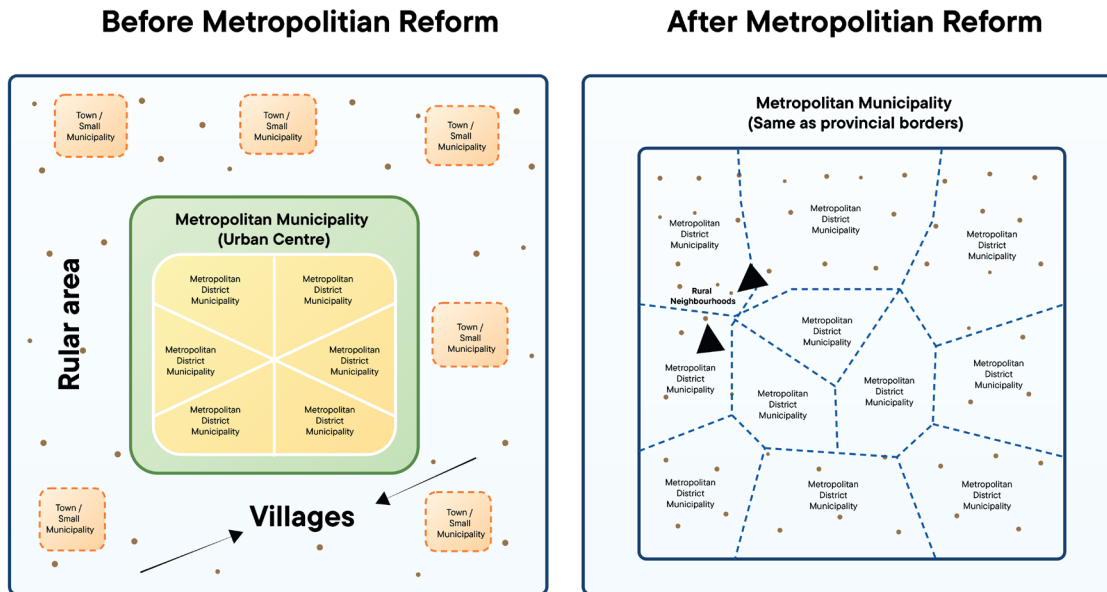


Figure 10. Structure of metropolitan municipalities after Law No. 6360

The relationship between central and local government remains an issue. The reform increased the responsibilities of local governments, yet stakeholders frequently point to insufficient consultation in legislative changes and limited coordination between institutions. In some cases, functions that were previously decentralised appear to be moving back towards central authorities or becoming subject to greater central oversight.

The report also stated that institutional coordination within the metropolitan system also presents challenges. While the expanded authority of metropolitan municipalities allowed for integrated planning and investment at the provincial level, it has also led to tensions with district municipalities. Differences in perspectives between metropolitan and district administrations states the ongoing debates about the balance of power and the distribution of responsibilities. Overlapping competences in areas such as infrastructure, social services, and regulatory functions often result in over-

laps and coordination difficulties.

The reform has also altered the relationship between municipalities and rural communities. While service provision in rural areas has improved, municipalities have faced difficulties adapting to new responsibilities related to agriculture, livestock, and rural infrastructure. Planning and zoning in former village areas remain particularly complex, as urban planning tools are not always suited to rural contexts. Despite these challenges, rural residents generally perceive the reform positively, partly due to the benefits associated with service expansion and fiscal exemptions.

In terms of governance principles, the reform has contributed to improvements in strategic planning and institutional capacity. Larger administrative units have enabled more comprehensive planning approaches and more efficient resource use. However, issues related to human resources, coordination, and accountability persist. Transparency appears to have improved to

some extent, yet participatory mechanisms remain uneven, and the increased scale of governance may have widened the distance between citizens and decision-makers.

Overall, the metropolitan municipality reform was significant change towards a more integrated system with a stronger upper-tier municipal structure, where planning and coordination powers are concentrated at the metropolitan level. It has enhanced service delivery in certain areas and improved coordination at the provincial level. At the same time, it has not fully resolved longstanding issues related to fiscal autonomy, institutional balance, and rural-urban integration. The reform can therefore be seen as a step towards consolidation rather than a complete transformation, and its long-term effectiveness likely to depend on further adjustments and policy refinement.

Additionally, the decrease in the number of municipalities from 2,950 to 1,392 has largely resulted from the closure of small-scale town municipalities. This situation has made a positive contribution in terms of the sustainability of service provision, particularly in small settlements with limited financial and administrative capacity. How-

ever, town municipalities functioned not only as service delivery units but also as mechanisms of representation and participation at the local level. Their direct democratic contribution, particularly in making local needs visible in provincial-level politics, organised social and cultural activities, and preserving local identity, should not be overlooked in terms of local democracy.

A Decade of Legislative Reforms

Institutional and Legal Changes in Municipal Governance

Between 2016 and 2025, local government legislation in Türkiye did not undergo a comprehensive reform comparable to the municipal law reforms of 2004-2005 or the metropolitan restructuring of 2012. Instead, the period was more of a cumulative and incremental changes. Legal records point to repeated interventions across similar policy areas, including municipal finance, revenue sharing, borrowing, personnel structures, business licensing, metropolitan governance, and the management of urban-rural boundaries.

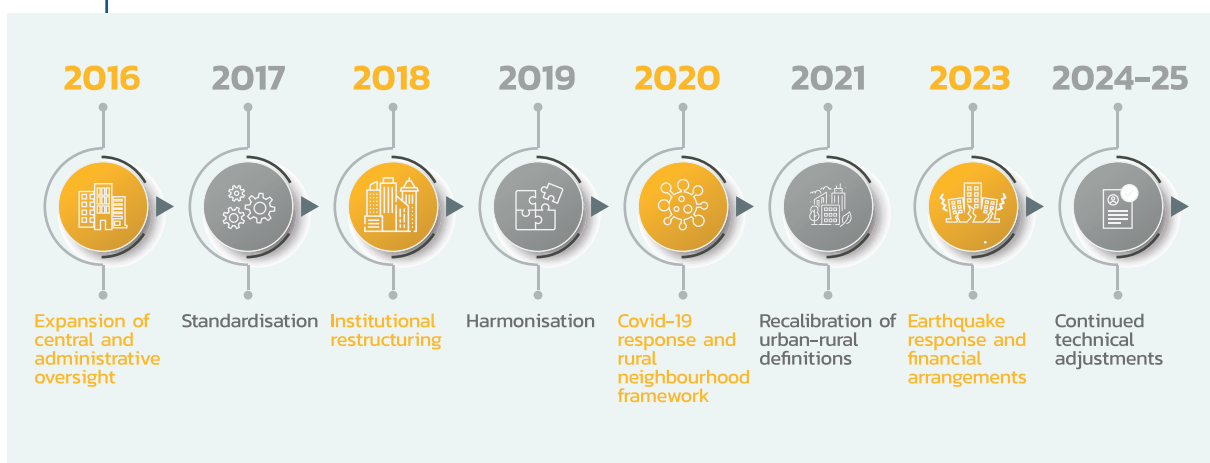


Figure 11. Annual policy focus of local government reforms

A key turning point emerged in September 2016. Earlier changes in that year were largely technical in nature, covering areas such as cemetery management, shopping mall regulations, staffing norms, accounting rules, and routine adjustments in municipal revenue practices. The major change came after the attempted coup, with amendments to Articles 45 and 57 of the Municipal Law that expanded the scope of central administrative oversight.

In 2017, reforms continued the transition initiated by Law No. 6360, focusing on villages that became neighbourhoods within metropolitan municipalities. The application of municipal taxes, fees, and charges in these areas was postponed to ease adaptation and reduce financial pressure on rural neighbourhoods. Additional time was granted for construction and payment obligations to prevent loss of rights. Municipalities were also authorised to provide free or discounted water to religious facilities and certain public institutions. Alongside, regulations on municipal police recruitment, personnel procedures, and workplace licensing were revised for improvements.

In 2018, amendments to the Municipal Law revised provisions on cooperation between municipalities as well as with other public institutions and civil society organisations. Law No. 7099 was introduced to support faster and more accessible municipal service delivery. A persistent issue was the lack of coordination of municipalities with telecommunication companies and other infrastructure providers undertaking excavation works. In response, a new legal basis was established granting municipalities stronger authority over infrastructure excavation, including permit requirements, application timelines, applicable fees, and administra-

tive fines for unauthorised works. In addition, amendments to the Metropolitan Municipality Law authorised metropolitan municipal councils to determine and organise public transport lines based on distance, population, and usage levels. Major local government-related oversight and coordination functions were reassigned from the Ministry of Interior (General Directorate of Local Administrations) to the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change (General Directorate of Local Authorities).

From a fiscal perspective, the same year saw repeated revisions to distribution formulas and revenue categories. Revenue Sharing Law continued to a system dependent on shares from central tax revenues, maintaining baseline allocation ratios for non-metropolitan municipalities, metropolitan district municipalities, and special provincial administrations. Amendments in 2018 adjusted distribution mechanisms and transitional provisions. The Municipal Revenues Law also underwent several revisions in relation to environmental taxes, fees, and tariff-based charges.

In 2019, amendments facilitated the provision of childcare services for municipal employees through service procurement arrangements. Water and wastewater tariffs applied in cultural and tourism sites were aligned with those used for public institutions. In addition, existing regulations were revised due to the transition to the Presidential Government System. Article 73 of the Municipal Law, which regulates urban transformation and development areas, was amended in July 2019 to strengthen implementation mechanisms and enhance the effectiveness of land readjustment and planning processes. The Article 14 was then again extended with later additions on public

school buildings and related facilities.

In 2020, the legislative agenda was directly affected by the pandemic. The omnibus law adopted in April to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 is a clear example of crisis-driven and reactive local government legislation. In this context, water service receivables from households and businesses unable to operate could be deferred. Municipalities were authorised to support private operators providing public transport under licensing or leasing arrangements, and related debts could be postponed without interest. Businesses whose activities were suspended were exempted from annual advertisement taxes and environmental cleaning taxes for the duration of closure. Additional administrative regulations clarified the implementation of these exemptions. Measures were introduced to prevent disruptions in essential local service chains such as water and transport, and to ease financial pressure on businesses. Municipal staffing norms were revised by updating the classification of municipalities in line with the latest population data. Water and sewerage services were standardised across municipalities to ensure more consistent and uniform service delivery nationwide.

Beyond immediate crisis measures, 2020 also introduced other adjustments affecting local governance. Law No. 7254 granted permanent advantages to rural neighbourhoods within metropolitan areas, based on criteria such as socio-economic conditions, distance to the urban core, and access to municipal services. Establishment of Türkiye Environment Agency, expanded local responsibilities in promoting environmentally friendly transport such as bicycles and e-scooters. Institutional arrangements in metro-

politan transport governance within UKOME were revised for greater involvement of central authorities in decision-making processes which was also seen a partial recentralisation of competencies in the domain. In parallel, staffing systems and norms were updated in line with merit-based principles and demographic changes. Additionally, water and sewerage services were standardised across municipalities for water subscription procedures to be carried out electronically through remote contracts.

Reforms in 2021 deepened the recalibration between urban and rural areas. In April, the Regulation on Rural Neighbourhoods and Rural Settlement Areas entered into force, based on the additional article introduced to the Metropolitan Municipality Law. The regulation set out the criteria for defining rural neighbourhoods and settlement areas and clarified when this status would take legal effect. Certain properties used for residential or agricultural purposes were exempted from property tax. Fees related to construction and zoning processes were removed. Selected taxes, charges, and participation shares under the Municipal Revenues Law were reduced by half for commercial, industrial, and tourism-related properties.

During the same period, the Regulation on Electric Scooters entered into force and introduced a requirement for shared e-scooter operators to obtain permits at the municipal or regional level and limited their operations to designated areas. In addition to their existing duties and powers, municipalities were in need of developing new capacities to regulate emerging urban mobility modes and new service offerings. In June 2021, an additional article was introduced to the Muni-

pal Revenues Law, strengthening the link between construction fees and the licensing process. Amendments to the related water and sewerage legislation further developed regulatory provisions at the intersection of zoning, construction, and infrastructure services.

In spring 2022, changes were introduced in the revised local disciplinary oversight and staffing norms. In August, a new general communiqué on municipal revenues replaced the earlier 2011 framework and regrouped municipalities according to the administrative geography that emerged after the metropolitan reform and updated the classification system used for taxes, fees, and charges. Additional adjustments were also made in areas such as water services, roadside facilities, and business licensing. Another amendment at the level of primary legislation was introduced in November 2022 concerning cemevis, a domain that had previously been subject to legal and administrative ambiguity. The Municipal Law was revised to allow municipalities to construct, maintain, and repair buildings for cemevis. Further changes made it possible for cemevis to benefit from discounted or free access to water and other infrastructure services.

In 2023, legislative activity developed under two main pressures. One concerned the institutionalisation of the personnel regime and the other was linked to the need for financial adjustment in the aftermath of earthquake disasters. In January, Law No. 7433 amended Article 49 of the Municipal Law which a change that addressed a persistent issue of the use of contracted staff as a de facto permanent employment channel. With the amendment, the recruitment of contracted

personnel was brought closer to the procedures applied for the civil service. Those completing three years of service gained the right, upon request, to be appointed to corresponding permanent positions. Transfers to other public institutions were restricted for one year after such appointments. Guidelines were developed on the new process by the Ministry to support the national consistency approach across municipalities.

In March and April 2023, the legal agenda moved towards earthquake conditions and infrastructure financing. Transitional provisions of metropolitan reform law were revisited. Amendments adopted in April modified Article 68 of the Municipal Law on municipal borrowing. Borrowing linked to projects financed with European Union support, loans provided through international institutions or İLBANK, and financing under the SUKAP (a programme for financing municipal water and sewerage infrastructure projects) were excluded from general borrowing limits. Related amendments were introduced in the Metropolitan Municipality Law, the revenue sharing framework, and the earlier metropolitan reform law.

In March 2024, detailed revisions were introduced to the rules governing promotion and title changes for municipal personnel. In June, the staffing norm regulation was reviewed. The most direct intervention related to the earthquake came in July 2024, with the addition of a temporary provision to the revenue sharing law. This rule applied to municipalities in 11 provinces affected by the February 2023 earthquakes that experienced population loss. Until June 2027, these municipalities continued to be assessed based on their January 2023 population figures for

allocation purposes, unless their population exceeds that level. In practice, this measure stabilised part of the formula used to distribute central government shares and prevented an immediate decline in municipal revenues due to population loss.

Two months later, in September 2024, amendments were made to the Regulation on Local Government Budget and Accounting. Greater emphasis was placed on budget structure, comparability, and performance-oriented financial management. At the same time, sector-specific updates have continued, including adjustments in licensing regulations, additional provisions for the jewellery trade, and various temporary rules.

The final year of implementation, 2025, showed that the reform process is still ongoing and not yet fully complete. In July, amendments to the Municipal Law focused on organisational restructuring. In September, the staffing norms were revised again, requiring local administrations to align their internal units with standardised titles. In November, further changes were made to the rules governing recruitment and appointments. In December, business licensing regulations were updated with new definitions and provisions, alongside additional changes to promotion rules and address systems.

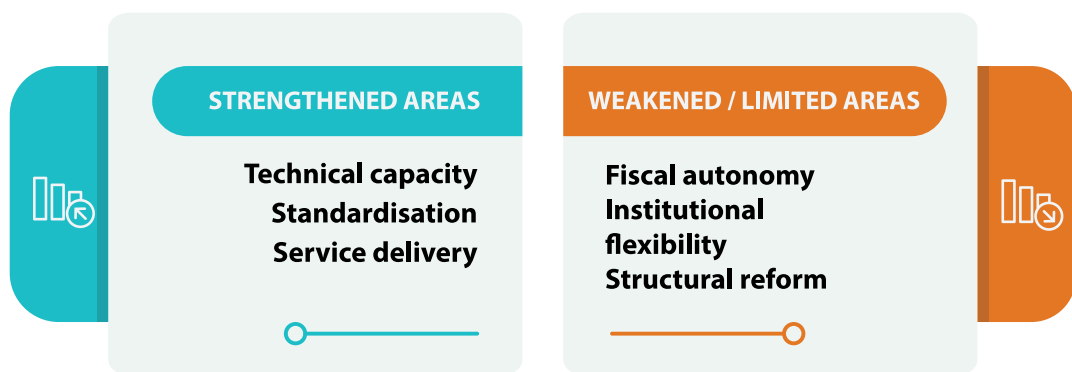


Figure 12. System outcomes of municipal reforms

An overall assessment of the decade demonstrates five persistent legislative priorities. Municipal finance has been continuously regulated, with a focus on transfer formulas, debt deductions, fee schedules, exceptional borrowing arrangements, and temporary financial relief measures. The revenue sharing law has remained the backbone of the system, and official data confirms that municipalities continue to rely heavily on transfers from central tax revenues rather than autonomous local taxation. The personnel regime and staffing norms have been subject to repeated

legal intervention, pointing to ongoing challenges in human resource management at the local level. Business licensing and inspection powers have remained highly active areas of regulation, with frequent sector-specific additions and transitional provisions. The relationship between metropolitan municipalities and rural areas has not been fully resolved, despite earlier reforms, and continues to generate legislative attention in areas such as tax exemptions, service provision, and transfer calculations. Finally, crisis periods have affected the legisla-

tive agenda through security-focused measures, pandemic-related financial support, and post-earthquake adjustments into focus.

From a wider perspective, technical capacity and standardisation have been strengthened over time. Service delivery capacity has expanded in certain areas. At the same time, fiscal autonomy has not increased in a meaningful way, and central guidance has remained strong. The dominant legislative approach has relied on incremental adjustments rather than comprehensive redesign.

Importantly, when effective communication between central and local administrations was in place, necessary regulatory harmonisation and facilitation measures were implemented in a timely manner. Therefore, the system can be explained with an existing co-ordination capacity, however, operating primarily within a centrally guided framework.

Reforms in the Planning System under the Construction and Zoning Law

A review of the successive amendments to Development Law No. 3194 during the SDG implementation period (2015-2025) shows that over time, the system has taken on a more integrated form, with stronger use of digital tools and closer links to market-based mechanisms. The changes go beyond technical adjustments with core aspects of the system, including the structure of the planning hierarchy, the balance between public and private property, the management of rural areas, and the way value gains are handled.

During the MDG period (2000-2015), the planning system in Türkiye went

through a gradual yet notable transformation. From the mid-2000s onward, sectoral and thematic considerations were more firmly integrated into planning practices. In 2005 an amendment strengthened the protection of agricultural land through special permit requirements. Changes introduced after 2008 further restricted the use of publicly owned land and introduced safeguards for afforested areas. Another change emerged in 2013, when obligations related to data production, sharing, and archiving were introduced for transparency and faster procedures. By 2014, the framework moved towards a more hierarchical model as it linked spatial strategy, environmental, and zoning plans, and requiring consistency across different planning scales, supported by more detailed and data-oriented plan definitions.

The amendments made in 2015 and 2017 focused on the integration of planning decisions with industrial policies. Especially, planning decisions related to organised industrial zones, industrial zones, and technology development zones were made subject to the approval of the relevant ministry. Therefore, spatial planning has been more directly linked with economic development policies and planning was positioned also as an instrument of economic strategy.

In 2019, amendments were introduced focusing on implementation processes by prioritizing parcelisation plans. In particular, provisions allowing subdivision and amalgamation in planned areas only after the completion of parcellation plans improved the effectiveness of planning decisions at the application stage.

The amendments made in 2020 moved the digitalisation process to a

more advanced stage. The uploading of plans to electronic platforms, their integration with the national geographic information system, and the requirement that all processes related to plans be carried out in a digital environment were made mandatory. At the same time, practices such as announcing plan changes on-site through signboards and through municipal websites stating an approach to increase citizens' access to planning processes. Additionally, during the same period, increasing the rate of the land readjustment share and expanding its scope provided greater capacity for financing areas allocated for public use.

es and the improvement of the land readjustment share system. The introduction of an additional land readjustment share in cases where building rights or population density increase created a mechanism to capture value gains from plan changes for the public. In the same year, the transition period for the amendments introduced in the previous year regarding building height regulations reached its final stage. Within this framework, the previously unrestricted determination of building heights was limited, and it became mandatory to consider criteria such as urban silhouette and environmental compatibility.

The regulations introduced in 2021 focused on the sharing of value increas-

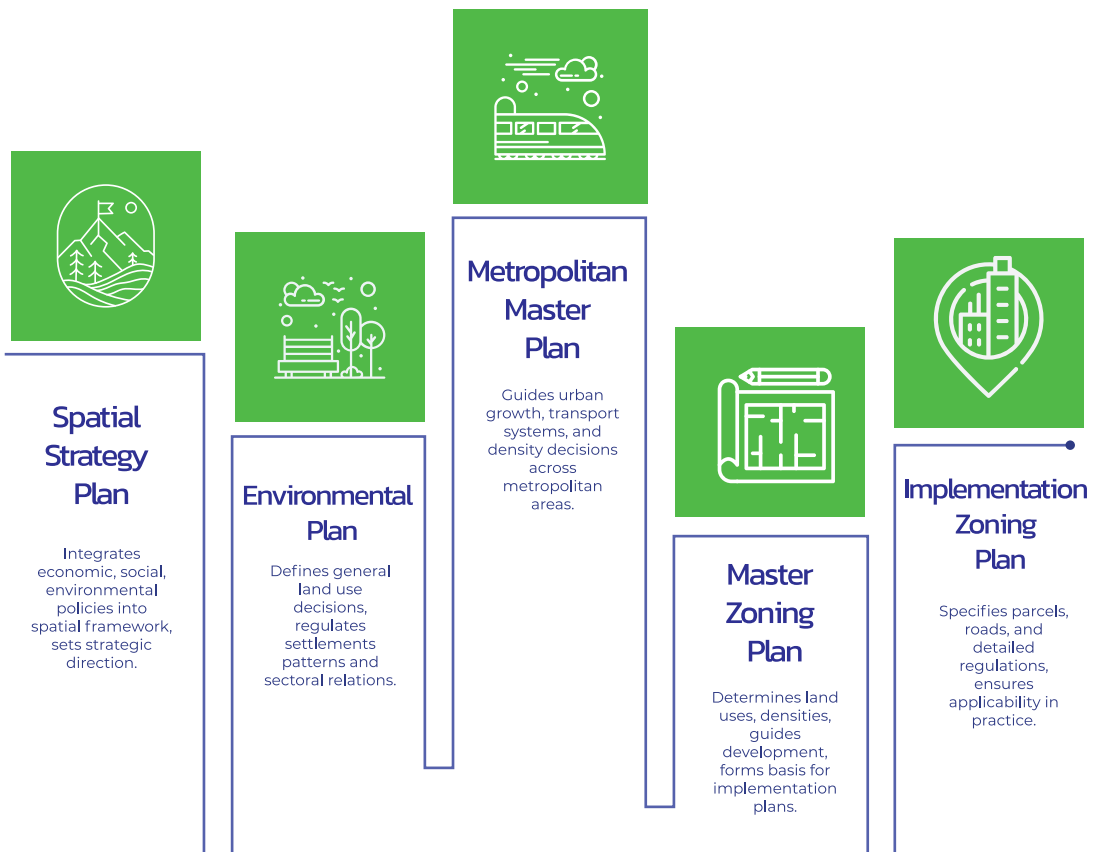


Figure 13. Spatial planning hierarchy in Türkiye

In 2024, further amendments were introduced regarding the concept of “transfer of development rights,” expanding its scope within the planning system. Although, mechanisms based on the relocation of development rights had existed in Türkiye since the early 1990s (particularly in coastal areas) these were previously applied under strict spatial constraints, such as proximity requirements or the obligation to remain within the same implementation zone. The 2024 changes broadened the concept by easing these limitations and enabling development rights to function more flexibly. The reform moved the system beyond a purely location-bound transfer mechanism toward a more market-oriented approach, where development rights can operate as transferable assets, which also enhanced both property rights protection and the implementability of planning decisions.

