BELARUSIAN-GEORGIAN EXPERT REVIEW:

Strengthening SDGs localization on the subnational level in Georgia and Belarus with the consideration of German experience and expertise

LOCALIZING THE SDGs

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The Review includes materials and proposals, provided by other Belarusian experts.

Belarusian-Georgian Expert Review focuses on the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Belarus and Georgia. Historical and methodological aspects, institutionalization frame, mechanisms and tools for SDGs localization in both countries are described. Thematic priorities of ongoing and developing strategies for sustainable development at different administrative subnational levels in Belarus and Georgia demonstrate the directions of local development and their contribution to the achievement of global SDGs.

Conclusions and recommendations of the Review on the strengthen SDG localization are addressed to the policy-makers, municipal and community leaders, businesses and NGOs involved in Georgia and Belarus as well as in other Eastern European countries.

CONTENT

SUMMARY

The Review focuses on the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Belarus and Georgia. In Belarus, sustainable development strategies at the national and local levels have been developed since 1997, with a focus on achieving all 17 SDGs. However, the development of these strategies at the regional and district levels is not regulated and remains voluntary. The localization of SDGs at the local level in Belarus faces challenges, including the lack of integration of older strategies with the SDGs, insufficient competencies in certain areas, and the lack of the unified methodology for developing and implementing sustainable development strategies.

In Georgia, despite efforts to integrate the Millennium Goals into state policies, the steps taken were insufficient to advance the SDGs. The country has developed a Localization Plan for the SDGs, aiming to involve local self-government in the implementation process and raise awareness about the SDGs at the local level. However, there are still gaps in the plan, such as the lack of multi-level interaction and institutionalized procedures for monitoring and evaluation. Georgia has also faced challenges in institutionalization and the nationalization of SDG targets.

The Review provides common recommendations for both Belarus and Georgia, such as systematic development of sustainable development strategies at all levels, unified methodologies, clear and accessible development indicators, empowerment of SDG governance structures, the introduction of public reports, and cross-sectoral integration. The review also suggests the need for capacity building, bottom-up development processes, human resource development, and addressing data gaps for effective SDG localization.

Specific recommendations for Georgia include preparing Voluntary Local Reviews (VLR) based on successful European examples, improving the institutional framework, and focusing on the National Decentralization Strategy.

The review emphasizes the importance of comprehensive approaches, stakeholder engagement, institutionalization, and strong institutional settings at both national and local levels for successful SDG implementation and localization.

ABBREVIATION

AA – Association agreement

ESDN – European Sustainable Development Network

EU – European Union

GIZ – Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit

IDPs – internally displaced persons

LA (LA-21) – local agenda (local agenda for 21st century, (document)

MAPS – a study on Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support for the 2030 Agenda

MDGs – millennium development goals

NSSD – national strategy for sustainable development

SAOG – State Audit Office of Georgia

SDG – Sustainable Development Goals

SDG Council – the Sustainable Development Goals Inter-Agency Council

SIDA – the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

SSD – strategy for sustainable development

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

VLR – Voluntary Local Review

VNR – Voluntary National Review

1. INTRODUCTION

At the 2015 United Nations General Assembly, 193 UN member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as a global development agenda that lays out 17 Global goals to be reached by 2030 by all the countries nationally and for all the communities locally.

The year 2023 marks the halfway towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The cities and settlements are considered as the key to achieving the Global goals, as nowadays over half of the global population lives in urban areas and that's where the SDGs targets should turn into reality. While local authorities around the world have integrated SDGs into their public policy priorities and reached significant progress in moving towards the sustainable development model by redirecting development finance flows distributing on three dimensions (economic, social and environmental) of the sustainable development, many challenges hindering the process remain for numerous of the local communities.

The effectiveness and efficiency of the localization process depend on many background factors and development circumstances, such as political environment, institutional setup, previous experience and practices of multi-stakeholder policy-making, availability of data, evidence-based and whole-of-society approach development practices, awareness and capacities of the public servants and communities.

The review objective is to support the SDGs localization process on the subnational level of Georgia and Belarus (EaP) through best practices, strengthening institutions and local stakeholders. Under the SDGs localization process the focus will be made on the support of the establishment of the institutional set-up of the SDG localization at the local level; integration of SDGs in local policy documents and promoting inclusiveness and participation of all relevant stakeholders in the SDG localization process.

The experience accumulated in and best practices from Georgia and Belarus as well as expertise from Germany will be very useful for stakeholders from all countries. It will also give a chance to consider global tendencies in the adaptation of localizing SDGs in Georgia and Belarus.