During the same period, the methods for acquiring areas allocated for public services were also diversified. The possibility of using different instruments such as land and plot readjustment, exchange, purchase, and transfer of development rights together has increased flexibility in the implementation of plans. In addition, the expansion of the scope of the land readjustment share and the detailed definition of public service areas allowed a better planning of urban infrastructure and social facility areas.

Regulations concerning rural areas have also included significant changes during this period. Granting authority to metropolitan municipal councils in determining rural settlement status has increased the role of local decision-making mechanisms in rural area management. In addition, the development of tools such as village design

guides supported preservation of local architecture and cultural values in rural areas.

On the other hand, institutional complexity of spatial planning leads to significant delays in decision-making and approval processes.⁴⁶ The lack of clarity regarding the authority, responsibilities, and mandatory nature of different plan types creates areas of ambiguity within the legislation. Moreover, the existence of plan types that are defined in legislation but not implemented in practice results in a system that remains largely on paper. Although the linkage between upper- and lower-scale plans is formally required, this relationship cannot be adequately established at the technical level. As a result, the planning hierarchy does not function properly, and the limited implementation capacity of the legislation further deepens these problems. As a result, a mismatch emerges between the ideal planning process and the current structure.

In addition, the misalignment between the administrative structure and spatial realities shows that the existing governance model struggles to respond to new settlement patterns, especially in a context where the urban–rural distinction has become increasingly blurred.⁴⁷ The limited scope of representation and participatory mechanisms weakens the inclusiveness of local decision-making processes. Rigid bureaucratic structures and the lack of qualified human resources constrain institutional capacity. Furthermore, the failure of existing planning, budgeting, and procurement systems to encourage innovative approaches, along with insufficient open data infrastructures, hinders the development of data-driven and innovative decision-making processes.

During the MDG and SDG implementation period, planning has moved closer to economic policy, digital infrastructure, and value-based instruments and implementation tools have become more flexible and diversified. Public intervention continues, yet it works alongside mechanisms that allow market dynamics to play a more active role. However, legal ambiguities, and weak coordination across planning scales continue to limit the effective functioning of the system. At the same time, gaps in participation, administrative capacity, and data infrastructure constrain the ability to establish inclusive and evidence-based planning outcomes.

**FROM GLOBAL GOALS
TO LOCAL ACTION**

Transition from MDGs to SDGs

At the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 1992, 178 countries adopted a new global agenda known as Agenda 21. Agenda was introduced as an inclusive action plan with improving human well-being and protecting the environment through the establishment of a global partnership for sustainable development.

Another major milestone in the global development agenda was the introduction of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at the United Nations Millennium Summit in New

York in September 2000.⁴⁸ The United Nations Millennium Declaration was adopted at the same Summit and was a commitment from the world leaders to establish a common framework to combat extreme poverty and improve human welfare. Therefore, eight core goals were defined with a target year of 2015 under the MDG framework. These goals covered areas such as poverty reduction, universal primary education, gender equality, child and maternal health, combating diseases, environmental sustainability, and global partnerships for development.



Figure 14. The Eight Millennium Development Goals (2000–2015)⁴⁹

Throughout the 2000s, the MDGs became the main reference framework for the global development agenda. In 2002, the United Nations Secretary-General launched the UN Millennium Project to develop practical policy recommendations to achieve the goals. The expert group prepared the 2005 report *Investing in Development*, which resulted from previous efforts and provided a roadmap for implementation. During the same period, the UN Millennium Campaign was initiated to raise public awareness worldwide and to strengthen the involvement of civil society in the process.

The World Summit held in 2005 was another important moment for assessing progress towards the MDGs. At the Summit, more decisions were taken in the areas of development, security, and human rights, and countries reaffirmed their commitments to the goals. In the following years, the international community launched several initiatives to accelerate implementation. In 2008, a high-level event at the United Nations Headquarters brought together governments, international

organisations, the private sector, and civil society representatives. The gathering has led to new financial commitments amounting to billions of dollars to address poverty, hunger, and disease. The MDG Summit held in 2010 concluded with the adoption of the global action plan (*Keeping the Promise*), alongside new financial pledges, particularly in the area of maternal and child health.

By 2013, as the 2015 deadline for the MDGs approached, efforts to evaluate progress and design the post-2015 development agenda intensified within the United Nations General Assembly. At a special event held the same year, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon presented *A Life of Dignity for All*. During this process, world leaders reached a consensus on the need for a new global development framework that would build upon the achievements of the MDGs. All these efforts were resulted in the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015.



Figure 15. Evolution from MDGs to SDGs

When the Millennium Development Goals process is examined from the perspective of local governments, it becomes evident that many of the goals were implemented largely at the local level.⁵⁰ Services such as water and sanitation, infrastructure investments, slum upgrading programmes, urban planning, and local poverty reduction policies were carried out by local authorities in many countries. Despite this, local governments were not sufficiently included in decision-making and monitoring processes during the design of the MDG framework. The limited involvement of local actors in the formulation of the goals, combined with insufficient financial and institutional capacity at the local level, created certain challenges during implementation. Lessons learned from the MDG period contributed to a stronger recognition of the role of cities and local governments in the subsequent global development agenda.

Building on the MDGs and the SDG Era

The Sustainable Development Goals build on the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals, which played an important role in mobilising global action around a commonly agreed and time-bound development agenda.⁵¹ While similar initiatives existed before, the MDGs brought them together under a single, coherent global framework. Over time, clear progress was made. Extreme poverty declined, child and maternal mortality decreased, and major diseases were notably reduced. Improvements were also seen in education, access to clean water, and environmental protection. At the same time, development assistance, as part of interna-

tional cooperation, increased in volume. Critics, however, point to uneven progress across regions and sectors, noting that many countries adopted a selective approach and did not fully engage with all goals.⁵² This has been linked to the fact that the MDGs primarily targeted developing countries, which had limited influence in their formulation and some to view them as externally imposed. It is important to highlight that significant share of the global progress recorded under the MDGs, particularly in poverty reduction, was driven by developments in China, where rapid economic growth and large-scale expansion of the middle class substantially influenced global averages.⁵³

In September 2015, Heads of State and Government adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which established a global framework to guide development efforts over the following fifteen years. At the core of this agenda are 17 Sustainable Development Goals, supported by 169 targets that define both quantitative and qualitative objectives across social, economic, and environmental dimensions. Unlike the MDGs, the SDGs are universal in scope, applying to all countries while taking into account national contexts, capacities, and priorities. The framework is supported by a global indicator system developed to monitor progress and ensure accountability. Building on the partial successes of the MDGs, the SDGs take on a wider and more varied set of challenges.

SDGs adopt a more integrated perspective, recognising that environmental sustainability supports economic and social progress rather than existing as a separate concern. Accordingly, the SDGs extend beyond

poverty reduction to include areas such as urban development, energy, water, and climate action with the interconnected nature of challenges. Another major distinction is the formulation process. The SDGs were developed through a highly participatory and inclusive mechanism involving a wide range of stakeholders, including governments, local authorities, civil society, and the private sector.

Preparing for the SDGs through the Municipal Movement

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) is the largest international network representing local and regional governments worldwide and a key institution in the field of city diplomacy.⁵⁴ The organisation's primary objective has been to ensure stronger representation of cities in global policy processes. In particular, making the role of local governments visible within development policies carried out at the United Nations level has become one of its core missions. Given that cities constitute the main arenas where sustainable development goals are implemented, UCLG has consistently advocated for the inclusion of local governments in global decision-making processes over many years.

In line with its objective of making cities more visible within the UN agenda, UCLG launched an important initiative in 2013. The organisation initiated the "stand-alone urban goal" campaign to establish a dedicated goal for cities within the Sustainable Development Goals framework.⁵⁵ The campaign's main objective was to recognise cities as central actors in the development process. The initiative quickly gained

widespread support. Local government leaders and municipal associations from more than 40 countries endorsed the campaign. Over 140 signatures were collected and submitted to the United Nations process. The campaign played a significant role in increasing the visibility of cities within the global development agenda.

One of the most prominent figures in this process was Kadir Topbaş (Mayor of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality at the time) who was serving as President of UCLG between 2010 and 2016 where he led extensive advocacy efforts to strengthen the position of cities within the global development agenda. He acted as the political leader of the stand-alone SDG campaign initiated by UCLG and conducted numerous engagements with heads of state and representatives of international organisations. He maintained close contact with Ban Ki-moon (former UN Secretary-General) and their communication extended beyond formal meetings. Hosting Ban Ki-moon at his residence in Istanbul has been regarded as a symbolic example of this dialogue.⁵⁶

As a result of sustained advocacy efforts, SDG 11 on "Sustainable Cities and Communities" was included among the Sustainable Development Goals adopted in 2015. This development is widely considered a major turning point to acknowledge the central role of cities in global development policies.

The declaration published by UCLG on 30 September 2015 is the success document of this process. The core message of the declaration was that the success of the 2030 Agenda largely depends on local governments. Cities were defined as the primary spaces

where the Sustainable Development Goals will be implemented. It was also emphasised that local governments must be actively involved in both the formulation and implementation of global policies. The text also reaffirmed that SDG 11 was incorporated into the global agenda as a result of advocacy efforts by local governments. Through the work carried out by UCLG and other city networks, a distinct goal for cities was successfully established.

The declaration set out four main policy calls. The first emphasised the localisation approach, stating that the Sustainable Development Goals must be implemented at the local level. The second called for the formal recognition of local governments as official actors within the global development

agenda. The third addressed the need to strengthen the financial and institutional capacities of cities, while the fourth emphasised the importance of strong cooperation between national governments and local authorities.

In his accompanying remarks during the event, Kadir Topbaş stated that local and regional governments are central actors in the implementation of global development policies and reminded audiences that a large proportion of the world's population resides in cities.⁵⁷ He also underlined that the Sustainable Development Goals would be implemented predominantly at the urban level and stated that local governments represent the most effective level of governance for translating global goals into concrete policies.



Figure 16. Overview of SDG 11 Targets

UCLG and Kadir Topbaş, succeeded in establishing sustainable cities as a stand-alone goal within the SDG framework. More importantly, they brought cities and local implementation into the core of global assessment processes. As each SDG is linked to specific indicators, the inclusion of

SDG 11 placed urban development within the global monitoring system. This, in turn, encouraged central governments to give greater attention to local governments and cities as main actors in achieving SDG-11.

Local Perspective in Türkiye's VNR Process

A Voluntary National Review (VNR) is a country-led process through which governments assess and present progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals.⁵⁸ VNR functions as a soft accountability mechanism and supports experience sharing, peer learning, and the identification of gaps and good practices.

Türkiye's first VNR report was prepared in 2016 submitted to the United Nations within the framework of the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals.⁵⁹ An examination of the report reveals that local governments were reflected in a limited manner. In the 51-page report, the term "municipality" was used only twice. No reference was made to the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye in any part of the report. The term "local" appeared a total of ten times; however, only 4 of these references directly referred to local governments, while the remaining 6 were used in a broader sense covering all institutions and organisations operating at the local level.

Following the limited inclusion of local governments in the 2016 VNR, the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye initiated efforts to develop a new local dialogue for future VNR processes. At the same time, its close engagement with UCLG encouraged a more active role in SDG processes in Türkiye. During the preparation of the second VNR report, the Union communicated its intention to strengthen cooperation with the Presidency of Strategy and Budget (the institutional body responsible for the VNR in Türkiye) in order to make municipal contributions more visible. Besides these efforts,

local level SDG awareness activities were carried out in 2018 with UMT preparing and distributing themed desk calendars and coasters to municipalities to support their engagement with the SDGs.⁶⁰

Another initiative undertaken in the same year was a report prepared to contribute to the "localisation of the SDGs" campaign launched by UCLG. The report included municipal practices and presented the activities of municipalities in Türkiye related to the SDGs. UMT submitted the study to the Presidency of Strategy and Budget for consideration as an input to the 2019 VNR report.⁶¹

By 2019, this process had become more comprehensive. In order to strengthen the VNR report, UMT held consultations with 37 different municipalities, through which SDG-related municipal projects were identified and compiled. A total of 100 municipal projects were submitted to the Presidency of Strategy and Budget.

During the same period, a comprehensive consultation process was also carried out. To further advance the process, a multi-stakeholder workshop was organised under the coordination of the Presidency of Strategy and Budget and hosted by the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye. All relevant public institutions and key stakeholders involved in VNR reporting took part, and workshop also made the level of cooperation between the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye and the Presidency more visible at the national level.

The second VNR report submitted in 2019 demonstrated the impact of these efforts.⁶² Compared to the first report, references to local governments increased significantly. The

term “municipality” appeared 96 times, while the term “local” was used 112 times. In addition, the Union of Munic-

ipalities of Türkiye was directly referenced 8 times throughout the report.

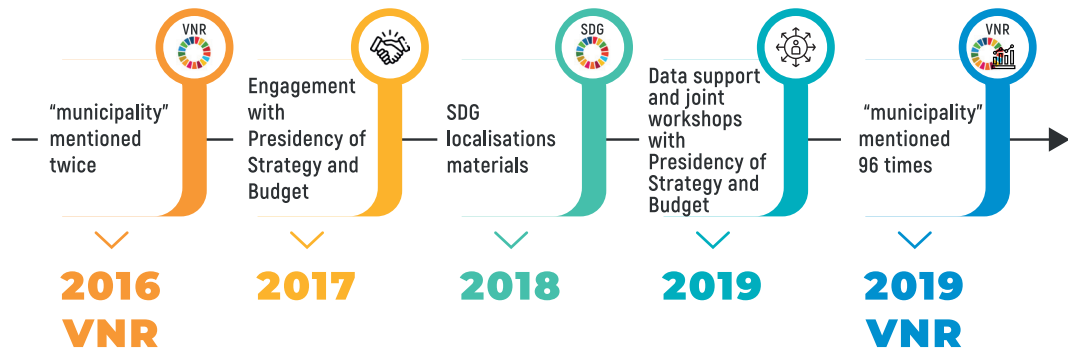


Figure 17. UMT's advocacy in the VNR process

Another important development took place at the level of international representation. At the High-Level Political Forum held in New York between 9 and 19 July 2019, the Republic of Türkiye presented its second VNR. Upon the invitation of the Presidency, a representative from the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye was included in the delegation and municipalities were directly represented within the national delegation during the VNR presentation process.

The conclusion emerging from this process is the fact that when effective communication was established between the central administration and local governments, the integrative capacity of the central system became visible, as demonstrated in the VNR process. The preparation of the 2016 report began in 2015, at a time when the SDGs had only recently been adopted. During this early phase, the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye did not yet have sufficient institutional knowledge on SDG reporting and had only begun engaging with UCLG on the visibility of local governments in VNRs. However, in the following years, the dialogue and narrative developed by the Union with the central adminis-

tration found a response. The process evolved from basic information exchange to a strong cooperation which ultimately led to the inclusion of local government representatives in the national delegation to the High-Level Political Forum.

Good Practices in SDG Localisation

SDG localization refers to the process of adapting the global Sustainable Development Goals to local contexts by integrating them into municipal strategies, policies, and development plans in alignment with national frameworks.⁶³ Localization places local communities at the center of implementation and relies on principles such as subsidiarity, inclusion, partnership, and multilevel governance, supported by adequate data and financing. Inter-agency policy briefs coordinated by United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) point out important dimensions of the process with data systems, monitoring and reporting, governance coordination, and links between SDGs and climate action. These policy briefs,

developed with contributions from UN agencies and international organizations, provide evidence-based guidance to strengthen local implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

As noted earlier, the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye played an active role between 2016 and 2020 in promoting awareness of the SDGs among local governments. During this period, a range of promotional materials was produced such as desk calendars and SDG-themed coasters each displaying an individual goal. In 2018, UMT also published the Turkish translation of the SDGs in booklet form to increase the dissemination. In parallel, SDG-related content was incorporated into speeches delivered by UMT representatives at meetings, events, and training programmes in order to increase awareness and recognition of the SDGs at the municipal level.

The Town Twinning Between Türkiye and the EU project (2018–2020) is another good example of integrating global frameworks into local practice.⁶⁴ The programme was implemented in partnership with the Directorate for EU Affairs Türkiye, Union of Municipalities of Türkiye, Union of Provinces Türkiye, and the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change. Under the EU-funded project, 24 municipalities received grants ranging from EUR 60,000 to EUR 100,000 within a total budget of EUR 2.5 million. A compulsory requirement was that each municipal partnership match its project with at least one Sustainable Development Goal and demonstrate its contribution and relevance.

In 2019, a Sustainable Urban Development Network was established with the participation of 20 municipalities from different regions of Türkiye.⁶⁵ The

initiative was launched during a two-day training programme on “Strategic Planning and Sustainable Development Goals for Municipalities,” and was held at a time when municipalities were preparing their 2020–2024 strategic plans. The network created a platform for inter-municipal communication, knowledge sharing, and cooperation on SDG localisation. Participating municipalities, including metropolitan and district-level authorities, exchanged good practices on integrating SDGs into planning and service delivery.

In Türkiye, municipalities with populations above 50,000 and all metropolitan municipalities are legally required to prepare strategic plans. In its 2022–2024 revised strategic plan, Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality incorporated SDGs as a core framework guiding local policy priorities.⁶⁶ The plan covers the entire provincial territory and was prepared through a structure involving district mayors and senior municipal officials. The municipality defined seven strategic areas and twelve objectives, explicitly linking each to relevant SDGs.

In addition to individual municipal efforts, regional-level studies have also contributed to the understanding of SDG localisation in Türkiye. A notable example was the report titled “Localisation of the SDGs: The Case of the Marmara Region,” prepared by the Marmara Municipalities Union.⁶⁷ Based on a survey conducted across 106 municipalities in 12 provinces, the report evaluated the level of awareness, institutional integration, and governance practices related to the SDGs. The findings are organised around main themes such as SDG awareness, implementation practices, and governance mechanisms. Furthermore, the

report identified and analysed 15 good practices developed by municipalities, selected based on criteria such as replicability, scalability, budget efficiency, and performance measurement. Additionally, Marmara Municipalities Union created the position of Sustainable

Development Goals Ambassador in 2020, which made MMU the first public institution to open such a position. Also in 2020, MMU established a Sustainable Development Goals Working Group to support interdepartmental coordination.

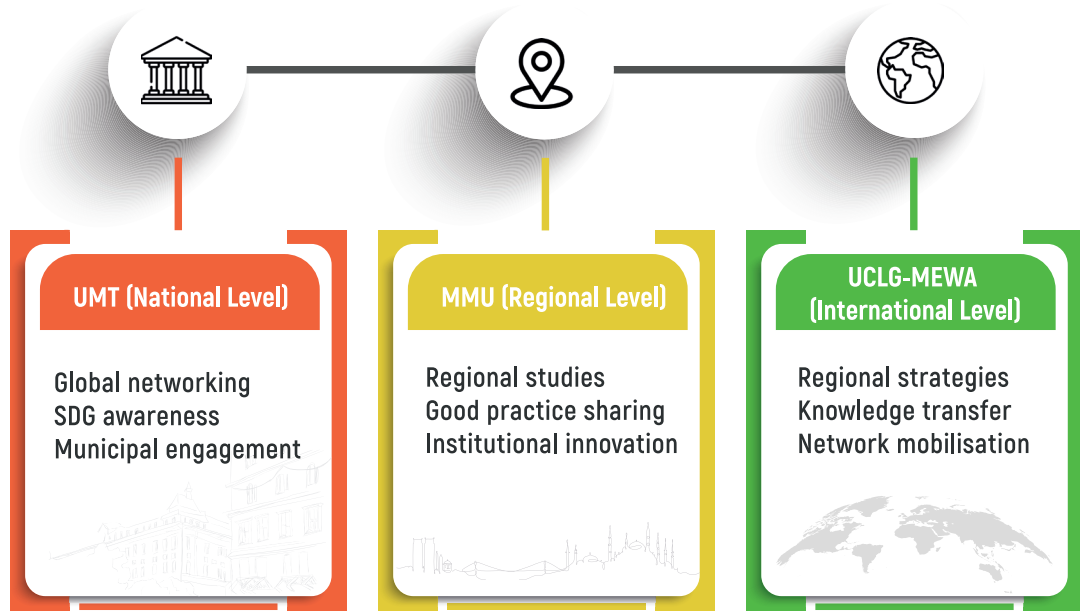


Figure 18. Key actors in SDG localization in Türkiye

At the multinational level, UCLG-MEWA has played a very important role in advancing SDG localisation efforts in Türkiye and the wider region.⁶⁸ The organisation has developed regional strategies for the implementation of the SDGs, mobilised its members, and established thematic committees that act as drivers of these efforts. In addition to strategic coordination, UCLG-MEWA has undertaken a range of technical activities such as mapping SDG-related initiatives, translating main global documents produced in collaboration with UN-Habitat and UCLG into Turkish, and supported knowledge dissemination.

SDG localisation in Türkiye has largely been driven by a group of institutionally strong and internationally connected actors, mainly The Union of

Municipalities of Türkiye, Marmara Municipalities Union and UCLG-MEWA. UMT, as the national union of municipalities, lobbies in many different international networks and closely follows global agendas. On the other hand, the Marmara Municipalities Union, due to the fact that the Marmara region is socio-economically highly connected with the international sphere, closely follows the global vision within its institutional structure and tries to meet the vision demands of its member municipalities. Likewise, UCLG-MEWA has also positioned the SDGs as a main area of work, as the regional branch of UCLG (which is a stakeholder of the UN).

The State of VLR Implementation

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, United Nations Member States have committed to working closely with local and regional governments to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Accordingly, Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) have emerged as a main instrument for monitoring SDG progress at the local level. Although not formally mandated, VLRs are encouraged under the Agenda's follow-up framework and contribute to both subnational accountability and alignment with national Voluntary National Reviews. Up to date, 385 VLRs have been submitted to the United Nations which shows the global uptake level of this mechanism.⁶⁹ VLRs support evidence-based planning, enhance vertical and horizontal policy coherence, and strengthen stakeholder engagement. Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) are supported by organizations such as UN-Habitat and United Cities and Local Governments, and promoting organizations defend that reports facilitate peer learning and technical cooperation.

To support municipalities in Türkiye for this process, The Voluntary Local Review (VLR) Guide (originally developed jointly by UCLG and UN-Habitat) was translated into Turkish by UCLG-MEWA and made accessible to municipalities in Türkiye.⁷⁰ The translation of the guideline into Turkish helped municipalities understand what is expected from a VLR at the global level and provided a more practical and widely usable document on how to prepare one.

As noted in earlier sections, the LAR-III project, implemented by UNDP, also contributed to the SDG implemen-

tation phase by introducing tools for global development agendas. Within this context, two important outputs related to Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) were produced.⁷¹ The first output was the VLR Review and Assessment Report, which analysed international practices and examined how VLRs are prepared and linked to local planning and budgeting processes, with a focus on participation, data management, and alignment of national frameworks. The second output was the VLR Guideline, developed as a practical tool to support municipalities in preparing their own VLRs which provided an approach on governance, data management, indicator selection, and reporting formats.

Another important initiative promoting VLRs is Marmara Urban Forum (MARUF) which an international event organised by Marmara Municipalities Union. MARUF has continuously provided a platform for cities that have prepared VLRs to present their reports, discuss the preparation processes, and comment on the impact of their reviews. VLR sessions are organized as part of the MARUF process to promote the dissemination of good practices and encourage more cities to engage in VLR preparation.⁷² The first VLR session within the scope of MARUF was held during the second edition of MARUF in 2021. "City's Logbook: Voluntary Local Reviews of the SDG journey" session in 2021 featured cities from both Türkiye and abroad, sharing their experiences and the challenges they encountered during the VLR process. Similarly, a VLR session was held at MARUF 23, where representatives from cities that had prepared VLRs presented their reports and explored the future path of VLR efforts. As part of MARUF 25, VLR session took place within the MARUF under the theme

“Voluntary Local Review: From SDG Reporting to Action.” MMU has also organized capacity-building training programs, supported municipalities in their VLR preparation processes, and facilitated knowledge and experience sharing by bringing together municipalities preparing VLRS within the scope of the Mentor Program between 2017-2026.

One of the earliest examples of SDG localisation through reporting is the Voluntary Local Review prepared by Sultanbeyli Municipality (İstanbul) in 2021.⁷³ The report developed with the support of UCLG-MEWA and the UCLG, and provides assessment of all 17 SDGs at the district level. Report also included baseline data, locally adapted indicators, and findings derived from a local evaluation survey. A notable feature of the report was its consistent emphasis on the principle of “leaving no one behind,” which is integrated into most SDG chapters.

Another important example was provided by Karatay Municipality (Konya), which has also prepared and submitted a VLR to the United Nations.⁷⁴ Karatay was also among the first three municipalities in Türkiye to have completed the report. The preparation process involved extensive local engagement, including consultations across all neighbourhoods and the use of participatory tools such as citizen meetings, digital platforms, and local governance mechanisms. The municipality also matched all its investments and services (ranging from infrastructure to social and cultural initiatives) with the relevant SDGs.

The experience of İzmir Metropolitan Municipality represents another significant milestone in SDG localisation efforts in Türkiye. İzmir’s Voluntary Lo-

cal Review was a very strong model in terms of its research methodology, governance structure, and the lessons derived from the process.⁷⁵ The participatory nature of the process, supported by local networks and international organisations such as UNDP and UN-Habitat, contributed to VLR’s credibility and impact. The İzmir VLR was prepared under the leadership of İzmir Metropolitan Municipality; however, the contributions and activities of all district municipalities were also visible and comprehensively covered by the report.

The İstanbul Voluntary Local Review (İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality) was published in 2021.⁷⁶ VLR İstanbul presented the city’s progress towards the 2030 Agenda, covering social, economic, and environmental dimensions. Main findings included expanded social support programmes, increased renewable energy and green space investments, improved access to education, strengthened urban resilience measures, and greater support for women’s employment and entrepreneurship.

In its Voluntary Local Review, Fatih Municipality (İstanbul) conducted analysis at the neighbourhood level, covering a broad set of local targets and indicators.⁷⁷ The use of spatial mapping and composite indices enabled the identification of intra-urban inequalities in a detailed manner. Data limitations were addressed through large-scale surveys, which reinforced the analytical foundation of the report. The inclusion of an additional goal on culture and heritage also shows an effort to adapt the global framework to local specificities.

Avcılar Municipality (İstanbul) provides another example of a Voluntary Local

Review.⁷⁸ Its VLR Progress Report for the 2022–2023 period records developments across environmental, social, and economic areas. Reporting process also strengthened data collection mechanisms, enhanced stakeholder collaboration and motivated impactful projects in waste management, energy efficiency, and urban mobility. The municipality also identified accelerating local actions in line with the SDGs, strengthening international partnerships and enhancing institutional capacity as strategic priorities.

In addition to municipalities that have completed their Voluntary Local Reviews, Safranbolu Municipality has also initiated its VLR process.⁷⁹ The work was carried out within the framework of a participatory and inclusive local governance project implemented in cooperation with academic institutions and civil society. The process included surveys, focus group meetings, stakeholder consultations, and thematic conferences. The municipality has completed the preparatory phase with indicator-based assessments and a roadmap for SDG localisation, and has moved forward to the drafting stage of the final report.

The experience in Türkiye shows that while VLRs have gained increasing visibility, their adoption remains limited. To date, only 6 municipalities have completed VLRs, while one municipality is still in the preparation phase. Considering the total number of municipalities and the growing engagement of national and international organisations in promoting SDG localisation, this number remains relatively low. Despite strong institutional support, capacity-building efforts, and dissemination activities, the uptake of VLRs has not yet reached a scale in Türkiye that shows the local emphasis on reporting.

The Emergence of VSRs

The 2030 Agenda has also established a follow-up and review system to monitor the implementation of the goals and assess progress. Within this framework, Member States are expected to report their progress toward the SDGs through regular and inclusive review processes. As stated in paragraph 79 of the Agenda, these reviews should be country-led processes that reflect national priorities, strategies, and challenges.⁸⁰ At the global level, this review process is conducted through the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), convened under the auspices of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

Local governments and cities play a significant role in processes of societal transformation. This is equally valid in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The implementation of the SDGs largely depends on practices carried out at the urban level; therefore, the importance of mechanisms that link global, national, and local levels within the sustainability agenda continues to grow. Understanding, reporting, and monitoring the contributions made at local levels, in achieving the SDGs has become an important component of the global policy agenda.

The concept of the Voluntary Subnational Review (VSR) emerged in the late 2010s alongside the growing efforts to localise the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Although the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development established Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) as the primary mechanism through which countries report their progress, it became evident over time that national reports do not fully capture the contributions of cities and local governments. In

response, complementary reporting tools began to be developed under the leadership of international organisations such as United Cities and Local Governments and UN-Habitat, with the support of national associations of local governments.⁸¹ The first VSR reports were published in 2020 and introduced a new reporting approach to present the role of local and regional authorities in achieving the SDGs.

VSR reports rapidly gained attraction at the global level. In 2021, eight additional VSRS were published by Cape Verde, Germany, Indonesia, Mexico, Norway, Sweden, Tunisia, and Zimbabwe and significantly expanded the initiative launched the previous year. During the same period, the number of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) prepared by individual cities also increased considerably.⁸² By 2025, a total of 37 VSRS had been produced across 34 countries with a total representation of more than 170,000 local governments and approximately 1.4 billion people worldwide. Although VSRS are not yet formally included among the reporting mechanisms of the UN High-Level Political Forum, they are gaining increasing recognition through side events and the efforts of local government networks.⁸³ Consequently, VSRS are considered a mechanism that strengthens multi-level governance in SDG implementation and facilitates the integration of local experiences into global policy discussions.

VSR studies are not limited to documenting the steps taken by local governments in line with the SDGs. They also identify areas where progress has been achieved, identifies challenges encountered, and point to potential opportunities for the future. In many countries with diverse socio-econom-

ic conditions, it may not always be sufficient to assess local contributions solely through nationally prepared reports. Local-level practices and experiences provide different perspectives on sustainability efforts across the country.

The Voluntary Subnational Review mechanism also helps local actors to assess their relationship with the SDGs more precisely. VSR enables local governments to analyse their own practices, evaluate outcomes, and develop new policy proposals. Additionally, both national policymakers and international stakeholders can gain a stronger understanding of the work carried out by local actors in the field of sustainable development.

Another reason for preparing VSR reports is that the contributions of local governments are not always sufficiently visible in national reports. National reports often focus on macro-level indicators and may reflect local practices only in a limited manner. The contributions of local governments to sustainability extend beyond technical data. They are also related to the development of participatory processes, the strengthening of local decision-making mechanisms, and the increasing awareness of society regarding the SDGs.

VSR studies also create a process of learning and evaluation for local actors. Good practices developed in different cities can serve as examples for others. A VSR report prepared at the national level brings together practices from different municipalities and creates a knowledge base.

While various documents and guidelines exist for the preparation of VSRS, these materials are generally motivational and guiding in nature. There is



Figure 19. Rationale for Voluntary Subnational Reviews

no binding framework for VSRs. Therefore, a VSR can be created according to the main needs of local governments in the respective country.

Post-2030 Development Agenda

As 2030 approaches, both implementation challenges and shifts in global politics have made the question of what comes after these goals increasingly visible. Today, a significant share of international discussions focuses on what kind of global development agenda may emerge in the post-2030 period.⁸⁴

One of the main contributions of the current framework has been to increase the global visibility of sustainable development issues. SDG symbols have become a reference point across a wide range of sectors, from

educational institutions to public administrations. As a result, topics such as climate change, inequality, education, health, and environmental protection have been addressed in a more systematic manner.⁸⁵ However, this increased visibility does not necessarily mean that all targets will be successfully achieved. Many assessments indicate that progress has been slow in several areas and that setbacks have occurred in others, therefore a new global framework may be needed.

One of the main trends in discussions on the post-SDG period is the idea of updating rather than replacing the existing framework. Many evaluations suggest that future goals should be determined by learning from the experience of the current 17 SDGs. While some goals have seen significant progress, others may require revision due to unrealistic indicators or

implementation challenges. Therefore, even if a new framework emerges after 2030, it is expected that the core logic of the SDG approach will continue.⁸⁶

Another major area of discussion concerns the need to rethink the concept of development itself. Although the SDG framework covers a wide range of issues, some critiques suggest that it does not sufficiently incorporate elements such as culture, local knowledge, and social values. In particular, it is argued that the knowledge systems and development perspectives of local communities are not adequately represented in the global agenda.⁸⁷ As a result, there is a growing academic debate on the need for a more inclusive understanding of development in the post-2030 framework.

In connection with this, there is a widely shared view that cultural and societal dimensions should receive greater attention in the future. Development policies have long been designed by

economic indicators and technical solutions; however, sustainability is not solely a matter of technology and economics. Human behaviour, social norms, and cultural practices also play a crucial role. Thus, it is argued that the new global framework should better reflect the contributions of social sciences, arts, and culture.

Technology and innovation are also seen as central components of the post-2030 agenda. Recent analyses point to advancements in science and technology will play a decisive role in sustainable development policies. Areas such as energy transition, digitalisation, data governance, and artificial intelligence are directly influencing how development policies are implemented. Therefore, future frameworks are expected to be more closely linked to technology policy.

The role of the private sector has also become a prominent topic in discussions about the future of global devel-

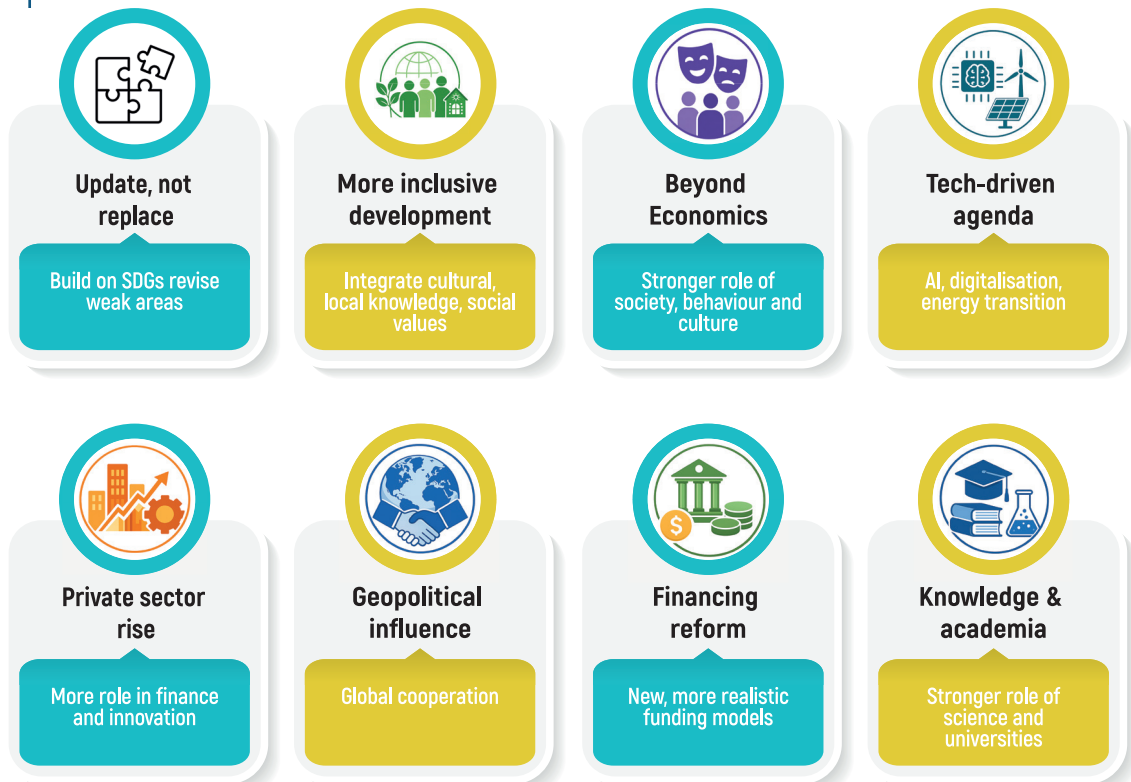


Figure 20. Emerging priorities in post-2030 Agenda debates

opment.⁸⁸ Development policies have traditionally been driven by governments and international organisations, but the financial capacity and innovative potential of the private sector are now gaining importance. This has led to a growing recognition that sustainability is not only a matter of social responsibility but also an economic necessity.

Another factor likely to affect the future of the global development agenda is the transformation of international politics. In recent years, trust in multilateral institutions has weakened in some countries, which may complicate the process of defining joint global goals.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, many countries continue to view international cooperation as an essential tool. Consequently, the emergence of a new development framework will largely depend on diplomatic processes and the dynamics of international negotiations. Geopolitical changes are also leading countries to develop new visions. Some countries are linking their own initiatives to the global agenda and producing new narratives.

Financing remains another critical area of debate. A significant funding gap has been identified in the implementation of the SDGs. Future frameworks therefore, are expected to develop more realistic and sustainable financing models. Arguments build around the new approaches that should include both solidarity-based mecha-

nisms to support low-income countries and joint financial instruments to address global challenges. However, the financial constraints experienced in COP processes, along with ongoing negotiations and instances where some countries have withdrawn or signalled reservations regarding financial packages, also indicate that financing will remain a highly contested issue in the post-2030 agenda.

The role of scientific knowledge production and academic institutions is also considered important in designing the post-2030 agenda. Universities not only generate research and provide the intellectual foundations for new development approaches therefore; education institutions might play a more active role in the sustainable development policies.

In conclusion, the post-SDG period remains uncertain, yet current discussions reveal several main trends. The new framework is expected to be more inclusive, with greater emphasis on cultural and societal dimensions. Technology and innovation are likely to play a central role, while the private sector may become a more active actor. Financing mechanisms are expected to be restructured, and global political dynamics will significantly influence the direction of the process.

**ON THE ROAD TO
ANTALYA**

Cities and Climate Change

The publication of the VSR Türkiye ahead of COP31 (to be held in November 2026) also establishes a link with the major global climate summit and the climate diplomacy process to be hosted by Türkiye. Taking this opportunity, the VSR addresses climate change as a dedicated theme to show attached importance to the country's growing role in the upcoming negotiations.

A large and growing share of the global population now lives in cities, and this

trend is expected to continue in the coming decades with Türkiye being no exception. As urban areas expanded, cities have become the main centres of energy use and emissions, accounting for around 75% of global energy consumption and 70% of greenhouse gases.⁹⁰ This is largely linked to everyday urban activities such as heating, cooling, lighting, transportation, and the operation of electronic devices. Over time, emissions in urban areas have become less linked to industrial production and more associated with these everyday energy services.⁹¹

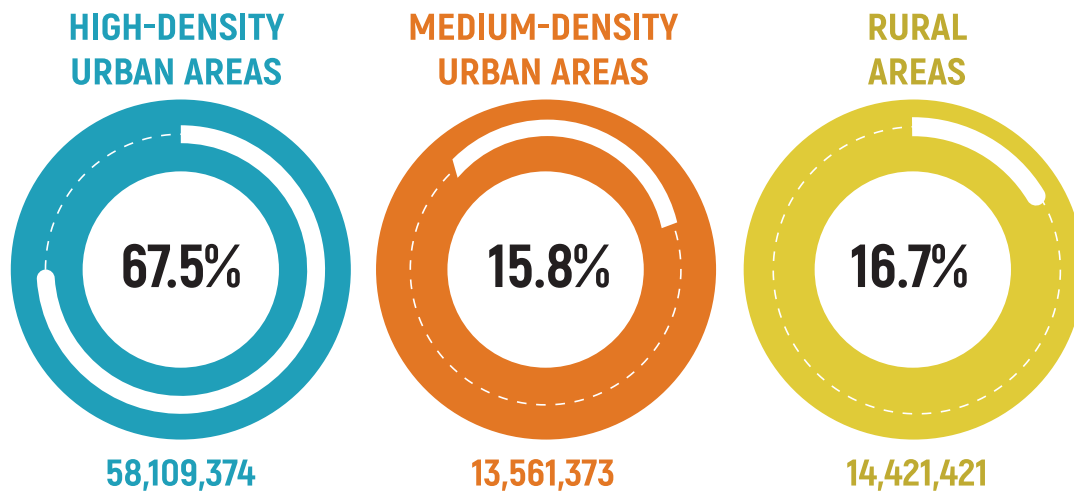


Figure 21. Population distribution across urban and rural areas in Türkiye⁹²

Urban areas have the potential to use energy more efficiently than dispersed settlements. Indeed, efficiency has been one of the main factors for the development of cities throughout history. Higher density can reduce infrastructure costs, shorten travel distances, and allow for more efficient service delivery. However, this potential is not directly realised and depends largely on how cities are planned and built. According to the UN-Habitat there are five principles

for sustainable human settlements.⁹³ Streets should cover at least 30% of land with dense networks. Population density should reach around 15,000 people per km². Land use should be mixed, with at least 40% for economic activities. Neighbourhoods should include diverse housing options to support social mix. Finally, single-use areas should be limited to below 10% to encourage functional diversity and urban vitality.

The main argument on the low-density expansion and the spread of built-up areas is the increased reliance on private transport and raised energy demand. In addition, sprawl development limits the achievement of economies of scale in infrastructure and service provision, which in turn reduces overall efficiency and increases per capita costs. Nevertheless, low-density urban expansion can create other environmental and social advantages.⁹⁴ Sprawling areas often provide more green space, lower exposure to concentrated pollution, and reduced heat island effects. Detached housing allows for better natural ventilation and renewable energy integration at the household level. Moreover, large cities experience higher temperatures than surrounding rural areas due to dense construction materials and heat generated by human activities. The effect intensifies heat waves and increases health risks for vulnerable populations.

The location of cities is also important factor to climate change risks, as many large urban areas are situated near coastlines and are therefore exposed to rising sea levels and more intense storm events. Pressures affect infrastructure, economic activities, and daily life, while social inequalities further deepen vulnerabilities, as lower-income groups are often concentrated in high-risk areas and have fewer resources to adapt to changing conditions.

Whether high or low-density or coastal, rapid urban growth, especially in developing regions, is expected to increase overall energy consumption. In many cases, traditional energy sources that had relatively low emissions are being replaced by more carbon-intensive systems which will add further pressure to already growing emission

levels. At the same time, the physical expansion of cities continues outward, often faster than population growth, reinforcing patterns that are less energy-efficient.

Evolution of Climate Policy and Governance in Türkiye

Türkiye is particularly vulnerable to climate change due to its geographical location in the Mediterranean Basin, a region identified as one of the global climate change hotspots. This vulnerability has increased the Türkiye's urgency of developing both mitigation and adaptation policies. Türkiye's climate policy has evolved in line with the international climate regime and has progressively deepened in scope and ambition over time.⁹⁵ The country's engagement with global climate governance starts in 2004, when Türkiye became a Party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This was the beginning of country's formal participation in international climate negotiations and established the foundation for following policy development. The process advanced further in 2009 with Türkiye's accession to the Kyoto Protocol, which integrated the country into global efforts aimed at greenhouse gas mitigation.

A major milestone was reached in 2016, when Türkiye signed the Paris Agreement. As the current global reference framework, the Paris Agreement requires countries to define and periodically update their climate commitments through Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), with the overarching goal of limiting global temperature rise to well below 2°C and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C.

Türkiye initially committed to a 21% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 with the business-as-usual scenario.

In 2021, Türkiye ratified the Paris Agreement and simultaneously announced its 2053 net zero emissions target. In the same year, important institutional changes were introduced. The Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation was renamed the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change to state the growing importance of climate policy within the national governance structure. In parallel, the Climate Change Presidency was established as a central coordinating body to oversee climate policy implementation and improve inter-institutional coordination. Another important institutional development was the establishment of the Türkiye Environment Agency (TÜÇA) in 2020. The agency's mission was to support environmental management and circular economy practices in areas such as waste management and resource efficiency.

In 2022, the Türkiye organised its first Climate Council which brought together approximately 5,000 participants from public institutions, the private sector, academia, civil society, and other stakeholder groups. The Council produced 217 recommendations, 76 of which were prioritised and formed the basis for Türkiye's long-term climate policy framework.

At the international level, Türkiye also strengthened its engagement with the Conference of the Parties (COP) process. In 2022, during COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh, Türkiye submitted its updated NDC and increased its 2030 emission reduction target from 21% to 41%. In the same year, Türkiye formally an-

nounced its candidacy to host COP31.

In parallel with these developments, Türkiye began to institutionalise its climate policy framework through strategic planning. Two key policy documents were introduced for the 2024–2030 period, namely Climate Change Mitigation Strategy and Action Plan, and the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan. The Mitigation Plan outlines 49 strategies and 260 actions across seven major sectors, with a focus on renewable energy expansion, energy efficiency, and circular economy practices. The Adaptation Plan addresses 11 priority sectors through 40 strategies and 129 actions and covers areas such as water resource management, urban resilience, public health, and disaster risk reduction. To support national strategies, Türkiye also developed a national Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) system through the Climate Portal.