The desk study to describe and analyze existing practices, processes and approaches related to the nationalization and localization of SDGs in Georgia and Belarus was made by experts from the two countries. A visit to the target municipality and a meeting with the city Mayor and municipality administration staff were used to get a deeper understanding of the process that the municipality went through to localize SDGs and to hear firsthand about the challenges occurring with it. Finding the best practices, learned lessons and gaps in local processes helped with the creation of the information base to develop conclusions and recommendations for the further acceleration of the SDG localization in Georgia and Belarus.

2. GEORGIAN EXPERIENCES IN SDG LOCALIZATION

2.1 HISTORICAL REVIEW OF THE SDG LOCALIZATION DEVELOPMENT

The transition of the Republic of Georgia towards Sustainable Development has started in times of multiple crises for the state.

Even though the country has a history of commitment towards the Millennium Agenda that is the basis for the following Sustainable Development Goals, the steps taken by the state to achieve significant improvements in institutionalization, localization and integration of the Millennium Goals into the state policies appeared to be insufficient for later jumpstarting the SDGs. The recent research on "The political impact of the Sustainable Development Goals: transforming governance through Global Goals?" [1] talks about the different steering effects of the global agenda on the normative, institutional and discursive changes. In working towards MDGs, some changes were observed in all three directions. However, with MDGs expiring term, the new agenda needed to address the initial challenges again. The reasons for it are the lack of institutional memory or previously taken steps being insufficient

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[1]   Biermann, Frank, Thomas Hickmann, and Carole-Anne Sénit, eds. The Political Impact of the Sustainable Development Goals: Transforming Governance Through Global Goals? Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. doi:10.1017/9781009082945.

to bring awareness, approaches and attitudes to jumpstart the implementation of the new agenda with the advanced position.

Georgia has committed to reaching the Millennium Development Goals at the September 2000 Millennium Summit in New York, joining the 191 nations.

The country has prepared the national baseline report[2], which was the first effort to monitor its commitment to the Millennium Declaration. The report was launched in June 2004, and it also was the first document showing the adaptation of MDGs and the targets to national priorities and local context.

The document also stated that considering the commitments, the Presidential Decree of 26 August 2003 led to the establishment of the Governmental Commission for Elaboration of the Report on the Realization of the Millennium Development Goals headed by the State Minister. Five working groups were identified to focus on specific development goals: poverty and development, education, health care, environment, gender equality and women's empowerment. The working groups comprised representatives of relevant ministries and agencies, as well as experts from non-governmental and international organizations.[3]

The nationalized MDGs document presented in the report and prepared by the Commission, included a set of international goals, targets and indicators paired with the ones adjusted to Georgia. The table didn't include the information on the responsible bodies and data.

The following chapters contained analyses of current situations and tendencies concerning the nationally adopted targets and indicators supported by relevant available data. At the end of separate chapters on each goal, some legislative and regulatory challenges were summarized, emphasizing the need to create a reliable database and provide technical as well as financial assistance enabling effective and consistent monitoring and other changes to be made to reach advancement.

The new government brought by the Rose Revolution of November 2003 reconstituted and transformed the Commission into a permanent one (Government Resolution #7 of March 31, 2004).

Even though the creation of the Special Commission with its thematic working groups was an obvious institutional steering effect, the continuity and sustainability of operation of this institute were not observed when the SDGs were introduced, and the creation of the Council for the Sustainable Development Goals took its time to be finalized in 2017.

The baseline report already emphasizes revealed difficulties connected to the **lack of an adequate information base**. It also describes the approaches that were chosen by the Commission – it adopted 2000 as the baseline year for MDG monitoring, compared to the international set baseline of 1990. Avoiding the establishment of unrealistically ambitious targets and the distortion of post-Soviet reality was stated as the reason for the selected approach. The

2   Georgia. "Millennium Development Goals in Georgia - National Report 2014," n.d.

3   Ibid.

chosen approach also emphasizes the **lack of continuity in the production of sufficient data** for the post-soviet, post-war Georgia.

Even though the nationalized MDG document was not followed by the strategy on how to follow the implementation, the report emphasized the connection between Georgia's Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Programme implementation process bringing possible progress in the data collection. It was also stated that efforts should be put to continue updating the information base and develop an improved schedule of indicators, bringing them into line with MDG indicators. These efforts are considered a prerequisite to creating a more advanced monitoring and reporting system. However, the document doesn't offer any strategy to reach this result.