In 2024, the Long-Term Climate Strategy (LTS) was announced with a roadmap toward the 2053 net zero target. The strategy includes 89 measures across 18 sectors and four cross-cutting areas. At the same time, climate objectives were incorporated into broader national planning instruments, such as the 12th Development Plan (2024–2028) and the Medium-Term Programme (2024–2026). In 2025, Türkiye submitted its second updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 3.0). The new commitment includes reducing emissions by 466 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent compared to the reference scenario and limiting total emissions to 643 million tonnes.

The most significant legal milestone in this process was the adoption of Tür-

kiye’s first Climate Law on 2 July 2025, which entered into force on 9 July 2025. The law represents the first legal framework addressing climate change in Türkiye and introduces main mechanisms such as the Emissions Trading System (ETS), formal MRV requirements, climate finance instruments, and mandatory local climate action plans.

In parallel with domestic reforms, after two years of negotiations and diplomatic engagement, Türkiye secured the right to host COP31.⁹⁶ Hosting COP31 is expected to enhance Türkiye’s international visibility and further strengthen its influence in global climate policies. Türkiye’s approach to COP31, as articulated in the First Pres-

idency Letter, states a move toward an implementation-oriented climate diplomacy framework.⁹⁷

The emphasis on *Dialogue, Consensus, and Action* is presented as an operational logic for managing a highly fragmented negotiation landscape. Dialogue is framed as a mechanism to rebuild trust and broad participation by bringing diverse regional perspectives into the process. Consensus, in turn, is positioned as a tool to secure ownership of outcomes, acknowledging different national circumstances without weakening collective ambition. Most notably, the focus on Action is an intention to move beyond negotiated text toward measurable and applicable outputs.



Figure 22. COP31 Presidency Vision

Türkiye puts forward 9 Action Agenda priorities to connect global commitments with practical delivery channels. The agenda spans circular economy, clean energy transition, low-carbon industrialisation, resilience of vulnerable regions, food systems, sustainable cities, financial and institutional mechanisms, youth engagement, and cross-sectoral coordination across climate, biodiversity, and land use.

Within the COP31 Action Agenda, cities have a central position with their dual role as both major contributors to greenhouse gas emissions and vulnerable systems exposed to climate risks. Agenda’s focus on climate-resilient cities indicates the need to address urban transformation through integrated and scalable solutions. The priority emphasises reducing emissions across the full life cycle of

buildings, promoting sustainable construction practices through certification systems, and improving overall energy performance in urban environments. At the same time, resilient city approach underlines the importance of developing resilient infrastructure capable of withstanding increasing

climate pressures. Another dimension of this agenda item is the mobilisation of sustainable and accessible financing mechanisms to support cities in implementing these transitions.



Figure 23. COP31 Action Agenda

Municipalities in Türkiye and Climate Change

The involvement of local governments in Türkiye in climate change efforts has steadily increased. Previously, municipal activities were mainly around environmental protection. However, the process of alignment with the European Union acquis and the growing prominence of climate change at the national policy level have made municipalities more visible in the field. In particular, the widespread adoption of local climate action plans and the introduction of climate law have accelerated the institutionalisation of climate policies at the local level.

Although Article 14 of the Municipal Law does not explicitly refer to climate change, the duties assigned to municipalities provide a basis for implementing climate policies at the local level. Municipal responsibilities such as environmental protection and environmental health services, waste collection and solid waste management are major ways to reduce emissions. Water supply and sewerage services play a decisive role in strengthening resilience. Afforestation and the development of parks and green areas contribute to increasing carbon sinks and mitigating the urban heat island effect. Geographic and urban information systems on the other hand, support data-driven environmental planning processes. In addition, the protection of cultural and natural assets and the sustainable management of historical heritage contribute to the preservation of both natural and cultural environments. Housing and urban infrastructure services also create an impact in terms of energy efficiency and sustainable urbanisation.

Article 7 of the Metropolitan Municipality Law defines extensive powers and responsibilities for metropolitan municipalities in the fields of environmental management and sustainability. These include the protection of the environment, agricultural areas and water basins, the implementation of afforestation activities, and the regulation of activities that may pose risks to environmental and public health. In addition, responsibilities such as solid waste management, the disposal and recovery of excavation and industrial waste, and the establishment and operation of related facilities are other functions of metropolitan municipalities in environmental sustainability.

Article 11 of the Environmental Law also states the obligation of municipalities regarding municipal solid waste management and defines the financial framework for these services. Accordingly, metropolitan and other municipalities are responsible for establishing, operating, or outsourcing solid waste disposal facilities and the costs of these services are borne by the beneficiaries. Requiring that collected fees be used exclusively for solid waste services further increases the proper allocation of financial resources.

Another important development in 2020 was the amendment to the Regulation on Norm Staff Principles and Standards for Municipalities and Their Affiliated Entities, which strengthened the institutional capacity of local governments in the fields of climate change and waste management. Municipalities were required to establish dedicated units of Climate Change Departments and Zero Waste Departments at the metropolitan level, and corresponding branch offices at the provincial and district levels.

The development of climate policies at the local level has entered a new phase in 2025 with the adoption of the Climate Law. The law made the preparation of local climate change action plans mandatory and defined the process within a multi-level governance framework. Plans prepared at the provincial level, adopt an approach that addresses both greenhouse gas emission reduction and climate change adaptation, under the coordination of provincial authorities and with the active participation of local governments. Metropolitan municipalities and provincial municipalities together with special provincial administrations in other areas, were positioned as the main actors of the local plans. Furthermore, data sharing in preparation and monitoring phases became mandatory between the institutions.

The Directorate of Climate Change Adaptation and Local Policies is important partner of local governments.⁹⁸ Its responsibilities include identifying adaptation needs across sectors and regions, developing and monitoring policies, and preparing relevant legislation and guidelines. Main function of the Directorate is the coordination of regional and local climate action plans, including their preparation, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. Additionally, it oversees impact, vulnerability, and risk assessment studies and ensures their national coordination.

The LCCAP (Local Climate Change Action Plan – YİDEP) is the planning instrument to be prepared at the provincial level. It should be noted, however, that the regulatory framework governing LCCAPs is currently at the draft stage.⁹⁹ LCCAPs are expected to be developed for each province through a participatory and coordinated approach. These plans are de-

signed to include climate projections, vulnerability and risk assessments, greenhouse gas inventories, mitigation and adaptation targets, financing mechanisms, and monitoring indicators.

In terms of implementation, LCCAPs are not limited to preparation but are also expected to be systematically monitored, evaluated, and reported. A dedicated digital platform (E-LCCAP) is now under development by the Directorate and will be used for data entry and tracking, ensuring transparency and consistency. The plans are to be updated every five years, with the first implementation period envisaged to cover 2028–2032.

Besides the local plans, cities in Türkiye actively engage in a range of global and regional initiatives to strengthen their climate change experience at the international level. At the European level, platforms such as the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy provide a framework for municipalities to commit to emission reduction targets and develop local climate action plans. Networks such as Energy Cities support cities in advancing energy transition policies and global city alliances including Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, ICLEI and C40 Cities creates platform for collaboration on urban climate solutions and policy innovation. In addition, Turkish municipalities participate in initiatives such as the Carbon Disclosure Project, which enhances transparency in climate data reporting, and the Making Cities Resilient 2030 programme, which focuses on strengthening urban resilience. Membership in broader local government networks such as United Cities and Local Governments further contributes to global policy dialogues.¹⁰⁰

STATUS OF LOCAL CLIMATE CHANGE ACTIONS PLANS (LCCAPS)

As of January 2026



Figure 24. Local climate action plans in Türkiye

A number of large-scale programmes in Türkiye have also motivated municipal capacities for climate action. The “Enhancing Climate Change Adaptation Action in Türkiye” project, implemented between 2019 and 2025 with EU support, has focused on embedding adaptation into both national and local planning systems. The project has functioned as a structural capacity-building mechanism and supported municipalities through decision-support tools, updated strategies, and pilot applications.¹⁰¹ The project was implemented in cooperation between the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP Türkiye). The objective was to improve both national and local adaptation capacities through a structured, multi-component approach. Programme was built around three main pillars. The development of decision-making tools and updated national strategies to support climate-resilient planning; the enhancement of local adaptation planning capacities through pilot cities and knowledge-sharing mechanisms; and the establishment of a broad coop-

eration network involving public institutions, local governments, academia, and civil society.

Complementarily, the IPA III-funded climate action programme launched in 2023 is another implementation-oriented initiative with a specific objective on operationalising climate policies at the local level. This project was also implemented by United Nations Development Programme in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change.¹⁰² Main activities of the project included the development of climate projections, vulnerability and risk assessments across all regions, the establishment of a regulatory framework for Local Climate Change Action Plans, and the preparation of such plans for selected cities.

Another good example from local level (MMU) is the Climate-Neutral Cities Network (İNŞA). The objective of the initiative is to bring together both leading and newly engaged municipalities on a common transformation path toward a climate-neutral future through a comprehensive capacity-building and networking program. İNŞA is also a national community in

Türkiye designed specifically for municipalities under the City Expert Support Facility.¹⁰³ The Facility provides local governments with access to the knowledge, guidance, and peer-learning opportunities they need throughout their climate-neutrality journey. MMU acts as a facilitator and majorly support municipalities in positioning their efforts with the European Green Deal objectives.

While climate change has emerged as a promising area for municipalities, its long payback periods make it a difficult investment field for politically driven organizations. As a result, most initiatives in this area tend to rely on external financing. Local governments in Türkiye face significant challenges in financing climate change adaptation, despite the increasing urgency and long-term benefits of such investments.¹⁰⁴ A main constraint is the limited availability of dedicated adaptation finance, which remains considerably lower than mitigation-oriented funding both in scale and institutional support. Adaptation projects are often perceived as high-cost and low-return, as their benefits (such as avoided losses and improved resilience) are difficult to quantify over long time horizons. At the municipal level, these challenges are further compounded by insufficient integration of climate risks into planning processes, limited access to reliable local climate data, and gaps in technical capacity. Additionally, high upfront costs and underdeveloped financial markets restrict the development of bankable projects. As a result, municipalities frequently rely on foreign project budget.

In recent years, however, several metropolitan municipalities in Türkiye have introduced innovative financing instruments to address this need. İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality issued Türkiye's first municipal green bond in 2023, raising USD 715 million from international markets with strong investor confidence.¹⁰⁵ In parallel, the Green

Sukuk model, developed by Konya Metropolitan Municipality, provides an alternative financing mechanism with sustainable finance principles.¹⁰⁶

Alongside these financial developments, institutional and organisational transformations have also taken place at the municipal level. A significant number of metropolitan and provincial municipalities have established dedicated climate change and zero waste units or reorganised existing environmental departments, largely influenced by global climate policies and national guidance.¹⁰⁷ However, this transformation is uneven across municipalities, with metropolitan municipalities generally showing higher capacity, stronger engagement, and better performance in areas such as policy development, project implementation, and participation in international networks. In contrast, provincial municipalities, although increasingly active, demonstrate more limited effectiveness, particularly in implementing local climate action plans

In terms of planning, the progress is again uneven across municipalities.¹⁰⁸ While some cities have taken important steps, overall efforts remain limited and not yet fully developed. Local governments are increasingly aware of climate risks and show relatively strong commitment at the policy level, but this does not always turn into action on the ground. In particular, areas such as infrastructure improvements and the enforcement of building and safety standards remain weak.

Hosting COP31 is a milestone for Türkiye for its role in global climate governance and accelerating domestic momentum. COP is expected to further increase the engagement of municipalities in climate and environmental action, and also making central government commitment on local government supports more visible.

**LOCAL SDG
IMPLEMENTATION
CHALLENGES**

How to Read This Section

This section guides the reader through SDG implementation at the local level in Türkiye. Each part starts with an overview of the relevant Sustainable Development Goal with a focus on the main areas where municipalities are active. Each SDG introduction explains how local governments in Türkiye contribute to global goals, with examples of how these actions are put into practice through services and policies.

The section then presents the main problem areas identified through the survey process, explained in detail in the “Multi-Level Methodological Approach” section. Identified problems are presented under “Voices from the Field” and represents the views of practitioners and municipal actors. All issues are based on collected and analysed data and shows common challenges seen across different local contexts.

Then, “Voices at the Table,” presents the outcomes of the VSR Türkiye workshop held on 5 February 2025. A total of 98 participants from municipalities, academia, central government, civil society, and international organisations took part in roundtable discussions. Instead of offering a single recommendation, this approach invites the reader into the discussion.

SDG 1: NO POVERTY

Municipalities in Türkiye tackle SDG 1 by combining direct social assistance with interventions that respond to both urgent needs and longer-term poverty risks. Social aid systems provide financial assistance, shopping cards, and in-kind support such as food and clothing. Card-based systems allow households to purchase essential goods according to their own priorities which increases flexibility in meeting daily needs. Municipalities typically implement these systems through agreements with small and medium-sized local markets to support local enterprises. Municipal food banks collect surplus food and redistribute it to low-income families. In addition, municipalities provide utility support, such as assistance with electricity and water bills, along with rent subsidies and basic household items.

Municipal services also focus on housing and access to basic services for disadvantaged groups. Temporary shelters and guesthouses provide accommodation for individuals facing homelessness or economic hardship. In emergencies such as natural disasters, municipalities establish temporary housing facilities quickly to address urgent needs. Home-based support services are delivered to elderly individuals, persons with disabilities, and those with chronic illnesses who cannot access services directly. Examples to these services include meal delivery, cleaning, and assistance with daily needs. In addition, transport support and education-related assistance help households maintain access to essential services. Practices extend service delivery to groups that face mobility or access barriers.

Beyond immediate support, municipalities implement programs to reduce poverty through employment and social inclusion. Vocational training initiatives develop practical skills that support entry into the labour market. Projects supporting women and other vulnerable groups encourage participation in income-generating activities, often in cooperation with other public institutions. Community-based support mechanisms, such as social markets and solidarity centres, enable the redistribution of goods and strengthen local support networks. Municipalities also implement programmes for refugees and low-income populations, including food support and social integration activities.

Voices from the Field (Problem 1.1)

The lack of a mandatory, up-to-date data-sharing system between Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations (local entities coordinating social assistance under the Ministry of Family and Social Services), municipalities, and central institutions results in duplicate aid, the exclusion of some vulnerable households, and delays in providing support to those in need.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- A more coordinated and integrated approach to social assistance delivery should be established, based on reliable and common data systems.
- Coordination gaps across institutions weaken the ability to reach those in need and reduce the overall effectiveness of support mechanisms.
- A unified data infrastructure should be developed so that all relevant actors operate on consistent, up-to-date information.
- A centralised system supported by geographic information tools should be created to enable mapping of needs and alignment of interventions.
- Interoperability between national and local systems should be strengthened through data exchange arrangements among municipalities, foundations, public institutions, and civil society organisations.
- Improved data exchange would enhance both coordination and accountability in resource allocation.
- Digital tools should be utilised to improve oversight, particularly through automated verification and compliance checks.
- Automated systems should be used to detect inconsistencies early and prevent duplication in assistance delivery.



- Databases should be regularly updated, and data flows should remain continuous and reliable across all governance levels.
- Field-level data collection should be strengthened through visits and local engagement mechanisms.
- Local actors should play a supportive role in capturing real-time changes in household needs.
- Transparency and individual responsibility should be reinforced across the system.
- Secure and traceable payment systems should be adopted to allow effective monitoring of assistance provided.

Voices from the Field (Problem 1.2)

Rising rents and limited affordable housing are making it harder for vulnerable groups to find safe homes, increasing pressure on municipalities while existing systems remain fragmented and insufficient to meet growing demand.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Housing affordability has become a issue that requires coordinated action across different levels of governance.
- Individual interventions are not enough to meet the scale of need, and a more integrated approach is required to provide both short-term relief and long-term stability.
- Mass social housing projects led by the central government were positively received and seen as an important contribution.
- Municipalities should be given a stronger role in this area due to their closer knowledge of local needs and their role in implementation.
- Central institutions should provide supportive frameworks, especially for rental assistance schemes developed in coordination with municipalities.
- Municipalities are key actors in developing and applying models that expand access to affordable housing.
- Municipalities should be supported in producing and allocating social housing, including rental units assigned for fixed periods.
- Alternative models that allow beneficiaries to gain ownership through regular contributions gradually should be promoted.
- Stronger regulatory oversight is needed in housing markets.
- Cooperation between central and local authorities is necessary to address price volatility and limit speculative practices.
- Mechanisms should be introduced so that a share of new housing developments remains affordable.
- New financing approaches should be explored to increase resources for social housing.
- Innovative models linking the financial obligations of local compa-

nies or individuals to social housing investment should be considered.

- Cooperative-based housing production should be strengthened to support more active involvement of local actors.
- Strong data systems are needed, and housing support measures should be integrated into digital platforms to improve accuracy.

Voices from the Field (Problem 1.3)

Low income, high food prices, and weak links between local production and access are making it harder for vulnerable groups to reach healthy and affordable food, increasing reliance on municipal support.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Food access is no longer only about short-term affordability but is linked to income, labour markets, and local production systems.
- Stronger links are needed between social policy and local economic development, with coordinated action across employment, agriculture, and social support.
- Labour market alignment at the local level should be improved through better data on workforce needs and stronger job matching mechanisms.
- Employment opportunities should be increased, especially for individuals completing municipal training programmes.
- Cooperation between municipalities, central institutions, and local economic actors should be strengthened so that skills development leads to stable income and better access to food.
- Local food production should be supported, especially through cooperatives and local agriculture, to stabilise supply and reduce dependence on external markets.
- The lack of a clear legal definition of rural areas, particularly in metropolitan municipalities, creates confusion between rural tourism and agricultural land use.
- A clear definition of rural areas should be introduced based on objective indicators.
- Stronger regulatory frameworks are needed in food markets.
- Oversight of supply chains and pricing practices should be improved to support fair access and maintain quality.
- Social public procurement should be used as a policy tool in food systems.
- Social support mechanisms should evolve with a stronger focus on food security as a main part of social policy.
- Local governments should play a central role in coordination with central government in the implementation of integrated food policies.
- Municipalities are increasingly expected to act as coordinators in the sector, beyond their role in service provision.

SDG 2: ZERO HUNGER

For SDG 2, municipalities rely on service delivery mechanisms that improve food access while maintaining safety standards and raising awareness on nutrition. Direct food support is one of the primary mechanisms, delivered through meal distribution, food packages, and community kitchens that provide regular assistance to low-income households so that the vulnerable groups can access sufficient and nutritious food throughout the year. In parallel, municipalities support access to affordable food through local markets, where fresh products are sold at lower prices than in commercial outlets. These markets are regularly inspected to ensure compliance with pricing, hygiene, and quality standards. Control mechanisms such as label checks, weighing systems, and vendor inspections aim to maintain trust and prevent unfair practices in food distribution.

Another key channel involves improving food quality and nutrition, particularly among children and vulnerable groups. Municipalities organise awareness programs focused on early childhood nutrition and healthy eating habits. Home visits and training sessions are conducted for parents, especially mothers, to improve knowledge on infant and child nutrition. Educational programmes for different age groups introduce basic nutrition concepts and promote balanced diets. Special attention is given to disadvantaged populations, including refugees, through targeted outreach and training activities.

Municipal involvement also extends to supporting local food systems and small-scale production. Producer markets and cooperative-based supply models connect local producers directly with consumers, thereby shortening supply chains and reducing costs. In some cases, municipalities support food production through facilities, equipment, or guaranteed purchase mechanisms, particularly for small producers. Projects that promote local and traditional products, including specialised food production, improve access to affordable and safe food while supporting local economies. In addition, agricultural initiatives such as livestock support, seed preservation, and sustainable production practices are implemented in cooperation with other institutions.

Voices from the Field (Problem 2.1)

The lack of a binding and standardised national legal framework for food banking, along with undefined roles and responsibilities among institutions, leads to differences in implementation across municipalities and weakens the consistency of food assistance services.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- The effectiveness of food banking systems depends on having a clear and enforceable national framework that supports consistency

across local practices.

- Current models create uncertainty in implementation and limit municipalities' ability to operate in a predictable and coordinated way.
- A unified legal basis should be established to clarify responsibilities and standardise main processes among all actors.
- Stronger institutional coordination is needed as a priority.
- A central mechanism led by relevant ministries should bring together municipalities, public institutions, and civil society actors under a common framework.
- This mechanism should support similar procedures and improve communication so that food assistance systems work more effectively and with stronger accountability.
- Common operational standards should be developed for donation procedures, tax arrangements, inspection processes, and storage conditions, including cold chain requirements.
- Digital tools should be integrated to improve transparency and traceability.
- A system that tracks food from donation to final beneficiary should be introduced to support monitoring and reduce operational risks
- Existing experience and good practices within the system should be used to support capacity development at the local level.
- Knowledge transfer from experienced organisations should be promoted.
- Partnerships with cooperatives should be strengthened, and more sustainable approaches to supply and distribution should be encouraged.
- Clear and objective criteria should be used to identify beneficiaries.
- Social assistance databases should be integrated, and data sharing across institutions should be improved to increase accuracy.
- Logistical infrastructure should be strengthened, and consistent standards across municipalities should be maintained to build a more resilient and effective system.

Voices from the Field (Problem 2.2)

The current legal framework does not sufficiently support mechanisms that enable small producers to sell directly to consumers, which also limits municipalities' ability to improve access to more affordable food.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Strengthening local food systems requires an institutional and regulatory environment that allows municipalities to act more effectively.
- Unclear legal mandates and operational procedures limit local governments in supporting direct market access for small producers.
- A more predictable framework is needed to improve market functioning and public intervention capacity.

- Integration between local production and market access should be improved.
- Municipalities should develop mechanisms that connect producers and consumers more directly, including digital platforms and alternative distribution channels.
- Supporting local consumption of locally produced goods can support price stabilization and reduce dependence on long supply chains.
- Producer organisations should be strengthened.
- Cooperative structures should be encouraged, and their cooperation with municipalities should be improved so that small producers can operate more efficiently and access markets under fair conditions.
- Public procurement approaches should be adjusted to include smaller suppliers as a way to support local economies without harming market balance.
- Clear standards for market organisation and oversight should be established.
- The operational framework for producer markets should be defined, and inspection and monitoring practices should be improved to support quality and consumer trust.
- Storage, handling, and transport conditions should be improved through cooperation between local and central authorities.
- Local planning and data systems should be strengthened.
- A better understanding of regional production capacity and demand patterns should support more effective decisions.
- Municipalities should act not only as service providers but also as facilitators and coordinators linking production and distribution.
- More objective indicators should be developed to define rural areas in metropolitan municipalities.

Voices from the Field (Problem 3.3)

Limited municipal capacity to influence food markets, combined with weak regulatory frameworks and insufficient integration between production, distribution, and access, restricts the ability to deliver affordable and nutritious food for vulnerable groups.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Food affordability and access are closely linked challenges affected by market conditions and inequalities.
- Municipalities face growing demand but have limited ability to influence market dynamics without stronger regulatory and institutional support.
- Existing legal frameworks should be strengthened to give local authorities more effective tools for food safety and fair market conditions.

- Municipalities can improve access through both direct and indirect market interventions.
- Local governments should take part in collective purchasing mechanisms and develop alternative distribution channels to support price stabilisation.
- Local production systems should be strengthened to reduce external dependency and improve supply resilience.
- Support for small-scale agriculture and cooperative structures should be increased to improve production capacity and market access.
- Policy tools across different levels of governance should be more closely coordinated.
- Oversight of food supply chains should be strengthened, and market monitoring should be improved to address imbalances and prevent harmful practices.
- Public procurement should be used as a tool to support inclusive supply models and increase demand for locally produced goods.
- Capacity-building initiatives should be expanded to support sustainable production practices and wider participation.
- Training programmes and targeted incentives should be developed, especially to increase the involvement of women in production.
- Greater participation in production can support both economic inclusion and the resilience of food systems.
- More specific definitions should be introduced within rural areas, possibly by identifying households as rural households and distinguishing between those engaged in agricultural or rural economic activities and those using properties for secondary or recreational purposes within the same area.

SDG 3: GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Efforts under SDG 3 are coordinated through local services, where preventive health actions and community-level initiatives play a major role. Public health awareness activities form a main channel with regular information campaigns on hygiene, disease prevention, and vaccination. During health crises, municipalities disseminate guidance through multiple communication tools and organise local coordination mechanisms with relevant institutions. Public spaces and high-traffic areas are equipped with informational materials, while outreach activities ensure that health-related messages reach different population groups.

Access to health services is supported through specific assistance, particularly for individuals facing physical or financial barriers. Transport services enable elderly individuals, persons with disabilities, and patients with chronic conditions to reach healthcare facilities. In parallel, home-based support programmes provide regular visits by trained staff, including basic health monitoring and guidance. Services primar-

ily serve vulnerable groups who cannot benefit from standard service channels. Municipalities also support mental health through counseling services, family guidance, and individual therapy. In areas with diverse populations, additional support, such as translation and advisory services, improves access to healthcare systems.

Municipal activities also address behavioural risks and long-term health outcomes through education and programmes. Awareness campaigns target issues such as tobacco use, substance dependence, and reproductive health. Training sessions and seminars provide information on disease prevention, healthy lifestyles, and family health practices. Sports facilities and organised activities promote physical activity among people of different ages, contributing to both physical and mental well-being. Screening programmes and early detection activities support the identification of conditions such as diabetes and hypertension, followed by referral or guidance. In addition, environmental health measures, including sanitation practices and the control of hazardous materials, contribute to reducing health risks.

Voices from the Field (Problem 3.1)

The lack of clarity in legislation and practice regarding the roles and responsibilities of municipalities in preventive and protective health services (such as mental health, addiction prevention, psychosocial support, and screening) limits their ability to develop consistent and widespread service models and prevents them from responding effectively to increasing local needs.



Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Municipalities face complex social and health challenges, but their capacity is limited due to unclear mandates and responsibilities.
- The types and areas of health services that municipalities can provide should be more clearly explained, and their scope of responsibilities should be expanded.
- Cooperation between municipalities and national institutions should be strengthened.
- Collaboration with health authorities at central and provincial levels is important for continuity and coherence in services.
- Existing programmes and networks can support this cooperation, especially as platforms for local practices with national health strategies.
- Institutional capacity at the local level should be strengthened.
- The number of professional staff in relevant fields should be increased, and suitable organisational structures should be created within municipalities.
- Regular field engagement should be strengthened through home visits and follow-up practices to better understand and respond to local needs.
- Partnerships beyond the public sector should be expanded.
- Cooperation with civil society organisations, especially those working on issues such as addiction prevention, can improve the reach and impact of services.
- Coordination with social service institutions should be reinforced so that interventions are more comprehensive and focused.
- Municipalities should be supported in taking a complementary role within the broader health system.
- Their role in primary care structures should be clarified, and joint service models with health institutions should be developed to strengthen the overall system response.

Voices from the Field (Problem 3.2)

Overlapping mandates between municipalities and provincial health and environmental authorities in drinking water, wastewater, air quality, and environmental health inspections, combined with the lack of an integrated measurement and monitoring infrastructure, weaken early detection and response to environmental risks and make it more difficult for municipalities to manage their responsibility for protecting public health at the local level.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Diverse responsibilities and weak communication reduce the ability of institutions to act in a timely and consistent way.
- Roles should be clarified, and coordination between municipalities, provincial authorities, and other actors should be strengthened.
- Monitoring and assessment mechanisms should be improved.
- Measurement systems should reflect local conditions and support continuous data flow to detect risks early.
- Environmental risks should be assessed in a comprehensive way, considering affected populations, exposure patterns, and vulnerabilities.
- Advanced tools, including data-driven and automated monitoring systems, should be integrated to strengthen detection and response capacity.
- Institutionalised coordination platforms should be developed.
- Regular engagement between local and central stakeholders is needed so that decisions reflect current needs and are followed in practice.
- Communication channels should be strengthened, including shared systems for information exchange, to reduce delays and improve efficiency.
- Oversight mechanisms should be diversified.
- Public sector leadership should be combined with complementary monitoring approaches, supported by strong supervision and accountability.
- Existing inspection systems should be reinforced, and enforcement measures should be strong enough to discourage non-compliance.
- Local engagement should be strengthened.
- Community-based reporting and feedback systems should be developed to improve early warning and responsiveness.

Voices from the Field (Problem 3.3)

Although municipalities are responsible for the planning and management of traffic, their authority in traffic safety remains limited, making it difficult to effectively reduce risks at the local level.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Improving traffic safety requires an approach that addresses both infrastructure and behaviour.
- Municipalities face growing pressure to manage local risks but have limited capacity without stronger authority and institutional support.
- Local competencies should be expanded, and responsibilities in traffic management should be clarified.

- Technical and institutional capacity within municipalities should be strengthened.
- Specialised roles, such as road safety experts in municipalities, should be introduced to support planning and implementation.
- Data-driven approaches should be improved, including the use of digital systems to monitor traffic behaviour and support enforcement.
- Coordination between central authorities and municipalities is important so that violations are identified and addressed effectively.
- Oversight should cover all transport modes operating within urban areas.
- All transport systems should be monitored and reported consistently to maintain safety standards.
- Mobility patterns should shift by promoting alternatives to car dependency.
- Walking, cycling, and other sustainable transport options should be supported to reduce overall risk exposure.
- Evidence-based planning should be strengthened.
- Field assessments should be carried out to identify priority areas and guide interventions.
- Mechanisms should be developed so that municipalities can take a more active role in traffic safety processes.
- Stronger alignment is needed between local needs and broader policy frameworks.

SDG 4: QUALITY EDUCATION

In advancing SDG 4, municipalities expand educational access and support learning environments that extend beyond formal schooling. One of the main areas of intervention involves providing complementary education services outside formal schooling. Learning centres offer academic support programmes, including exam preparation courses and subject-based tutoring, available on both in-person and digital platforms. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the move to online education exposed significant connectivity challenges for students living in rural areas with limited internet access. To address inequalities in access to remote education, municipalities establish dedicated access points equipped with computers and internet connectivity. In parallel, municipalities organise cultural and social activities such as arts, music, and sports programmes, which support personal development and encourage continued engagement with education.

Early childhood development and parental support constitute another key service channel. Municipalities implement home-based programmes that monitor child development and provide guidance to caregivers on nutrition, communication, and behavioural development. Structured training sessions inform parents about child health, learning processes, and developmental risks. Screening tools are applied to assess cognitive and physical development, followed by referrals to spe-

cialised services when needed. Access to early childhood education is supported through the expansion of preschool facilities and the provision of low-cost or free services.

Municipalities also play a role in developing skills alignment for labour market needs and promoting inclusive education. Vocational training courses and technical workshops provide practical skills in areas such as digital technologies, crafts, and service sectors. Science and technology centres introduce students to applied learning through coding, modelling, and interactive activities, which strengthen analytical thinking and problem-solving skills. Lifelong learning programmes address a wide range of topics, including social cohesion, cultural awareness, and civic engagement. Targeted support is provided to disadvantaged groups through language training, mentoring, and guidance services that facilitate integration into the education system.

Voices from the Field (Problem 4.1)

The predominance of central-level planning and authority in early childhood education, combined with the limited and unclear legal definition of municipalities' role in directly providing or financing education services, makes it difficult for municipalities to offer early childhood support, particularly in low-income neighbourhoods.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Municipalities are well placed to respond to local needs, but their role in education is limited due to unclear regulations and weak institutional recognition.
- A clearer framework is needed so that municipalities can contribute more effectively, especially in areas with high demand.
- Models that combine central standards with local implementation capacity should be developed.
- Alignment with national curricula should be maintained while municipalities support and expand service provision.
- Municipalities can play a complementary role through additional educational programmes that respond to emerging local needs beyond the formal curriculum.
- Operational responsibilities between central authorities and municipalities should be identified.
- Roles related to infrastructure, service provision, and resource allocation should be clarified to support continuity and quality.
- Alternative governance models should be considered, including arrangements where municipalities take a more active role in managing educational facilities while core educational functions remain under central oversight.
- Sustainability in service expansion should be taken into account.
- Expanding municipal involvement requires careful consideration of financial implications and resource allocation.

- Adequate funding mechanisms are necessary for long-term effectiveness.

Voices from the Field (Problem 4.2)

The absence of a binding legal framework and an institutional matching mechanism governing the pathway from training support to internships or on-the-job training and transition into employment in vocational education and skills development processes limits the ability of municipal training programmes to ensure sustained participation and generate employment outcomes for young people.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- The effectiveness of vocational education depends on a continuous pathway linking training to employment.
- Gaps between training provision, practical experience, and labour market entry weaken outcomes, especially for young people seeking stable jobs.
- A more integrated model is needed to improve long-term impact.
- Coordination among key stakeholders should be strengthened.
- Municipalities, central authorities, educational institutions, business organisations, and the private sector should work together within a common framework.
- Stronger collaboration is needed so that training programmes match labour market needs and support smoother transitions into employment.
- Institutional mechanisms that support this alignment should be developed.
- Joint platforms and shared funding arrangements should be created to support cooperation and long-term continuity.
- Common financing tools backed by multiple actors can help improve programme stability and resource use.
- The role of municipalities within the system should be clarified.
- Municipalities should have a stronger role in the transition from training to employment, and administrative processes should be simplified.
- Different types of vocational education should be distinguished to improve policy design and respond to specific needs.

Voices from the Field (Problem 4.3)

Collaboration between universities and municipalities often remains informal and dependent on personal relationships, as the lack of binding frameworks defining roles, responsibilities, and authority limits the use of academic knowledge and student projects in local education policies and implementation.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Collaboration potential is already high, but the lack of formal frameworks weakens continuity and reduces overall impact.
- Formal arrangements should be established to define roles and improve coordination beyond informal practices.
- Stable institutional links between universities and municipalities should be developed.
- Dedicated units or contact points should be created within universities to manage relations with municipalities.
- Coordinating bodies should be assigned for joint initiatives to address local priorities better.
- Multi-stakeholder coordination platforms should be developed to bring together universities, municipalities, and other actors.
- Such platforms can support project development in line with local needs and capacities.
- Incentives and funding mechanisms are important to sustain cooperation.
- Support schemes should focus on measurable results and practical outcomes.
- Stronger links between academic research and real-world application should be supported by suitable financial tools.
- Cooperation should be anchored within a broader policy framework.
- Universities should contribute more to local development while maintaining their autonomy.

SDG 5: GENDER EQUALITY

Addressing SDG 5 involves municipal programmes that enhance women's protection and enable their stronger presence in both social and economic spheres. Main areas of intervention include support mechanisms for individuals exposed to violence. Shelter services provide temporary accommodation for women and their children in situations where safety cannot be ensured. These facilities are complemented by psychosocial counselling, legal guidance, and case management services that aim to stabilise living conditions and support recovery. In parallel, dedicated support lines and digital tools enable rapid reporting and access to assistance.

Service delivery also focuses on strengthening the social and economic position of women through specific programmes. Training activities provide information on legal rights, health, and family relations, while vocational workshops support skill development in areas that can generate income. Community centres function as accessible platforms where women can participate in educational and social activities, receive counselling, and build support networks. Programmes addressing disadvantaged groups, including migrants and refugees, combine language training, social orientation, and individual support services.

Municipalities also implement measures that encourage participation in decision-making processes and promote awareness of gender equality. Training sessions and seminars introduce concepts related to equal participation, civic engagement, and representation in public life. Efforts to increase the presence of women in administrative and advisory roles are supported through capacity-building activities and mentoring. Public awareness campaigns use various communication channels to challenge existing social norms and promote equal roles in daily life. In addition, urban services such as transport, public spaces, and social facilities are increasingly designed to consider the needs of women, which affects accessibility and safety.

Voices from the Field (Problem 5.1)

Unclear roles, weak coordination, and the lack of common service standards across institutions make it difficult for municipalities to provide timely, consistent, and effective support to women facing violence.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Municipalities provide immediate support and protection, but unclear responsibilities and uneven service practices reduce their effectiveness.
- Institutional roles should be well established to improve coordination and continuity in service delivery.
- Cooperation between municipalities, central government bodies, and other public institutions should be strengthened.
- Closer coordination is needed to deliver accessible and timely support.
- Clear referral pathways and monitoring systems should be developed to prevent service gaps and provide consistent support.
- The capacity and quality of services should be improved.
- Common standards for shelters and counselling services should be introduced.
- Regular assessments of needs should guide services to adapt to changing conditions.
- Alternative or complementary service models should be developed to respond to different situations and improve effectiveness.
- Responsibilities across different administrative levels should be clarified.
- Roles between metropolitan and district municipalities should be distinguished to improve resource use and service delivery.
- Safety and protection measures should be integrated into all services.

Voices from the Field (Problem 5.2)

The lack of a clear and binding legal framework that integrates gender equality into municipal structures, planning, and budgeting leads to varied efforts and limits the consistent and effective implementation of equality policies.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Real progress in gender equality at the local level requires integrating this perspective into all municipal activities, not treating it as individual actions.
- The lack of a common approach leads to different efforts and weakens long-term policy impact.
- A more integrated model for gender equality should be developed.
- Planning and budgeting processes should be linked with gender equality goals.
- Gender-sensitive elements should be included in strategic plans and performance systems to improve accountability and focus.
- Budgeting practices should consider different needs to use resources more effectively and increase policy impact.
- Institutional capacity should be strengthened.
- Tools should be developed to support evidence-based decision-making.
- Gender-disaggregated data should be collected and used so that municipalities can better understand local conditions and design appropriate services.
- Gender equality should be reflected across all service areas, including urban planning and spatial development.



- Policies and services should be assessed from a gender-sensitive perspective using clear indicators and monitoring systems.
- Municipal capacity to prepare, implement, and monitor local equality action plans should be strengthened.

Voices from the Field (Problem 5.3)

In municipal programmes that support women's participation in economic life (such as cooperatives, entrepreneurship, and employment support) the limitations imposed by existing legislation on municipalities' ability to provide partnerships or financial support, along with the lack of clarity regarding the sustainable financing of care services, restrict municipalities' efforts to ensure women's long-term participation in employment.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Increasing women's participation in economic life requires a more supportive policy environment that addresses both employment and care needs together.
- Municipalities already play an important role in expanding access to economic opportunities, but regulatory limits and unclear implementation models reduce their effectiveness.
- Support tools for women's economic activities should be strengthened.
- Cooperative models and entrepreneurship opportunities should be expanded through simpler and more accessible arrangements.
- Municipalities should take a more active role in helping beneficiaries access external funding sources to support sustainability.
- Care services are a key factor in women's participation in the labour market.
- Economic programmes alone are not sufficient without reliable and affordable care infrastructure.
- Care services require long-term and financially viable models supported by both public institutions and private actors.
- Clearer guidance is needed at the local level.
- Municipalities need practical frameworks on how to design and implement programmes that support women's economic participation.
- The scope and definition of care services should be clarified in policy discussions so that interventions remain focused.

SDG 6: CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

The implementation of SDG 6 is linked to municipal responsibilities in water and sanitation, managed through infrastructure and operational systems. Drinking water supply is maintained through extensive distribution networks that ensure continuous access for households and public facilities. Water quality is monitored in line with national and international standards, and treatment processes are applied before distribution. In areas where network access is limited, alternative delivery methods such as water transport and storage facilities are used to maintain service continuity. Maintenance activities include regular inspection of pipelines, reservoirs, and distribution points to prevent losses and ensure system reliability.

Wastewater management constitutes another core service channel, with collection, treatment, and reuse systems operating at different scales. Sewerage networks transport wastewater to treatment facilities, where biological and advanced treatment methods are applied. A significant share of treated water is reused in irrigation, industrial processes, and maintenance of green areas, which supports water efficiency. Infrastructure investments also include the separation of stormwater and wastewater systems to reduce pressure on treatment capacity. Rainwater management is addressed through the construction and maintenance of drainage channels, which help prevent flooding and reduce surface runoff.

Municipal activities also focus on protecting water resources and promoting sustainable use. Protection measures include land-use controls and environmental monitoring in water basins to prevent pollution. Rehabilitation of rivers and streams reduces contamination and lowers flood risks, while also enabling the development of public spaces. Waste management practices, including recycling and hazardous waste collection, contribute to reducing water pollution. Public awareness programmes encourage water conservation and responsible consumption, particularly in regions exposed to water stress. In addition, coordination with other institutions supports integrated water management, including monitoring of groundwater resources and implementation of efficiency measures in agriculture and urban use.

Voices from the Field (Problem 6.1)

The lack of a coherent and unified legal framework on water, together with complex approval procedures and dispersed institutional arrangements, leads to delays in water and sewerage investments and limits the timely and coordinated delivery of services.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- The success of water and sanitation investments depends on a consistent institutional setup.
- Institutional capacity should be strengthened and service coverage should be expanded.
- The existing metropolitan organisational model (water and sewage administrations) should be expanded to all 81 provinces to support more consistent service delivery.
- The regulatory framework should be updated to clarify mandates and simplify procedures, improving coordination between central and local levels.
- Financing tools should be better linked with real investment priorities.
- Decision-making should rely more on data so that financial mechanisms reflect actual needs on the ground.
- National funding schemes should be strengthened, and access to international resources should be improved to accelerate investments and increase resilience.
- Operational planning and accountability need further attention.
- Clearer planning frameworks are needed to define responsibilities in advance and support more predictable implementation.
- Minimum investment levels should be introduced in budget structures to maintain continuity in essential services.
- Water and sanitation services should be approached from a rights-based perspective.
- Recognising these services as fundamental can support more consistent and fair policy development and reduce discretionary practices.
- Existing infrastructure should be upgraded, including treatment capacity and advanced systems, to build a more resilient and sustainable service system.

Voices from the Field (Problem 6.2)

Aging infrastructure in drinking water, sewerage, and wastewater systems, combined with high levels of water loss, leakage, and illegal use (such as unregistered consumption and unauthorised extraction) makes it difficult for municipalities to use existing water resources efficiently and to ensure service continuity and equitable access.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Improving efficiency in water systems requires addressing both infrastructure conditions and daily operations together.
- Aging networks, climate pressures, and changing demand reduce reliability and lead to high water losses.

- Investment in infrastructure renewal should be increased, supported by stronger and more predictable financial support from central authorities.
- Technology should be used more widely in system management.
- Automated monitoring and control systems can help detect losses quickly and improve performance.
- Digital tools and data-based management practices help operators respond faster and reduce inefficiencies.
- Sustainable water management practices should be promoted.
- Solutions such as water reuse and rainwater harvesting can reduce pressure on existing resources.
- Municipalities should have better access to financing for these investments.
- Control and enforcement mechanisms should be strengthened.
- Advanced technologies can help detect illegal use, and stronger inspection systems can reduce losses and support fair distribution.
- A national database on water losses and usage patterns should be developed to support better policy decisions.
- A stronger approach to system management is needed.
- Long-term planning models and international experience can support more resilient systems.
- Investments and operational practices should be improved to better respond to future challenges.

Voices from the Field (Problem 6.3)

The limited use of separate stormwater and sewerage systems, combined with weak integrated planning (such as insufficient stormwater networks and the absence of mandatory separation) leads to increased flooding and environmental health risks during periods of heavy rainfall, making it difficult for municipalities to maintain uninterrupted sanitation services.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Current systems are vulnerable due to limited separation of networks and weak long-term planning, especially under growing climate risks.
- These weaknesses increase pressure on municipal services during extreme weather events.
- Planning frameworks should be strengthened and linked with climate projections to improve resilience.
- Regulations need to be more precise to support stronger infrastructure systems.
- Mandatory separation between stormwater and wastewater networks should be introduced, especially in new urban developments.
- Such separation can reduce system overload and prevent backflow problems in dense urban areas.

- Long-term planning is essential for infrastructure decisions.
- Infrastructure planning should take into account future climate conditions and urban growth trends.
- Monitoring systems should be improved, and aging infrastructure should be renewed as a priority to maintain service reliability.
- Nature-based solutions should be used alongside conventional infrastructure to increase flexibility and reduce environmental pressure.
- These solutions should be integrated into investment planning.
- Expanding municipal responsibilities in this area requires clear legal mandates and sufficient financial support for effective implementation.

SDG 7: AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

Under SDG 7, municipalities provide services for accessing to energy services by maintaining infrastructure and improving efficiency in service provision. Electricity access is maintained across urban areas through distribution networks that support households, public facilities, and commercial activities. Natural gas infrastructure has expanded significantly, and municipalities facilitate network extension in newly developed or underserved areas. Maintenance activities include the replacement of outdated lighting systems, repair of faulty equipment, and upgrading of low-voltage lines to ensure stable energy supply. In addition, technical adjustments such as relocating energy infrastructure elements and undergrounding cables are carried out to improve safety and reduce service interruptions.

Energy efficiency and consumption management constitute another main service channel. Municipalities implement measures that reduce energy use in public services, including optimisation of lighting systems and improvements in operational efficiency. Infrastructure adjustments in service delivery systems, such as waste collection routes, contribute to fuel savings and lower energy consumption. Monitoring of energy demand trends supports planning for future capacity needs, particularly in response to increasing per capita consumption. In parallel, regulatory frameworks and technical standards guide the implementation of energy-efficient systems in buildings and urban infrastructure.

Municipal activities also support the transition to cleaner energy sources and long-term sustainability. Renewable energy applications, including solar and geothermal systems, are integrated into public facilities and local energy supply where feasible. Planning frameworks encourage the adoption of energy-efficient building standards and the use of certification systems that promote sustainable design. Training programmes and capacity-building activities support technical staff and stakeholders in implementing energy-efficient practices. In addition, coordination with relevant institutions enables the development of integrated energy solutions that respond to both urban demand and environmental considerations.