The document includes a brief review of the country's development, emphasizing challenges and crises affecting the country, such as the context of the post-soviet, post-economic and financial crises and post-war Georgia leading to IDP crises, all together determining the start conditions for the realization of MDGs in the country and its way to sustainable development.

To sum up, the report highlights that some MDG indicators are less relevant to Georgia. Country-specific indicators are suggested for poverty, education, gender and healthcare Goals. The major challenges and calls for action are summed up as follows:

- **Difficulty to establish benchmarks** for some indicators due to weakness, and in some instances lack, of appropriate information.
- **Need for the systematic review and adjustment of the relevant indicators** to ensure correct accountability and for the establishment of effective monitoring systems at national as well as local levels.
- The necessity of **integration of MDGs** into the formulation, implementation, evaluation and monitoring of national policies and programs on SD.
- **Reflecting the implications of MDGs** and their consequences for the growth and development of the country **in current and future development strategies**.
- Defining and implementing **MDG-specific follow-up and reporting** requirements.
- Developing and adopting a **strategic approach to information, education and communication** in coordination with all relevant stakeholders to reach **greater public acquaintance and commitment** that is vital for achieving the MDGs in Georgia.
- Implementing **public awareness and advocacy campaigns to** bring the understanding of **MDGs in simple terms** developed for specific target groups and promotion of more active participation by the public in the implementation and monitoring of MDGs in Georgia.
- The Millennium Development Declaration should become an important **tool for monitoring a country's progress, identification of efficient interventions and prioritizing financial resources**.

It is important to note, that challenges identified in connection to MDGs remain relevant when it comes to the SDGs nationalization process in Georgia (e.g. challenges concerning public awareness, the lack of monitoring mechanism and the need to transform the agenda into the tool for monitoring a country's progress, identification of efficient interventions and financial resources prioritization, etc.)

The following monitoring and reporting efforts were taken in 2005 and reflected in the Progress report[4] as the first evaluation of the progress based on the baseline MDG report customized goals and targets.

The Third document was developed in 2014 aiming to evaluate Georgia's performance in MDG-related areas[5]. The data used for building the conclusions mostly covered the period from 2000 to 2013.

Closer to the post-2015 period, the processes described above were followed with the national consultations in Georgia, which were designed and initiated in August 2013 by the UN Georgian team. The long process of consultations facilitated by Georgians supported by the UN engaged more than 10,000 people, voices of diverse groups. The report on the results "My World Georgia"[6] by the Institute for Policy Studies presented the results of national consultations in Georgia for the following Agenda development.

Accordingly, Georgia started working on the SDGs in 2015, the same year the SDGs were adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.

At the outset, the process of nationalizing the Sustainable Development Goals in Georgia was initiated by the government's policy planning and coordination department. Since this was a novel undertaking, the specialists involved in the process faced a lack of knowledge and expertise. To address this, they developed baseline and predictive indicators. Almost all of the ministries, except of the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, later were eventually included due to the strong connection between the SDG nationalization process and the country's foreign policy, advocacy, and visibility. The National Statistics Office of Georgia played an active role in the process.

The nationalization process was complex and challenging due to the absence of a comprehensive policy standard, as well as a lack of readiness and awareness regarding SDG nationalization. Institutions viewed the process as almost impossible to complete as it required the analysis of existing data, the transformation of the data into statistics, and finally the prediction of future targets for the next 10-15 years.

The SDG nationalization process has been going on for almost two years, until the adoption of a government resolution in 2018. Unfortunately, non-governmental organizations and local municipalities were not involved in the process. The decision to exclude municipalities was taken due to the absence of a local policy strategy or implementation plan in various fields that intersect with the SDGs.

The nationalization document that was eventually adopted contains indicators and goals that are tailored to Georgia's specific context. However, the downside of the process was that methodology and metadata of some of the targets and indicators were not yet determined internationally, and even more gaps in data and methodology of data collection were found in Georgia. Thus, sections for these data gaps and in some cases, the responsible bodies, were left to be identified later with further development. Even though the international methodology and metadata have already caught up, the Georgian SDG matrix remained the same. Therefore, it is recommended that the Geor-

5   Millennium Development Goals in Georgia – National Report, 2014

6   My World Georgia, UNDP, 2013, updated: 8.05.2023.

7 მდგრადი
განვითარების ანგარიში
2021: მიმოხილვა და
საქართველოს შედეგები,
IDFI, 2021, updated:
8.05.2023.

gian SDG matrix be reviewed, updated, and made more relevant, ambitious and trackable to Georgia's context.