Voices from the Field (Problem 7.1)

Limitations related to production–consumption netting rules for solar power plants established by municipalities, along with restrictions on linking generation facilities to consumption points and low purchase prices applied to energy sales, constrain municipalities’ ability to use the energy they produce at scale within their own services and weaken the financial returns of renewable energy investments.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Current regulations reduce the effectiveness of municipal renewable energy investments.
- Netting rules and pricing mechanisms limit how municipalities use and benefit from the energy they produce.
- When surplus energy cannot be used efficiently or sold under fair conditions, incentives to expand capacity remain weak.
- Regulatory frameworks should be revised to make investments more attractive.
- More flexible operational models are needed.
- Self-consumption approaches can help municipalities match energy production with their own demand.
- Decentralised or independent systems can reduce reliance on grid limits and improve performance.
- Municipalities need more explicit authority and simpler procedures for energy production and distribution.
- Suitable organisational arrangements and easier legal processes related to energy use and sales should be developed.
- Better fiscal conditions for municipal energy use can improve financial sustainability.
- Technological solutions are important for improving system performance.
- Energy storage systems can help balance production and consumption by storing excess energy for later use.
- Storage solutions can improve efficiency and shorten payback periods for investments.

Voices from the Field (Problem 7.2)

Lengthy licensing, connection, and permitting processes, often split across multiple authorities in renewable energy investments, combined with grid constraints such as limited transformer capacity and connection priority rules, delay municipalities’ ability to operationalise energy generation projects and hinder efforts to strengthen local energy supply.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Procedural and technical barriers delay municipal renewable energy projects.
- Approval processes involve multiple institutions, creating uncertainty and slowing implementation.
- These delays reduce the overall impact of local energy initiatives.
- A more coordinated and faster system is needed to support project development.
- Approval procedures should be simplified.
- Licensing and permitting systems should be reviewed in a comprehensive way to reduce administrative burden.
- Relevant authorities should be brought into a single, coordinated process to improve predictability and efficiency.
- Grid capacity limitations are a major constraint.
- Existing infrastructure in many areas is not sufficient to connect new projects.
- Current prioritisation rules limit access to the grid.
- Grid capacity should be expanded, and more flexible connection models should be introduced.
- Decentralised energy systems can reduce reliance on the grid.
- Projects that include storage solutions can improve system flexibility.
- Different generation models should be supported, and financial mechanisms for municipalities should be strengthened to increase implementation capacity.



Voices from the Field (Problem 7.3)

The absence of a local data infrastructure based on household-level energy consumption and income data for identifying and targeting energy poverty makes it difficult for municipalities to accurately determine which households struggle to access electricity and heating in the context of rising energy costs, and to plan services and support in a fair and effective manner.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Tackling energy poverty requires a stronger data-based approach.
- Local authorities have difficulty identifying vulnerable households due to limited and unreliable data which limits the design of effective support measures.
- A more organised system for data collection and monitoring is needed.
- Data sharing between institutions should be improved.
- Access to consumption data from service providers should be arranged through formal agreements for consistency and reliability.
- A standard method to assess household income and expenditure should be developed to create a clear and comparable basis.
- Combining different data sources can provide a more accurate picture of household conditions.
- Linking administrative and financial data at the address level can help municipalities better understand local needs.
- Technological solutions should be used more widely.
- Automated systems in energy monitoring can improve efficiency and support faster decision-making.
- Municipalities should have a stronger role in self-consumption and decentralised energy models.

SDG 8: DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Local governments support SDG 8 by facilitating employment opportunities and shaping local economic conditions through regulatory and support functions. Main areas of intervention involves employment support services that connect job seekers with employers. Career centres and advisory units provide guidance on job search processes, including CV preparation, interview techniques, and workplace expectations. Individuals are assessed based on their skills and directed to suitable employment opportunities. In parallel, municipalities conduct labour market analyses to identify local demand and skill gaps, which informs the design of targeted training programmes.

Another key channel focuses on skills development and workforce integration, particularly for youth, women, and disadvantaged groups. Vocational training programmes are organised in cooperation with employers with market needs. These programmes cover both technical skills and soft skills such as communication and workplace adaptation. Training activities also include digital competencies and emerging fields to respond to changing economic conditions. Entrepreneurship support mechanisms provide guidance on business development, project management, and access to resources. In some cases, cooperative models and small-scale production initiatives are encouraged to support income generation.

Municipal activities also include regulatory and supportive measures that affect the local business environment. Licensing and inspection processes ensure that businesses operate within legal and safety standards, while also enabling the formalisation of informal economic activities. Business inventories and monitoring systems provide data on sectoral distribution, employment levels, and production capacity. Support is also provided to improve access to financial services, including facilitation of payment systems and cooperation with financial institutions. In addition, tourism and cultural activities are used as tools to generate economic activity and employment at the local level.

Voices from the Field (Problem 8.1)

Employment and entrepreneurship support for young people and women are largely based on short-term, project-based funding, making it difficult for municipalities to establish long-term incentive structures, monitoring systems, and mechanisms that generate sustainable employment outcomes.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Sustainable employment outcomes cannot be achieved through short-term measures alone.
- Temporary funding cycles interrupt continuity and make it difficult for municipalities to track results and build on past efforts.
- Longer-term support arrangements are needed to improve impact and sustainability.
- Cooperation among municipalities, central government, the private sector, and civil society should be strengthened.
- Closer coordination can create more complete employment pathways.
- Vocational training should be linked more directly with labour market demand to support access to stable jobs.
- Employment policies should be in line with local labour market conditions.

- Programmes should be based on regular assessments of regional needs, supported by reliable data.
- Data exchange between national and local levels should be improved to strengthen planning and accuracy.
- The role of municipalities within provincial coordination mechanisms should be increased to improve alignment across policy areas.
- Medium-term budgeting approaches should be adopted to provide a more stable basis for inclusive employment programmes.

Voices from the Field (Problem 8.2)

The absence of regulatory provisions that prioritise procurement from local SMEs, producers, and cooperatives in municipal purchasing processes limits municipalities' ability to revitalise local value chains and generate sustainable employment.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Public procurement can play a much stronger role in supporting local economic development.
- Current regulations limit how municipalities use procurement to support local producers.
- Local value chains are not fully used, and opportunities for stable employment are missed.
- A more flexible policy environment is needed so that municipalities can prioritise local sourcing when appropriate.
- Evaluation criteria should consider the contribution of local producers to improve their access to tenders.
- Transparency and open competition should be maintained to support fairness and long-term market balance.
- Local producers and cooperatives face capacity challenges in meeting procurement requirements.
- Many local actors have difficulty engaging with public institutions.
- Cooperation among local actors should be strengthened, and their organisational capacity should be improved.
- Procurement practices should be linked with broader economic and social objectives.
- Municipal purchasing decisions can be used more strategically to support local development outcomes.
- Clearer frameworks are needed to guide implementation while maintaining efficiency, accountability, and equal access.

Voices from the Field (Problem 8.3)

The restrictive and open-to-interpretation nature of regulations governing municipal authority, revenue-sharing, and financial frameworks in the use of tools such as incubation centres, co-working spaces, and direct grants, microcredit, or financial incentives for local businesses limits municipalities' ability to scale support for entrepreneurship, particularly for young people and women.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- The regulatory environment for municipalities should be improved.
- Current rules limit how local authorities design and apply support instruments, reducing flexibility and impact.
- Financial regulations should be updated, and municipal roles should be properly outlined.
- Cooperation between municipalities and business organisations should be strengthened.
- Joint platforms can offer workspace, mentoring, and advisory services in a more organised way.
- These partnerships can improve access to resources and create a more supportive environment for entrepreneurs.
- Specific financial tools are needed at the municipal level.
- Municipalities should be allowed to provide small-scale financial support within a clear legal framework.
- Such support can expand opportunities, especially for young people and women, and make systems more inclusive.
- The private sector should play a stronger role.
- Partnerships with private actors can bring funding and expertise. This collaboration can support the long-term sustainability of entrepreneurship support systems.

SDG 9: INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

SDG 9 is implemented at the municipal level through investments in infrastructure and digital systems that strengthen local economic activity. Service areas involve the construction and maintenance of urban infrastructure that enables production and service delivery. Road networks, sidewalks, and public facilities are developed and regularly maintained to support mobility and economic activity. Investments in water supply, irrigation systems, and social infrastructure such as health and education facilities contribute to improving living conditions and enabling economic participation. Maintenance and rehabilitation works are carried out based on demand and usage patterns to keep infrastructure remains functional and responsive to population growth.

Another key channel focuses on strengthening the business environment and supporting small-scale enterprises. Municipalities facilitate access to financial resources by providing information, guidance, and administrative support to businesses seeking credit or public incentives. During periods of economic disruption, such as the pandemic, businesses are supported in accessing available financial instruments through digital platforms and advisory services. Licensing and registration processes contribute to formalising economic activities, while data collection systems provide data on sectoral distribution and employ-

ment patterns. In parallel, digital literacy programmes and e-commerce training support businesses in adapting to changing market conditions.

Municipal involvement also extends to expanding access to information and communication technologies and promoting innovation. Broadband infrastructure is developed in cooperation with relevant institutions to ensure stable and widespread internet access. Public spaces, transport systems, and social facilities are equipped with wireless connectivity to support daily use. In addition, innovation-oriented programmes create platforms where businesses, institutions, and entrepreneurs can interact and develop solutions to operational challenges. Training activities in digital technologies and applied fields support skill development and encourage the adoption of new methods in production and service delivery.

Voices from the Field (Problem 9.1)

The absence of a binding joint planning and data-sharing system among municipalities, infrastructure operators, and private sector actors in excavation, maintenance, and repair works related to transport, drinking water, sewerage, energy, and telecommunications infrastructure leads to repeated excavations, delays in investments, and inefficient use of public resources, making it difficult for municipalities to manage infrastructure in an integrated manner.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Weak coordination and poor planning reduce the efficiency of infrastructure management.
- When institutions act without a common system, the same areas are reopened, costs rise, and services are interrupted.
- A binding planning approach is needed to bring all actors into a single coordinated framework.
- Regular coordination should be supported through formal mechanisms.
- Municipalities, infrastructure operators, and other stakeholders should meet on defined platforms to prepare medium-term plans and monitor investments together.
- Joint planning improves coordination of work schedules and reduce duplication.
- Digital tools should be used to improve coordination.
- Integrated systems with real-time information on permits, maintenance works, and technical issues can increase transparency and speed up operations.
- Working within a common digital environment can support more coordinated and timely decisions.
- Data management should be improved.
- A national framework based on common standards can support consistency and data sharing between institutions.

- Communication between stakeholders should be strengthened.
- Infrastructure planning should be given greater priority in new development areas to improve overall performance.

Voices from the Field (Problem 9.2)

The lack of clear roles and responsibilities in legislation between municipalities, central authorities, and organised industrial zone (OIZ) administrations in transport, logistics, and infrastructure investments between industrial areas and city centres delays project approval and implementation processes which delays the timely development of local industrial infrastructure.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Unclear institutional roles slow down planning and implementation, especially in projects with multiple stakeholders.
- Without a clear framework, decision-making becomes more complex and infrastructure investments in industrial areas lose efficiency.
- A governance model with distinct responsibilities is needed to support smoother coordination.
- Effective coordination requires bringing key actors into a common process.
- Formal platforms should connect municipalities, central authorities, and industrial zone administrations to improve communication and consistency.
- Planning processes should be better integrated.
- Transport and infrastructure investments should follow a common timeline and agreed plans.
- Standards for infrastructure and accessibility should be set at early stages of industrial development to avoid future constraints.
- Existing regulatory frameworks lack clarity on roles and responsibilities, creating uncertainty and weakening accountability.
- Legislation should be revised, and coordination units within central institutions should be established to improve alignment and delivery.

Voices from the Field (Problem 9.3)

The lack of standardisation and integration among software and data infrastructures used in urban information systems, digital municipal services, and smart mobility applications across different municipalities within the same province makes it difficult for municipalities to monitor and prioritise infrastructure, industry, and transport investments within a unified spatial and economic planning framework.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Different digital systems make it difficult for municipalities to manage urban development in a coordinated way.
- If systems are not integrated and standards are not in place, data sharing is restricted and planning is weakened.
- A more integrated digital ecosystem is needed to support data-based decision-making.
- Common frameworks at the national level should be set to improve compatibility between systems.
- A common data infrastructure supported by central institutions can help municipalities work within a connected system.
- Local systems should remain flexible so that municipalities can adapt solutions to their own needs while following common standards.
- Coordination challenges exist within local government structures.
- Better integration between metropolitan and district municipalities can improve consistency in planning and service delivery.
- Monitoring and coordination tools should be placed across different levels to support tracking of investments and management within a unified system.
- Collaborative digital solutions can bring important benefits.
- Common platforms can allow municipalities to work on a joint system while keeping the ability to customise applications.

SDG 10: REDUCED INEQUALITIES

Reducing inequalities, as framed in SDG 10, is addressed through municipal services that prioritise disadvantaged groups and improve access conditions. Social support mechanisms are designed to reach individuals who face economic, physical, or social barriers. Financial assistance, home-based care, and psychosocial support services are provided to individuals with disabilities and elderly populations who require regular support. Home visits include personal care, cleaning, and basic health monitoring which keep maintain daily living conditions stable. In parallel, information services raise awareness of legal rights and available support mechanisms, enabling individuals to access public services more effectively.

Strengthening social inclusion across diverse population groups is another area of municipal engagement. Municipalities organise social and cultural activities that bring together individuals from diverse backgrounds, including local residents and migrant populations. Activities include community events, training sessions, and group-based programmes that aim to reduce social distance and improve interaction. Support services for migrants cover areas such as education, health access, legal counselling, and language training. Dedicated service centres provide integrated support, enabling individuals to access multiple services within a sin-

gle structure. In addition, awareness programmes are implemented to address negative perceptions and improve social cohesion.

Through institutional arrangements and policy-based initiatives, municipalities support equal access and rights-oriented service provision.” Administrative processes are increasingly structured around inclusive service principles, ensuring that different groups can access services without discrimination. Monitoring and evaluation systems are used to assess service coverage and identify gaps in access. In parallel, targeted programmes support income generation and social participation for disadvantaged groups, including small-scale production initiatives and skill development activities.

Voices from the Field (Problem 10.1)

Temporary workers, seasonal agricultural workers, and undocumented migrants are often not properly recorded in the address-based national system, and since municipalities have limited authority to create alternative data systems, they struggle to provide timely and fair access to services such as social assistance, housing, health, and education.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Gaps in population data reduce the effectiveness of local services, especially for mobile and vulnerable groups.
- Incomplete or outdated records prevent municipalities from identifying needs accurately and allocating resources on time.
- Registration systems should be strengthened, and data reliability should be improved.
- Coordination between local actors and central systems should be improved.
- Working with community representatives can help correct inconsistencies in address-based records and improve data accuracy.



- Stronger data-sharing arrangements between institutions can support a more complete and responsive information system.
- Additional tools are needed to more accurately understand mobile populations.
- Systems that track movement patterns and employment conditions can support municipalities respond more effectively.
- Employers should provide accurate workforce data to support correct information flows.
- Cooperation in service provision should be strengthened.
- Municipalities should work more closely with public service providers, especially in health and social services, to support continuity.
- Resource allocation models should be adjusted to show real population dynamics and improve fairness in funding and service access.

Voices from the Field (Problem 10.2)

The absence of mandatory reassessment and monitoring mechanisms that regularly update the socio-economic status of beneficiaries of social assistance programmes leads to misallocation of support and creates perceptions of unfairness in access to services.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- The performance and credibility of social assistance systems depend on accurate and regularly updated data.
- Weak or irregular reassessment makes it difficult for support to reach the right beneficiaries.
- Periodic evaluation processes should be introduced.
- Data integration across institutions should be strengthened.
- A comprehensive social assistance database that municipalities can access should be developed.
- Data systems should be updated regularly and work together across institutions.
- Linking different administrative data sources can provide a more consistent and realistic view of socio-economic conditions.
- Procedures should be more transparent.
- Application and evaluation processes should be standardised across the country to reduce inconsistencies and improve accountability.
- Advanced analytical tools can support more accurate assessments and better decision-making.
- Individual responsibility plays an important role in maintaining data quality.
- Beneficiaries should provide accurate and up-to-date information, supported by appropriate regulatory measures.
- Improving data reliability can strengthen trust in the overall system.

Voices from the Field (Problem 10.3)

The lack of sustainable central financing and an effective oversight framework to ensure the implementation of accessibility standards for persons with disabilities and the elderly in public spaces, public transport, and municipal services makes it difficult for municipalities to expand accessibility investments and ensure equality in service provision.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- A stronger governance framework is needed to improve accessibility in urban services.
- Municipalities are responsible for implementation, but limited financial resources and weak monitoring systems restrict their capacity.
- Funding structures should be improved, and oversight mechanisms should be strengthened for more consistent implementation.
- Coordination across different levels of governance should be improved.
- Inclusive urban strategies supported by action plans can provide a stronger basis for accessibility policies.
- Regular evaluations with relevant stakeholders can support progress tracking and improve accountability.
- Service models should reflect diverse needs.
- Differentiated approaches in public transport and service delivery can improve accessibility for different population groups.
- Central institutions should strengthen their role in assisting municipalities in addressing the needs of ageing populations.
- Accessibility should be integrated into broader social and health policies.
- Linking accessibility measures with preventive and care services can improve overall effectiveness.
- The role of local authorities within the wider system should be clarified to improve coordination and service outcomes.

SDG 11: SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Urban development policies form the core of SDG 11, where municipalities manage housing, infrastructure, and spatial planning processes. Municipal intervention involves the transformation of existing building stock to improve structural safety and compliance with planning regulations. Risk assessments identify buildings that do not meet safety standards, followed by demolition, reconstruction, or rehabilitation processes. Licensing procedures ensure that new constructions comply with technical and legal requirements, while field inspections monitor unregistered development. Financial support mechanisms, including rent assistance during redevelopment, enable residents to remain within the formal housing system. In parallel, land and property-related administra-

tive services facilitate ownership registration and resolve long-standing tenure issues, which supports planned urban development and reduces informality.

Urban mobility and accessibility constitute another main service channel. Municipalities expand and maintain road networks, sidewalks, and traffic systems to improve safety and reduce congestion. Public transport services are extended through route expansion and increased service frequency, supported by investments in rail systems and intermodal connections. Accessibility measures include tactile paving, adapted crossings, and infrastructure adjustments that support individuals with limited mobility. In addition, green spaces and recreational areas are developed and upgraded to improve environmental quality and provide accessible public areas. Design standards consider different age groups and user needs, including child-friendly and barrier-free features.

Municipal activities also address environmental sustainability, cultural heritage, and disaster preparedness within urban systems. Waste management practices include collection, separation, and recycling systems that reduce environmental impact. Air quality improvement measures and green infrastructure investments contribute to healthier urban environments. Cultural heritage is preserved through restoration, site management, and integration into tourism and local development strategies. Disaster risk reduction is addressed through preparedness planning, public awareness activities, and the establishment of response infrastructure such as emergency coordination centres and training facilities.

Voices from the Field (Problem 11.1)

From the perspective of financing sustainable urbanisation investments, the fact that fixed taxes and fees defined under the Municipal Revenues Law No. 2464 have not been updated for many years limits municipalities' capacity to carry out green space development, urban regeneration, disaster risk reduction, and infrastructure investments in an equitable and continuous manner.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- There is a growing mismatch between municipal revenue systems and current economic realities.
- Existing fee structures are outdated and lack flexibility, which limits stable revenue generation for long-term investments.
- The legal framework should be updated to strengthen financial sustainability and support urban development.
- Revenue mechanisms should be more adaptive and based on data.
- Automatic adjustment tools linked to economic indicators can improve stability and fairness.

- Valuation models based on factors such as location, infrastructure access, and urban characteristics can improve efficiency and equity.
- Financial legislation is complex and should be simplified to reduce administrative burden.
- Municipalities should have some flexibility to adjust rates within defined limits to better respond to local conditions.
- Funding options should be expanded.
- Access to national and international financial sources should be improved, and barriers in credit and grant systems should be reduced.
- Alternative financing models involving citizens and private actors can support project-based investments and increase local ownership.
- Capacity in revenue management should be strengthened.
- Data integration, digital collection systems, and financial monitoring processes should be improved to assist municipalities to mobilise resources more effectively.

Voices from the Field (Problem 11.2)

The lack of coordination between municipalities and other competent authorities in zoning plans, urban regeneration, and disaster risk reduction processes disrupts planning coherence, leading to delays in transformation projects and the prolonged existence of high-risk building stock.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Institutional processes are not well coordinated, which weakens urban transformation and risk reduction efforts.
- When planning is not coordinated, projects develop inconsistently and implementation slows, especially when multiple agencies are involved.
- A precise coordination framework is needed to improve coherence and timely delivery.
- Medium- and long-term investment plans should follow a common timeline to identify overlaps and conflicts early.
- Coordination improves predictability and support more efficient use of resources.
- Permanent coordination bodies should be established to oversee planning and transformation processes.
- Mandatory consultation and joint evaluation steps should be included in decision-making to improve consistency and accountability.
- Digital tools should be used to improve transparency and monitoring.
- Systems that track planning decisions and risk reduction measures can strengthen oversight and reduce uncertainty.

- Advanced modelling tools can support decision-making by testing different urban transformation scenarios.
- Delays in approval processes are a major constraint.
- Response timelines and mechanisms to prevent prolonged inaction should be introduced.
- Procedural efficiency should be improved to support smoother implementation.

Voices from the Field (Problem 11.3)

The absence of land allocation mechanisms dedicated to municipalities for affordable housing limits their capacity to intervene effectively in meeting housing needs.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Limited access to land is a major barrier to expanding affordable housing at the local level.
- Municipalities face constraints when they cannot effectively use publicly owned land.
- A more transparent and accessible land allocation system is needed to strengthen local action.
- Coordination between municipalities and central institutions should be improved.
- Legal arrangements can make access to public land easier while supporting efficient use of resources.
- Safeguards should be in place to prevent speculative gains and keep social objectives central in housing policies.
- Implementation models should be expanded through cooperation.
- Partnerships between municipalities and national housing institutions can increase production capacity.
- Cooperative-based approaches can diversify housing supply when supported by clear legal and financial frameworks.
- Land management practices should be improved.
- Comprehensive land inventories can help municipalities plan better and use resources more effectively.
- Partnership models involving public, private, and local actors can strengthen development processes.
- Maintaining public ownership while allowing municipalities to coordinate projects offers a balanced approach for long-term sustainability.

SDG 12: RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

For SDG 12, municipalities organise waste management practices and promote more responsible consumption patterns at the local level. Services include collection, transport, and processing of municipal waste.

Household waste is collected regularly and transferred to designated facilities where it is consolidated and transported to final disposal sites. To improve efficiency, transfer stations reduce transportation distances and operational costs. In parallel, municipalities operate waste reception centres where recyclable materials such as paper, plastic, glass, textiles, and batteries are collected separately. Additional collection points, including street-level containers and mobile units, expand access and encourage separation at source.