The first voluntary review was prepared right after the adoption in 2016, thus the document didn't include the monitoring and evaluation of the progress against the SDG targets and indicators. Rather it was a statement of the state's commitment to the establishment, integration and implementation of the goals.

To facilitate the implementation and monitoring of the goals the Prime Minister of Georgia established and defined the members of the SDG Inter-Agency Council. The chairperson of the council is the head of the Administration of the Government of Georgia.

In order to effectively manage the process of nationalization, a horizontal integration model of connecting the goals and objectives of sustainable development with the existing policy documents was selected. In contrast to the vertical method, during which a single, new comprehensive sustainable development strategy is created, the horizontal integration model involves connecting global goals and their tasks and reflecting them in existing thematic strategies and action plans.[7]

THEMATIC PRIORITIES IN SDG NATIONALIZATION

Even though Georgia declared all 17 goals its priority, the chart below shows the nationalized targets of each goal in percentage (Figure 1.). It illustrates targets of which goals appeared to be the most relevant for Georgia, accordingly, which of the goals were nationalized the most. The first column shows the number of a specific goal, the second column indicates the number of global targets that the goal has; followed by the number of nationalized targets and nationally added targets in the next two columns. The last column is used to visualize the percentage of the targets of the global goals that were nationalized. The three dimensions – society, biodiversity and economy are also marked with different colors. The chart makes it clear that the majority of the nationalized targets are dedicated to the field of society (e.g. 100% of targets are nationalized under SDG 16 and SDG 3).

Figure 1 - The nationalized targets of each SDG in percentage.

economy

society

biodiversity

goal	# global target	# of nationalized target	# of added target	%
12	11	1	0	9.09
11	10	1	0	10.00
14	10	1	0	10.00
17	19	3	1	15.79
13	5	1	0	20.00
6	8	2	0	25.00
15	12	5	0	41.67
7	5	3	0	60.00
2	8	5	0	62.50
9	8	5	0	62.50

goal	# global target	# of national-ized target	# of added target	%
10	10	7	0	70.00
8	12	9	0	75.00
5	9	7	0	77.78
1	7	6	0	85.71
4	10	9	2	90.00
3	13	13	1	100.00
16	12	12	1	100.00

The analysis shows that even though the country declared all 17 goals as a priority, the nationalized targets integrate three dimensions (Social, Economic and Environmental) of sustainable development to a different extent. The second chart below illustrates the percentages of targets nationalized under each dimension. 76% of targets dedicated to the field of Society nationalized, 54% of those dedicated to the Economy and 26% to Biodiversity.

The Second National Voluntary Review 2020[8] already measures the progress of the country against the indicators. The review also covers the general developments for the country's progress towards SDGs. Based on the analysis of the budgeting process, the review concludes that Peace (SDG 16), Health (3), Education (4), Poverty (1) and Infrastructure (9) and Equality (10) are SDGs receiving the largest shares of the budget, and thus can be considered de facto national priorities. For other SDGs, however, funding was less generous and visible in the budget data before 2020. For Gender (5), and the "Planet" goals (6, 12, 13, 14 and 15), programmed amounts accounted for only 3 percent of the total. The review stated that priority areas will be revisited with this analysis in mind and based on the new strategic planning processes and procedures.

Figure 2 - Nationalisation of Global SDG Targets in Georgia
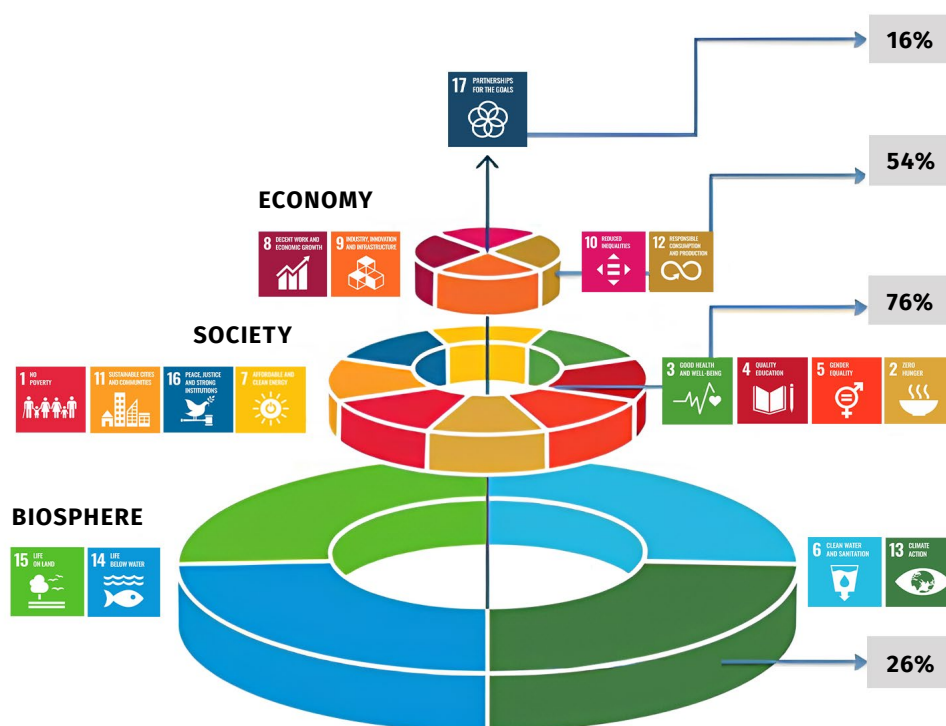
The review summarizes the analysis conducted in line with the methodology adopted globally by the UN, grouping the SDGs into five thematic clusters: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership. The research showed that judging by the sectoral breakdown of the nationalized SDG targets, Georgia is currently focusing most heavily on "people," with "prosperity" coming second, "peace" third, "planet" fourth and "partnership" as the last. **The weakness of cross-cutting elements and coordination was noted**, says the review.

Two main general challenges hindering the full implementation of some SDGs are emphasized: 1. Russian occupation of two regions of Georgia – Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region - where major human rights challenges are being faced and 2. Covid-19 that creates anticipation of challenging economic and social impacts.

The review emphasizes a few good practices and lessons learned:
1. Integration of SDGs with nation-wide shared objectives - The 36 national strategies and the EU-Georgia Association Agreement (EUAA) now jointly incorporate 96% of the country's nationalized SDG targets.
2. Public-private partnerships, potential to deliver tangible results quickly - in 2018 the Parliament of Georgia passed a law on Public-Private Partnership and respective Public Private Partnership Agency was established. Two examples of fruitful PPP are given - the program for the elimination of hepatitis C (HCV) and Vocation Education and Training (VET) Reform.
3. Ensuring "Leaving No One Behind" in the crucial areas – example: The Government introduced the Universal Health Care Program (UHP) in 2013, guided by the pledge to "leave no one behind". In May 2017, the Universal Health Care Program moved to service stratification based on income groups and medication funding.

The document shares information on areas where support is needed some of them being identified by the State Audit Office's assessment:

- Ensuring linkages with the SDGs framework and country's budget planning instruments;
- Clear division of responsibilities among public agencies;
- Localization of SDGs;
- Structured platforms where knowledge about the governance systems is shared, can be useful for the effective implementation of the SDGs;
- Capacity building of civil servants to design and conduct public consultation process;
- Building the capacity of the non-governmental entities to productively contribute to the policy development process;
- The degree of horizontal cooperation is uneven: cross-sectoral coordination and collaboration and more consistent engagement of external stakeholders are to be improved.

Other important points to be taken into account are mentioned in the conclusion part of the review as emerging issues to be addressed:

- **Generate and gather better quality data** – Improve the functioning of the National Statistics Office; integrate data gathering into monitoring and evaluation frameworks; Train relevant staff across the government agen-

cies; Help to build non-state capacity to generate relevant and disaggregated data; Build the stronger evidence base for action in priority areas.

- **Link SDG targets to budgeting** – Encourage municipal and regional officials to incorporate the SDGs into their planning and budgeting processes and strengthen similar efforts at the national and central level; Undertake a detailed review of national and sub-national budgets in view of the SDGs implementation and, where necessary to align spending with priorities, justify shifts in funding to target areas.

- **Improve monitoring and evaluation of targets** – Revisit the 93 nationalized targets to fill conceptual gaps and strengthen monitoring; Ensure that missing/ newly adopted targets are incorporated; Integrate the nationalized SDG indicators into the national monitoring and evaluation system; Increase the role of the civil society in the process of monitoring and evaluation.

- **Strengthen partnerships** - Agree on priority areas for action with national stakeholders; Build awareness of the EU Association Agreement, and other international treaties ratified by Georgia as an integral part of the SDGs progress; Support better communication, coordination and coherence around the SDGs across institutions at all levels.

- **Plan ahead** - Move from analysis and recommendations to proactive programming for the SDGs implementation.