Waste reduction and the expansion of recycling practices are pursued through both regulatory frameworks and operational actions. Municipalities establish collection systems for specific waste streams, including packaging materials, waste oils, tyres, and hazardous items, which require controlled handling. Agreements with businesses describe responsibilities for waste collection and cost-sharing so that commercial activities are integrated into the system. In many cases, municipalities develop their own collection and sorting capacity, allowing direct control over recycling processes. Monitoring systems track quantities of collected waste and recycling performance, which supports planning and optimisation.

Service delivery is further supported by awareness-raising initiatives and programmes aimed at encouraging behavioural change. Municipalities organise campaigns, training sessions, and community events that promote waste separation, recycling, and environmental responsibility. Educational activities target schools, households, and workplaces, using materials such as brochures, visual content, and on-site demonstrations. Collection campaigns for items such as batteries, textiles, and reusable goods reinforce participation and increase recovery rates. In addition, initiatives that redirect usable goods to other users contribute to extending product lifecycles and reducing consumption.

Voices from the Field (Problem 12.1)

The absence of enforceable legal regulations that make source separation of waste mandatory for households, workplaces, and commercial establishments weakens municipalities' capacity to implement separate collection systems and increase recycling rates in practice.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Stronger regulation is needed to improve waste management results, especially at the source level.
- Voluntary practices do not lead to sufficient separation rates.
- Municipalities often lack the authority to apply consistent systems.
- Binding rules are needed so that waste separation becomes a standard practice.
- Enforcement and accountability are main issues.

- Municipalities should have authority to monitor compliance and take action when needed.
- Well-defined procedures and stronger oversight can support real behavioural change.
- Long-term change should be supported through complementary measures.
- Waste separation and circular economy concepts should be integrated into education systems.
- Incentive schemes that increase the economic value of separated waste can encourage wider participation.
- Infrastructure and institutional capacity should be strengthened.
- National support for recycling systems should be expanded.
- Public institutions should set an example in waste management practices.
- Coordination between central and local levels should be strengthened to support consistent and scalable implementation.

Voices from the Field (Problem 12.2)

The absence of a revenue-sharing mechanism that secures the direct and transparent transfer of income generated from the “waste economy” (including chain retailers, packaging waste, and licensed recycling companies) to municipalities makes it difficult for municipalities to sustainably finance recycling and zero-waste investments.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- The financial balance of recycling systems is a concern, especially in how revenues are distributed.
- Municipalities carry major operational responsibilities but receive only a limited share of recycling value.
- More organised revenue-sharing model is needed to strengthen local investment capacity.
- Producers and large market actors should take greater responsibility for the waste they generate.
- Actors that generate more waste should also contribute financially to the system.
- Large retail chains often sell valuable recyclable waste directly to authorised companies.
- Municipalities are left to manage lower-value or non-recyclable waste, which increases their financial burden.
- Contribution mechanisms based on the volume of waste generated by large actors should be introduced.
- Such mechanisms can create a fairer distribution of costs and support municipal operational and investment needs.
- Revenue flows from recycling should be formalised within a clear legal framework.
- Municipalities should have predictable and direct access to recy-

cling income to support financial planning and long-term investments.

- Central support programmes should be strengthened to complement local resources and speed up infrastructure development.
- Cooperation with the private sector should be strengthened.
- Partnerships with major retailers and producers can improve efficiency and overall system performance.

Voices from the Field (Problem 12.3)

The absence of a national regulatory framework that mandates the systematic collection and reuse of food waste generated in marketplaces, restaurants, and households (such as for composting or animal feed) limits municipalities' ability to develop comprehensive practices to reduce food waste.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

A compulsory approach is needed to reduce food waste across sectors.

- Voluntary practices do not provide enough consistency, and municipalities struggle to build integrated collection and reuse systems.
- Clear obligations should be introduced for major waste-generating sectors to improve system performance.
- Collection systems should be better designed.
- Dedicated and well-organised infrastructure can make it easier to separate food waste at the source and increase participation.
- Treatment options should be expanded beyond basic methods to extract more value from collected waste.
- Food waste should be integrated into circular economy practices.
- Converting organic waste into energy or other usable outputs can reduce environmental impacts and create additional benefits.
- Regional facilities should be developed, and outputs should be linked with municipal services to support long-term sustainability.
- Economic tools can influence behaviour.
- Pricing models based on the amount of waste generated can encourage good practices.
- Incentive mechanisms, such as reduced fees for compliant behaviour, can increase participation and strengthen the impact of regulations.

SDG 13: CLIMATE ACTION

Climate action under SDG 13 is pursued through local planning processes and initiatives that enhance resilience to environmental risks. Development of climate action plans based on risk assessments and

environmental data is one of the main lines of combat and adaptation. Municipal units collect and analyse information on greenhouse gas emissions, ecological footprint, and local climate vulnerabilities to guide decision-making. Climate projections related to temperature increases, reduced precipitation, and extreme weather events are used to identify priority intervention areas. Dedicated administrative units coordinate climate-related initiatives and maintain the planning and implementation processes.

Climate-related disaster preparedness and risk reduction constitute an important dimension of municipal action. Municipalities establish response teams and operational units to address risks such as floods, heatwaves, and water scarcity. Early warning systems, monitoring tools, and emergency response mechanisms are developed to reduce the impact of extreme events. Training programmes focusing on households, students, and community groups improve awareness of disaster risks and preparedness actions. Volunteer systems and digital platforms are used to expand participation and strengthen local response capacity. In parallel, infrastructure monitoring systems enable real-time tracking of critical resources such as water networks, which supports efficient management and timely interventions.

Municipal interventions also contribute to mitigation efforts and sustainable resource management at the sectoral level. Water management systems are upgraded to improve efficiency, including the adoption of controlled irrigation methods and digital monitoring technologies. Agricultural practices are adapted to climate conditions by promoting crops and production methods that require less water. Green infrastructure investments, including the expansion of urban green areas and ecological corridors, support temperature regulation and carbon absorption. Public awareness programmes promote behavioural change related to energy use, water conservation, and environmental protection.

Voices from the Field (Problem 13.1)

The absence of a wider legal framework that defines the roles, responsibilities, and authorities of municipalities in combating climate change makes it difficult for municipalities to carry out climate action in a consistent and accountable manner across the planning–implementation–monitoring cycle.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Local climate action depends on a governance framework supported by binding rules.
- Without a comprehensive framework, practices remain inconsistent and municipalities struggle to apply policies in a measurable way.
- The legal and institutional basis of municipal responsibilities should be strengthened to improve accountability and coherence.

- Coordination between different levels of governance is a key issue.
- Formal coordination bodies can support the alignment of local and national strategies and improve policy coherence.
- Local climate action plans should be integrated into national frameworks and prepared and implemented on a regular basis.
- Monitoring and data systems should be strengthened.
- Reliable indicators, open data platforms, and integrated monitoring tools can support progress tracking and decision-making.
- Continuous tracking systems can improve transparency and policy effectiveness.
- Scientific and technical capacity should be strengthened.
- Cooperation with academic institutions can support evidence-based policymaking and improve local strategies.
- Locally adapted solutions and knowledge exchange between municipalities can support innovation and wider use of good practices.
- Financial alignment is important.
- Funding mechanisms should reflect climate objectives and support local implementation.
- Performance-based tools and better access to financial resources can help municipalities carry out their plans more effectively.

Voices from the Field (Problem 13.2)

The lack of clear local funding and revenue models that enable municipalities to access long-term climate finance for mitigation investments (such as public transport transformation, electric vehicle infrastructure, building energy efficiency, and green spaces) limits the scaling of low-carbon transition efforts.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Scaling local climate investments depends on a well-organised and diversified financing system linking municipal action with national and international sources.
- A framework is needed that provides stable and predictable access to finance.
- Dedicated resources from the central budget should be allocated, and access to international climate funds should be improved.
- Municipal capacity should be strengthened in areas such as carbon markets, climate planning, and project certification.
- Financial instruments should respond to local conditions.
- National financing platforms, including a local climate investment mechanism, should be developed.
- Risk-reducing tools such as credit guarantee schemes should be introduced.
- Green bonds and carbon pricing revenues can provide long-term municipal income.

- Emission reductions from projects like renewable energy and urban forestry can be linked to voluntary carbon markets to expand revenue options.
- Data and digital tools play an important role in financial planning.
- Digital twin systems and standardised project pipelines can support better evaluation of investment priorities and returns.
- A national pool of standardised climate projects should be created to improve coordination and access to funding.
- Green budgeting practices should be integrated into municipal systems to link financial decisions with climate objectives.
- Local initiatives should follow national climate targets across short, medium, and long-term priorities.
- Ongoing coordination, transparent data exchange, and stronger integration across governance levels are needed.

Voices from the Field (Problem 13.3)

The absence of standardised, mandatory, and regular data-sharing mechanisms for environmental, climate, and disaster-related information across institutions limits municipalities' planning capacity.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Effective local planning depends on data availability, consistency, and interoperability across institutions.
- Disconnected data systems and irregular data flows limit evidence-based decisions and reduce preparedness.
- A national data governance framework should be created with standard templates and data-sharing rules.
- Access to local datasets through a national GIS should be provided, and GIS should become a standard tool in all municipalities.
- Different data domains such as environmental, climate, health, and disaster data should be analysed together.
- These datasets are interlinked and should be processed jointly to support early warning and intervention.
- Local vulnerability and risk maps should be developed through cooperation between institutions.
- Expert bodies should support the conversion of raw data into practical insights.
- Sectoral datasets, including public health data, should be connected to improve responsiveness to climate-related risks and support preventive planning.
- Open and accessible data ecosystems should be developed.
- A national open data platform should be created with clear legal update cycles to support transparency and continuity.
- Local open data portals should complement national systems and support cooperation with universities, civil society, and the private sector.

- Real-time monitoring systems should be strengthened.
- Integrated monitoring environments should combine data such as weather, air quality, and water levels in a single system.
- A central command and coordination setup can support timely data flow and automated alerts.
- Citizen participation through voluntary reporting tools can enrich local data and improve situational awareness.

SDG 14: LIFE BELOW WATER

Although their role is often indirect, municipalities contribute to SDG 14 by limiting pollution and supporting the protection of water ecosystems. Reduction of land-based waste that could eventually reach marine environments is one of the municipal service line. Waste management systems are structured to minimise the volume of disposed materials through collection, separation, and recycling processes. By reducing the amount of waste sent to disposal sites, municipalities limit the risk of environmental leakage into water systems. In addition, industrial waste streams are monitored, and efforts are made to promote recycling and controlled use of materials that could otherwise harm ecosystems.

Municipal efforts in this field concentrate on improving resource efficiency and regulating environmentally sensitive production activities. Municipalities cooperate with relevant institutions and industry representatives to encourage the reuse and recycling of raw materials used in production. Measures targeting industrial inputs, such as reducing the use of extractive materials and improving recovery processes, contribute to lowering environmental risks. These interventions also reduce transport-related emissions by limiting the need for raw material extraction and long-distance supply. Monitoring and regulatory mechanisms ensure compliance with environmental standards, particularly in sectors where production processes generate waste that can affect soil and water quality.

Awareness campaigns and coordination mechanisms also play a role in sustainable consumption and environmental responsibility. Public campaigns promote waste reduction, recycling, and responsible disposal practices among households and businesses. Educational activities target different population groups, including students, to build long-term awareness of environmental protection. In areas connected to food systems and consumption, efforts are made to reduce waste and improve resource use efficiency, which contributes to lowering overall environmental impact.

Voices from the Field (Problem 14.1)

Overlapping mandates between municipalities and central authorities in monitoring wastewater discharges and marine pollution from vessels and facilities lead to inconsistent enforcement and unaddressed viola-

tions, thereby weakening municipalities' capacity to protect marine and coastal ecosystems.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Different authority structures in coastal and marine governance create operational gaps that weaken environmental protection.
- Unclear roles lead to duplication in some areas and inaction in others.
- A clear legal allocation of roles among municipalities, ministries, coast guard units, and port authorities is needed for consistent and accountable enforcement.
- Municipal authority in inspection and sanctioning should be strengthened so that local actors can respond more effectively to violations.
- An integrated monitoring and enforcement system supported by advanced technologies should be developed.
- Tools such as remote sensing, sensor networks, and satellite observation can support continuous detection of marine pollution, including wastewater discharges.
- Data systems should operate within a common digital environment so that information is collected, processed, and shared in real time across institutions.
- A common marine pollution monitoring platform should be established to improve coordination and support timely intervention.
- Enforcement strategies are needed, especially in high-pressure coastal areas.
- In touristic regions, inspection programmes should be more frequent and coordinated, covering hotels, marinas, and recreational vessels.
- Data sharing and joint operational planning between institutions should support these inspection efforts.
- Monitoring results should be communicated, and follow-up actions should be carried out to maintain environmental standards.
- Current sanctioning processes are often slow and lack deterrence.
- Administrative procedures should be accelerated, and penalty frameworks should be strengthened to improve compliance.

Voices from the Field (Problem 14.2)

In coastal municipalities, the high investment and operational costs of advanced biological wastewater treatment plants, combined with insufficient central budget and grant support mechanisms, lead to either the non-establishment of such facilities or their underutilisation, thereby increasing marine and coastal pollution and making it difficult for municipalities to maintain environmental quality.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- The financial burden of advanced wastewater treatment infrastructure is a major constraint for coastal municipalities.
- High-standard treatment facilities are needed, but limited and unstable financing leads to delays or weak operation of existing plants.
- A national support mechanism with stable and predictable funding is needed to cover both investment and operating costs.
- Dedicated budget programmes for advanced treatment facilities should be created to support both construction and long-term operation.
- Revenue sources for environmental infrastructure should be diversified.
- In tourism-intensive areas, local financial tools such as environmental contribution fees and carbon-related charges can support funding.
- Revenues from polluting activities should be redirected to wastewater treatment investments.
- Income from environmental penalties can be used for infrastructure development to strengthen both compliance and investment capacity.
- Access to international development finance is important.
- Procedures for accessing development banks and similar institutions should be simplified.
- Institutional capacity should be strengthened to prepare strong project proposals and manage application processes.
- Coordination between municipalities and central authorities should be improved to support access to external funding.
- Stronger inspection and enforcement systems are needed so that investments lead to clear environmental improvements.

Voices from the Field (Problem 14.3)

The development of tourism, construction, and commercial activities in coastal areas in ways that are inconsistent with zoning plans, along with legal and administrative barriers faced by municipalities in removing illegal structures that violate coastal boundary regulations, increases the degradation of coastal ecosystems and limits municipalities' capacity to manage coastal areas in line with the public interest.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Uncontrolled and non-compliant development in coastal areas harms ecological balance and limits public access.
- Gaps between planning rules and actual practices make enforcement difficult, especially when illegal structures remain for long periods.
- Administrative and legal procedures for demolition and sanctions should be strengthened and accelerated.
- Faster and stronger enforcement can restore confidence in planning

- systems.
- Policy inconsistencies weaken regulatory efforts.
 - Practices that later legalise illegal developments should be avoided, as they encourage further violations.
 - The authority of municipalities over service provision, such as water and electricity connections to non-compliant buildings, should be clarified.
 - Limiting access to services for illegal buildings can help reduce unlawful construction.
 - Environmentally sensitive coastal areas should be protected.
 - Vulnerable zones should be given clear protection status and strict development restrictions.
 - Natural features such as forests and coastal vegetation should be preserved to maintain ecosystem resilience.
 - Restoration and reforestation in degraded coastal areas should be supported as part of long-term environmental management.

SDG 15: LIFE ON LAND

SDG 15 is addressed through municipal services that safeguard natural areas and promote sustainable land use practices. Rehabilitation of natural habitats, including forests, steppe ecosystems, and protected natural areas are main areas of municipal action. Risk assessments identify pressures such as urban expansion, fire risk, and human-induced degradation, followed by preventive and corrective measures. Afforestation and landscape improvement projects are carried out in parks, public spaces, and suitable land areas, with a focus on increasing green coverage and improving ecological balance. Planting programmes often prioritise drought-resistant species and water-efficient systems to reduce resource consumption.

Another key channel involves biodiversity protection and wildlife management. Municipalities support the monitoring and conservation of endemic and threatened species through designated protection areas and controlled habitats. Veterinary services provide treatment, vaccination, sterilisation, and rehabilitation for stray animals, while feeding stations and shelter systems support their survival in natural conditions. Rehabilitation processes ensure that animals are returned to their habitats where possible, maintaining ecological balance. Monitoring activities also include the identification of plant and animal species, data collection, and cooperation with academic and public institutions.

Municipalities additionally promote public participation and integrate environmental priorities into planning and decision-making processes. Educational programmes targeting students and the wider public promote understanding of ecosystems, biodiversity, and sustainable land use. Field-based learning activities, volunteer platforms, and community

initiatives encourage direct engagement with natural environments. In addition, environmental considerations are integrated into urban planning through the development of green infrastructure strategies, ecological corridors, and conservation-oriented land use plans. Restoration projects for degraded areas, along with monitoring systems such as biodiversity inventories and ecological mapping, support data-based decisions.

Voices from the Field (Problem 15.1)

Lengthy and complex ownership and allocation procedures for public land required by municipalities for afforestation, parks, and green space projects delay implementation and prevent planned green areas from being realised.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Access to land is a major bottleneck for urban green infrastructure.
- Public land allocation processes are slow and complex, which creates uncertainty and delays projects.
- These processes should be simplified and streamlined while keeping clear conditions for proper land use.
- More flexible tools, such as temporary pre-allocation models, can help municipalities start projects earlier without waiting for full ownership transfer.
- Green space priorities should be integrated into higher-level planning frameworks.
- Land should be reserved for green infrastructure within strategic and spatial plans to reduce land-use conflicts.
- Increasing the share of green and social infrastructure in urban regeneration projects can protect environmental quality and public space.
- Vacant or idle land is not used effectively.
- Fiscal tools can encourage the use of such land in line with public needs.
- Tax measures on unused properties can push landowners to develop or release land for municipal use.

Voices from the Field (Problem 15.2)

The fragmented and limited definition of municipal authority in legislation regarding natural protected areas, forest-designated lands, and sensitive terrestrial ecosystems (combined with the fact that conservation and land-use decisions are largely determined outside municipal structures) makes it difficult for municipalities to effectively implement local conservation policies.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- The current governance system for protected and sensitive areas limits the role of municipalities in conservation.
- Decision-making is mostly centralised, and municipalities have limited influence despite their local responsibilities.
- The institutional position of municipalities should be strengthened.
- Municipalities should have formal representation and the right to submit binding or officially recorded opinions in decision processes.
- Local knowledge should be integrated into planning frameworks.
- Higher-level spatial and environmental plans should reflect municipal perspectives in a consistent way.
- Better inclusion of local views can improve decision quality and make implementation more effective.
- Active municipal participation in conservation boards and related bodies is important.
- Coordination between institutions is weak and creates challenges in planning and implementation.
- Overlapping responsibilities and poor communication reduce effectiveness.
- Coordination platforms involving municipalities, central authorities, and other stakeholders should be developed.

Voices from the Field (Problem 15.3)

The issue of stray animals creates structural, institutional, and financial constraints, and the absence of a clearly defined sustainable model for sheltering, rehabilitation, and meeting their needs makes it difficult for municipalities to manage growing expectations in the field and ensure consistency in implementation.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- The management of stray animals is a complex governance issue that requires stable financing.
- Current practices differ widely, and responsibilities are not matched with sufficient resources.
- A legal and financial framework is needed so that municipalities can act in a more predictable and consistent way.
- A financial support mechanism from central government to municipalities should be established.
- Service delivery varies across municipalities, leading to uneven outcomes.
- Differences in rehabilitation, sheltering, and care practices reduce overall effectiveness.

- A national framework with clear standards should be developed while allowing flexibility for local conditions.
- Such a framework can improve service quality, strengthen accountability, and support better coordination between municipalities, veterinary services, and other actors.
- Urban planning plays an important role in managing stray animal issues.
- Development and transformation projects should consider the spatial needs of stray animals.
- Designated areas for shelter and movement should be included in planning processes.
- Spatial planning can include managed feeding zones and suitable habitats outside high-density areas, guiding feeding patterns and gradually shifting animals' food-seeking behaviour away from dense urban spaces while safeguarding their welfare.

SDG 16: PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Strengthening governance, as reflected in SDG 16, is pursued through measures that improve transparency, safety, and public engagement. One of the main areas of intervention involves maintaining public order and reducing risks in urban environments. Inspection teams conduct regular controls in public spaces to address issues such as informal street activities, noise, and environmental violations. Surveillance systems, including camera networks and improved urban lighting, are used to increase safety in parks, streets, and high-traffic areas. Urban planning practices also contribute to safety by promoting organised settlement patterns and reducing uncontrolled expansion. In parallel, coordination with security institutions supports the monitoring of crime trends and the implementation of preventive measures.

Digitalisation and monitoring mechanisms are increasingly used to enhance institutional efficiency and transparency. Municipal services are increasingly delivered through online platforms that allow residents to submit requests, make payments, and track applications without physical interaction. All applications are recorded, processed through internal systems, and followed until completion, which improves accountability and reduces administrative delays. Digital document management systems, electronic signatures, and integrated databases support faster processing and reduce direct contact between staff and users. In addition, performance reports, strategic plans, and activity results are published online, enabling public access to institutional information.

Municipal practices also seek to broaden participation channels and facilitate access to justice-related support mechanisms. Communication channels such as call centres, online platforms, and public relations offices collect citizen feedback from multiple sources and direct it to

relevant units. Requests and complaints are monitored through integrated systems, and responses are shared with users in a traceable format. Participation is further supported through structured consultation processes, workshops, and community-based platforms where residents can express opinions and contribute to decision-making. Services provide legal guidance, social support, and advisory services for vulnerable groups, including migrants and children at risk. Awareness programmes address issues such as child protection and rights-based approaches, which strengthen community-level prevention.

Voices from the Field (Problem 16.1)

The limited or absent representation and voice of municipalities in provincial security councils makes it difficult for them to act in alignment with security and public order policies.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Limited involvement of municipalities in provincial security decision-making creates a gap between local services and public order policies.
- Municipalities manage urban spaces and services linked to safety, but their limited role in formal security platforms reduces their contribution.
- A more inclusive governance model is needed which recognises municipalities as key actors in local security.
- Municipalities should have representation and decision-making rights in provincial security councils.
- This inclusion can improve policy coherence and help adapt security measures to local conditions and capacities.
- Security decisions are not well connected with spatial planning and service delivery processes.
- Security policies should be considered together with urban planning, infrastructure management, and social services.
- Regular and organised coordination between municipalities and security institutions is necessary.
- Ongoing dialogue can help maintain alignment and respond to new challenges.
- Regular meetings and shared planning processes can strengthen institutional cooperation.

Voices from the Field (Problem 16.2)

The lack of clear legal definitions and binding implementation rules for participatory mechanisms leads municipalities to apply different approaches, making it difficult to compare and improve participatory governance practices.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Participatory governance in many municipalities lacks consistency due to unclear standards and non-binding procedures.
- Participation mechanisms exist but vary widely in form and impact across municipalities.
- The legal and institutional framework should be strengthened.
- The structure, membership, and decision-making role of city councils should be clearly defined.
- Existing participation practices often have limited influence on actual decisions.
- City councils should act as active parts of local governance.
- Their recommendations should be reflected in municipal decisions in a regular way.
- Formal links between participatory bodies and municipal councils should be established to improve accountability and policy alignment.
- Guidelines should be introduced for how participation processes are designed, implemented, and monitored.
- Standard approaches can improve consistency across municipalities.
- Digital platforms can expand citizen engagement by allowing people to share their views, access information, and take part more actively.
- Participation should be linked with financial decision-making.
- Participatory budgeting can connect citizen input with how resources are allocated.
- Municipalities need targeted support, including training and knowledge exchange, to apply these approaches effectively and achieve concrete results.

Voices from the Field (Problem 16.3)

The fact that open data and transparency practices are implemented differently across municipalities and largely on a voluntary basis, combined with the absence of a binding, standardised, and mandatory national framework, weakens the comparability, traceability, and inter-municipal learning of municipal operations across the country.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Open data and transparency practices are mostly voluntary and inconsistent, which weakens accountability and limits learning.
- Differences in data formats, quality, and availability make it hard to compare municipal performance.

- A mandatory national framework is needed with clear rules for data production and sharing.
- A central open data platform should be created where municipalities regularly publish planning, budgeting, and implementation data.
- Transparency should be linked more closely with financial management systems.
- Strategic plans, performance programmes, and annual reports should be published in a timely and accessible format.
- Presentation of financial information can help the public understand how resources are used and what results are achieved.
- Programme-based budgeting should be strengthened.
- Simple tools such as budget summaries can increase public engagement.
- Internal control and audit systems should be strengthened.
- Regular monitoring and stronger oversight can improve their effectiveness.
- Audit practices should also cover performance and information technology areas.
- Continuous training for municipal staff and leadership should support a culture of transparency and accountability.
- Common indicators and reporting standards should be developed to improve comparability across municipalities.
- Sharing anonymised datasets, such as transport, waste, or energy data, can strengthen the overall data ecosystem.
- Access to analytical tools from central institutions can support municipalities in developing stronger policies.

SDG 17: PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

SDG 17 is supported through partnerships, financing approaches, and coordination efforts that connect municipal actions with broader frameworks. Developing partnerships with public institutions, international organisations, and civil society actors to support project implementation are most common models of cooperation. Large-scale investments are often carried out through joint initiatives that combine financial resources, technical expertise, and administrative capacity. Municipal budgets rely on local revenues, transfers from the central government, and additional income sources such as service fees and property-related earnings. To expand financial capacity, project units prepare applications for national and international funding programmes, which enables access to external grants and technical support.

Municipal planning processes are informed by national development plans, sectoral strategies, and international frameworks, which are systematically reviewed during project design. Analytical units conduct regular assessments of policy documents and emerging trends in areas such as urban governance, climate adaptation, and social inclusion. In

parallel, data systems are developed to collect, store, and process information across multiple service areas. Integrated data platforms enable the monitoring of service performance, identification of local needs, and evaluation of policy outcomes.

Municipal action further includes reinforcing multi-stakeholder partnerships and advancing data-based governance approaches. Coordination platforms facilitate regular communication with neighbourhood representatives, public agencies, and non-governmental organisations, allowing local needs to be transmitted directly into planning processes. Training programmes, workshops, and joint initiatives support the exchange of knowledge and operational experience across institutions. Digital systems enable the sharing of data between organisations under access protocols, which improves service targeting and reduces duplication. In addition, local research activities, including surveys and field studies, provide detailed information on demographic, social, and economic conditions.

Voices from the Field (Problem 17.1)

The fact that central government approval and authorization processes required for municipalities in project partnerships related to EU and other international funds are lengthy, multi-layered, and unpredictable makes it difficult for municipalities to identify partners in a timely manner and to participate effectively in international projects.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Approval procedures create bottlenecks in municipalities' access to international funding programmes.
- Long and complex authorisation processes reduce competitiveness, especially in fast EU funding cycles.
- A more predictable and faster framework is needed.
- Maximum time limits for approvals should be defined.
- Simplified procedures should be introduced for standard project types.
- Pre-authorisation mechanisms can allow municipalities to start partnerships within set thematic and financial limits.
- Different approaches should be applied based on municipal capacity and past performance.
- Municipalities with strong experience, transparent financial management, and successful project records can follow lighter procedures.
- Accreditation-based systems can allow faster or notification-based approval processes.
- Coordination and communication between municipalities and central authorities should be strengthened.
- Central coordination points or focal units can support faster evaluation and decision-making.
- Digital platforms should be used for application, review, and approval processes.

- Data-sharing tools and automated checks can improve efficiency and transparency.
- Better data integration can help track project pipelines and identify overlaps or cooperation opportunities.
- Financing models should include multiple stakeholders.
- Combining grants, loans, and private sector contributions can improve project viability and sustainability.
- Partnerships with foundations, NGOs, and private actors can expand funding opportunities and strengthen collaboration.

Voices from the Field (Problem 17.2)

Although a legal basis for cooperation between municipalities and local stakeholders (such as local government unions, NGOs, universities, and the private sector) formally exists, the absence of provisions that actively encourage and incentivise such partnerships limits their development, therefore joint initiatives often remain short-term and struggle to evolve into sustained and institutionalised forms of collaboration.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Binding framework is needed to define how stakeholders work together and how decisions are taken.
- The current legal framework for multi-stakeholder cooperation lacks clarity in how partnerships should operate in practice.
- Many initiatives rely on informal arrangements or personal effort, which weakens continuity.
- Partnerships remain vulnerable without clear mandates.
- Cooperation should be based on project frameworks.
- Tasks should be linked to specific work packages and measurable outputs.
- Standard consortium agreements can support this approach.
- Pre-reviewed templates for different project types, such as EU programmes, development grants, or university-industry cooperation, can reduce administrative burden and protect institutions.
- Coordination and exchange between stakeholders should be strengthened.
- Regular platforms should bring together municipalities, universities, NGOs, and private sector actors.
- A stronger culture of cooperation is needed.
- Rules on partnership performance can increase commitment among partners.
- Early termination of partnerships should require justification except in exceptional cases.
- Lessons from implementation should be reflected in periodic updates of the legal framework.

Voices from the Field (Problem 17.3)

The absence of standardised and mandatory mechanisms regulating data sharing, as well as joint monitoring and reporting processes between central government, municipalities, and other stakeholders, weakens alignment in planning and implementation in multi-stakeholder projects.

Voices at the Table

Participants discussed that:

- Data systems across institutions often work in isolation, which weakens coordination in joint projects.
- Without common reporting standards and data-sharing rules, information flows are inconsistent and incomplete which makes it hard to monitor progress, assess results, and link projects with broader strategies.
- A binding framework is needed for regular and organised data exchange between central and local levels.
- Integrated monitoring and reporting tools should be used by all stakeholders.
- Real-time tracking systems can support comparison and evidence-based decisions.
- National statistical programmes should include datasets useful for local governments.
- Municipalities need consistent data for planning and evaluation.
- Institutional arrangements at the municipal level are important for integration.
- Integrated project management units should be created to track all projects through one digital platform which improve internal coordination and make reporting more consistent.
- Interoperability standards are needed so that different systems and datasets can work together.
- Strong methods should support data quality.
- Digital tools and advanced analytics play an important role.
- GIS, AI-based verification, and field data collection systems can improve data accuracy and efficiency.
- Common standards and coordinated governance practices can create a more transparent and coherent environment for managing projects.

**12TH DEVELOPMENT
PLAN AND VSR
TÜRKİYE**

Local Governments Specialization Commission Report

In Türkiye, Specialised Commission Groups are established during the preparation of development plans for participatory process. These commissions gather experts from public institutions, the private sector, civil society, and academia. Their main role is to analyse current conditions in policy areas, identify key challenges, and develop practical policy ideas for the development plan. The outputs of these commissions are the Specialised Commission Reports which are technical background documents for the development plans. Within the framework of the 12th Development Plan, a Local Governments Specialised Commission Report was also prepared for the policy framework on local governance.¹⁰⁹

According to the report, two main problem areas in the local government system are the institutional structure and coordination. The distribution of roles and responsibilities among administrative units is not always clear which leads to overlaps in practice. Coordination between metropolitan municipalities and district municipalities remains limited, hindering integrated service delivery. In addition, report identifies a need to clarify and strengthen the roles of entities such as special provincial administrations, local government unions, and municipal companies.

Financial constraints are another major challenge for local administrations as their revenues do not increase in line with rising service demand. Own-source revenues remain limited, and dependence on central government transfers continues. Access to exter-

nal financing and international funds is also complicated, particularly for smaller municipalities, which affects their investment capacity.

There are also notable limitations in service delivery and its quality. Although certain standards exist, performance measurement is often limited to basic indicators such as time, rather than effectiveness and quality. Disparities in urban and rural service provision continue, and municipalities farther from metropolitan centres tend to face greater capacity constraints in services. The definition of the rural areas in the current system is high subjective, and administrative structures do not match current settlement patterns. The transformation of villages into neighbourhoods has created new governance challenges in land use and local economic activities such as agriculture and livestock production.

Commission's report also stresses on the strong need for qualified and specialised personnel, as well as improvements in recruitment and career systems. Existing personnel structures do not always support expertise and continuity and weakens institutional performance and long-term planning capacity.

Participation and local democracy mechanisms are limited in practice. Although structures such as city councils exist, their effectiveness is often restricted. Citizen participation in decision-making processes is not sufficiently institutionalised. On the other hand, technological capacity and data infrastructure needs further improvement. The use of digital tools and smart city applications is not yet fully developed or standardised across municipalities.

Commission also demands for legislative and structural reform. Existing laws governing municipalities, villages, and local revenues do not fully reflect current needs. Disaster management and resilience are pointed out as increasingly important, especially in the aftermath of 2023 earthquakes. Therefore, the need to strengthen local government capacity in areas such as risk preparedness and response is emphasized. The integration of risk maps and disaster-related data into planning processes is underlined by the Commission as a main requirement.

Local development and social policy are presented as standing priorities. Strengthening local economies, supporting rural production, increasing the participation of women and disadvantaged groups in to workforce are central elements of sustainable development. At the same time, the role of local governments in the provision of social services is noted to be expanding, alongside their increasing contribution to national and global development objectives.

Local Governments Specialised Commission Report presents a local government system facing legal and institutional constraints despite its expanding responsibilities. Institutional disintegration, limited financial autonomy, and coordination challenges are identified as main issues to be addressed. At the same time, increasing roles in social services, local development, and disaster resilience require a more integrated system.

Local Administrations Section in the Development Plan

The Twelfth Development Plan (2024–2028) foresees the transformation of local administrations into citizen-oriented, efficient, and resilient institu-

tions with high-quality services. The targets related to local administrations are presented in “Section 3.5.6 Local Administrations,” which lists the main policy steps and priorities for the sector.¹¹⁰

The main objective of the Plan (related to local administrations) is to establish a governance structure that ensures effective, fast, and reliable service delivery while remaining responsive to citizen satisfaction. Local administrations are expected to strengthen their capacity to respond to disasters, adapt to climate change, protect the environment, and keep pace with technological developments. Maintaining transparency, accountability, participation, and financial sustainability are given as guiding principles.

The Plan foresees the establishment of administrative, financial, and technical minimum standards and the development of monitoring mechanisms for compliance. Legislative arrangements are also envisaged to support the implementation and supervision of the standards in order to improve consistency and quality across municipalities. The Plan also emphasizes increasing the level of expertise and institutional capacity within local administrations through training programmes and knowledge-sharing platforms. Creation of systems that disseminate good practices across municipalities is considered to increase overall performance.

Within participatory governance, the Plan calls for increasing the role of citizens and mukhtars in municipal decision-making processes, improving the city councils, and expanding the participation of women, youth, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. The need is also stated to redefine the duties, authorities, and service areas of local

administrations for efficiency. Steps include efforts to optimise service areas based on geographical and functional considerations and to resolve coordination problems, especially between metropolitan municipalities and their district municipalities.

The Plan also places an emphasis on improving the capacity of local administrations to address disasters and climate change. Measures include the integration of disaster risk considerations into infrastructure planning and construction processes, the establishment of financial support mechanisms, and the strengthening of emergency services such as fire brigades and municipal police units. In addition, the role of local administrations in economic resilience is foreseen through initiatives to contribute to local production and marketing structures.

Other urban management challenges are also addressed such as stray animal populations where the Plan proposes more effective and coordinated approaches, including alternative organisational models and project-based support mechanisms.

To a significant extent, the section on local administrations in the Twelfth Development Plan represents the main findings and priorities identified in the Local Governments Specialised Commission Report. Issues such as institutional capacity, coordination, financial sustainability, and service quality are brought into targets and implementation steps. At the same time, emerging areas highlighted by the Commission, including disaster resilience, climate adaptation, and participatory governance, are also incorporated into the Plan.

Disaster-Resilient Cities Section in the Development Plan

The 12th Development Plan establishes a framework that is highly relevant to municipalities under the heading “Disaster-Resilient Living Areas and Sustainable Environment,” even when not always explicitly stated.¹¹¹ The role of local governments, therefore; appears strongly across planning, infrastructure, service delivery, and environmental management functions.

Municipalities play a crucial role in managing disaster risks and creating safe urban environments. Plan expect them to incorporate risk assessments into all aspects of planning, including zoning and urban development. Outlined measures are conducting analyses and micro-zoning studies, and ensuring that construction permits and inspections always stay within the angle of resilience to disasters.

In urban transformation, municipalities are tasked with revitalizing high-risk areas and improving unsafe buildings. This involves preparing strategic documents, identifying priority zones for intervention, and engaging with property owners in participatory processes. Financing models and mechanisms to capture value from these improvements are also tied to the municipalities’ efforts.

Plan argues that municipalities play a central role in strengthening urban resilience, managing infrastructure, and delivering environmental services. They are expected to enhance water, waste, and transport systems while integrating digital tools such as GIS and early warning systems. Municipalities also lead disaster preparedness, response, and recovery processes and they support environmental protec-

tion through waste management and circular economy practices. Urban policies position municipalities as drivers of inclusive and sustainable development. The Plan therefore identifies municipalities as the main actors in implementing integrated strategies across resilience and sustainability.

12th Plan and VSR Türkiye

The relation between the 12th Development Plan and VSR Türkiye demonstrates a consistent understanding of the challenges faced by municipalities in Türkiye. Across both documents, three core themes stand out as:

- the need to clarify mandates and responsibilities,
- the necessity of strengthening institutional capacity,
- and the importance of moving toward data-driven and standardised service delivery systems.

The 12th Development Plan places an emphasis on redefining the roles, responsibilities, and service areas of local administrations, particularly in relation to coordination challenges between metropolitan and district municipalities. VSR Türkiye reinforces same priority by demonstrating how unclear mandates, overlapping authorities, and diverse approval processes affect daily operations. Many of the identified problems (ranging from delays in infrastructure investments to inefficiencies in social service delivery) are derived from the ambiguities in institutional roles and weak coordination mechanisms.

The Plan's call for establishing administrative, financial, and technical minimum standards is a repeating theme between many SDGs in VSR Türkiye's findings. In local practice, municipalities operate with varying procedures

and capacities across sectors such as social assistance, food distribution, water management, and disaster response. The absence of binding standards leads to uneven service quality and limits the ability to scale good practices. VSR demonstrates that the lack of standardisation results in inconsistencies, inefficiencies, and, in some cases, reduced access for vulnerable groups. The Plan's emphasis on monitoring and compliance mechanisms therefore addresses a gap.

The 12th Development Plan states the need for integrated data systems, geographic information tools, and smart city applications to support decision-making. VSR Türkiye confirms the fact that absence of such systems is a repeated constraint across multiple sectors. Problems related to social assistance, energy poverty, infrastructure coordination, and environmental monitoring all relates to fragmented or insufficient data systems.

Beyond these core areas, there are other domains where the Plan and the VSR reach similar conclusions. The Development Plan addresses social policy, poverty, food security, and access to housing within a framework of local development and social service provision. VSR Türkiye, however, provides an explanation of the pressures faced by municipalities such as rising housing costs, increasing demand for social assistance, and the growing complexity of food systems.

A similar pattern is observed in inclusive governance and participation. The Plan promotes stronger involvement of women, youth, elderly individuals, and persons with disabilities in decision-making processes. VSR Türkiye supports the same objective but moves the discussion toward implementation challenges such as the

sustainability of care services, the effectiveness of support mechanisms for women's economic participation, and the transition from training to employment for young people.

Local economic development and entrepreneurship are common focus in the two documents. The 12th Development Plan encourages municipalities to support local production and market structures. VSR Türkiye expands the discussion with identification of specific barriers, including regulatory constraints in procurement, limited financial tools for supporting small businesses, and weak integration between local production and market access.

In energy-related issues while the Plan addresses climate change and energy efficiency as urban priorities, VSR Türkiye states the specific challenges such as constraints in renewable energy production, regulatory limitations in energy use, and difficulties in identifying energy poverty due to lack of data.

Similarly, the Development Plan emphasises financial sustainability and capacity building, while VSR Türkiye points to major concerns of municipalities in international financing and multi-actor project development. Procedural complexities in forming partnerships, obtaining approvals, and managing externally funded projects are financial problem areas in the VSR.

The comparison indicates that the 12th Development Plan and VSR Türkiye are largely consistent in the identification of major reform areas. The Plan outlines a framework built around standardisation, capacity building, coordination, participation, resilience, digitalisation, and financial sustainability. VSR Türkiye, on the other hand, bring these themes into concrete operational challenges. The relation-

ship between the two documents can therefore be seen as one of strategy and implementation. VSR Türkiye's added value is, therefore, not introducing new priorities, but showing the roots of existing ones. Consequently, VSR is the complementary instrument to support the monitoring of the 12th Development Plan in terms of local governments.

CONCLUSION

The VSR Türkiye presents a comprehensive and perception-based assessment of the localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals, based on both analytical evaluation and practitioner experience. The report is based on field-based data, institutional perspectives, and multi-stakeholder dialogue, and goes beyond descriptive reporting to present an understanding of the challenges affecting SDG implementation at the local level. The identification of 51 problem areas were derived from municipal perception data and validated through participatory processes. Therefore, problems provide credible picture of the constraints that municipalities face across different policy domains.

A central finding emerging from this analysis is the nature of many implementation challenges. Rather than being independent or context-specific, a significant share of the identified problem areas comes from issues within governance structures, regulatory frameworks, and inter-institutional coordination mechanisms. Challenges related to central-local relations, financial constraints, and regulatory alignment recur across multiple SDGs which indicate that local implementation cannot be assessed independently from the broader institutional environment in which municipalities operate. Result reinforces the need to approach SDG localisation as a multi-level governance issue rather than a purely local administrative task.

The areas where solution proposals concentrate provide a direction for policy improvement. The most consistent recommendation across all SDGs is the establishment of integrated and interoperable data systems. Proposals emphasise the need for common digital infrastructures that connect munic-

ipalities with central institutions, service providers, and other stakeholders. Suggested systems are expected to improve targeting and support evidence-based decision-making. Another major focus of solution proposals is the clarification and restructuring of institutional frameworks. Across sectors, discussions highlight the need to identify roles and responsibilities more precisely to reduce overlaps.

Financial reform and diversification also emerge as key solution areas. Proposals focus on developing more sustainable funding models, including medium-term budgeting, improved access to external financing, and the introduction of flexible financial tools. Strengthening the financial capacity of municipalities is considered essential for service continuity. In parallel, the use of public procurement and local economic instruments is highlighted as a way to support local production and employment.

Capacity-building and institutional strengthening constitute another area where solutions are concentrated. Expanding professional staff, developing specialised units, and improving technical expertise are identified as necessary steps to support more effective implementation. Measures are often linked with the adoption of digital tools and data-driven management practices. Additionally, solution proposals consistently emphasise the importance of integrated and multi-level coordination.

The report also demonstrates that municipalities in Türkiye possess a substantial level of operational capacity and experience in delivering services inline with the SDGs. Urban infrastructure provision, environmental management, social assistance, and local economic development policies

already cover a wide range of SDG-related areas. However, the integration of these activities into a coherent SDG framework remains uneven. In many cases, the absence of standardised indicators, data limitations, and varied reporting systems constrains the ability of municipalities to monitor progress and align their actions with global targets.

Another key dimension highlighted by the report is the role of crises affecting local governance dynamics. Migration, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the 2023 earthquakes have significantly influenced municipal priorities and resource allocation. These events have exposed existing vulnerabilities but also have demonstrated the adaptability of municipalities under pressure. The ability to maintain essential services, develop support mechanisms, and coordinate with multiple stakeholders during crisis periods indicates a level of institutional resilience that should be recognised as an asset in future policy design. At the same time, the experience of crisis management emphasises the need for more flexible legal and financial frameworks that can support municipalities in responding to rapidly evolving conditions.

At the policy level, the report shows the importance of aligning national frameworks with local implementation realities. While the existing legal and institutional structure provides a comprehensive basis for municipal service delivery, the findings indicate areas where further adjustments may be required. Proposed solutions include improving coordination mechanisms between central and local authorities, enhancing fiscal flexibility, and supporting capacity development in areas such as data management and strategic planning.

The role of intermediary institutions, particularly LGAs and international networks, emerges as another critical factor in the localisation process. Organisations such as the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye, Marmara Municipalities Union and UCLG-MEWA and other local government unions play an important role in facilitating knowledge exchange, and representing local interests at higher levels of governance. Their contribution to capacity building and policy dialogue strengthens the overall ecosystem within which SDG implementation takes place. In this context, continued support for these institutions is likely to generate positive spillover effects across municipalities.

From an international perspective, the report contributes to the growing body of VSR literature by presenting problem-oriented methodology. The integration of field data and participatory analysis provides a model that can be adapted in other countries. The emphasis on documenting challenges and solutions alongside practices allows that the report remains realistic in its assessment, avoiding overly optimistic narratives that may not reflect implementation realities.

As also noted in the introduction of the VSR Türkiye, municipalities in Türkiye continue to work with strong commitment to improve the well-being and living standards of their citizens, whether within the SDG framework or through their own priorities. In this regard, the fact that VSR Türkiye does not follow a showcase approach, unlike other VSRS, should not be interpreted as a lack of effort from Turkish municipalities. On the contrary, during bilateral meetings and exchanges with municipalities, it became evident that they prefer to highlight the areas

where they face difficulties or cannot fully implement solutions, and to focus on developing practical responses to these challenges.

At the same time, it has been observed that the central administration shows a willingness to address these issues when effective communication with municipalities is in place, as shown in the ongoing updates to the legal framework. In this context, at a time when only one third of the SDG implementation period remains, the VSR Türkiye should be seen as a collective call from Turkish municipalities to approach unmet global targets in a more realistic way.

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