2.2   LOCALISATION

The report of State Audit on SDG implementation Readiness[9] prepared in 2019 emphasized a few major challenges and gaps in the process of effective implementation. One of the suggestions was to reinforce the SDG localization: "Given the universal and inclusive nature of the Sustainable Development Goals, it is important to include both central as well as local government. Accordingly, the Council must ensure the inclusion of municipalities in the process of realizing the SDGs.

In response to this recommendation, the Action Plan of SDGs localization in Georgia is a document prepared by the Interagency SDG Council to manage the process of localization of SDGs in all the municipalities of Georgia, gradually covering all 64 municipalities till 2025. The plan includes activities to support most of the elements of the localization cycle starting from the analyses of the enabling environment, awareness raising for the authorities and local communities, prioritization, integration and adaptation of SDGs as well as monitoring of the implementation.

The document sets two major objectives:

1. Establish a system that ensures the involvement of local self-government in the process of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

[9] Performance Audit of Preparedness for Implementation Of Sustainable Development Goals, State Audit Office of Georgia, 2018, updated: 8.05.2023.

2. Raise awareness about the SDGs and their importance at the local level

One of the gaps in the document is the lack of activities showing how multi-level interaction takes place between the central and the local levels, to avoid parallel processes without their integration.

Activities and measures on the creation of institutionalized procedures for the monitoring and evaluation of SDG implementation locally is another point that is lacking in the Localization Plan. – The Action Plan sets "The [SDG implementation] report is prepared in 5 pilot municipalities", as one of its indicators. However, there is no defined monitoring strategy or methodology available/adopted yet to reach this.

The Localization Action Plan implementation mostly takes place according to the set timeline.

Preparation and approval of the SDGs Localization Document took place in pilot municipalities or is in the process.

Development of local SDG priority documents started in 2022. The SDG Secretariat of Georgia has involved various development partners such as international organizations (e.g. UNDP, GIZ, SIDA), as well as national NGOs (e.g. CENN – co-chair of the SDG Council WG on Sustainable Energy and Environment) and it has been coordinating resources for the continuous process.

The representatives of the local authorities (2-3 people per municipality) of the pilot 18 municipalities were gathered and trained (2 days-training) on SDG localization and monitoring with the support of an expert facilitator. All the municipalities to be starting the preparation of the local SDGs priority document will undertake training accordingly.

The support of an expert was ensured in pilot 5, then 13 and 18 municipalities. In the first stage these municipalities already had or were in the process of developing/adopting the local SDG priority document: West Georgia - Batumi, Zugdidi, Kutaisi, Khoni Tkibuli, Ambrolauri, Oni; East Georgia – Telavi, Rustavi, Mtskheta, Signagi, Dusheti Kazbegi; Central Georgia – Kaspi, Borjomi, Gori, Khashuri, Kareli.

The Mayors and the relevant departments of the City halls were involved in the preparation process. Usually, the team that works on the development of the document is formed by 3 to 10 people.

Preparation of each municipal document takes approximately 3-6 months with the involvement and consultation of an expert. The process steps are as follows:

- The local authorities are trained on SDG localization and monitoring;
- The expert is involved to support in forming the local team and consult;
- The draft document is prepared by the Mayor and relevant department representatives;
- Public consultations are announced (the approach varies from municipality to municipality; in some municipalities, a draft document is presented to the local stakeholders to receive the feedback/comments to be reflected in the final document);

- The finalized document is presented to the Local Council for review and adoption;
- The creation of a local SDG Council is announced and planned;
- Local SDG council works on implementation and monitoring processes (This stage has not been implemented in any of the municipalities yet).

The municipal SDG document includes two documents:

1. Municipal SDG matrix – the document has the same structure as the national SDG matrix, including sections for Global targets, nationalized targets, selected targets for municipalities, global indicators, nationalized indicators and indicators selected for the municipality. The document also includes the baseline data and target indicator as well as the party responsible.
2. Annex 1 "Introduction" – the document describes the meaning of the Sustainable Development Goals, Georgia's nationalization and localization processes; Short description of the implementation and coordination process of sustainable development goals in each municipality. It states how many targets and indicators were selected for a municipality based on its challenges and context. The document emphasizes that the local SDG Council is to be created and headed by a Mayor to monitor the implementation of localized SDGs;

The methodology for the selection of the prioritized municipal targets and indicators is based on a few steps:

- The rights and the authorities that are the prerogative of each municipality are being checked. (There are slight differences in the rights in the case of some municipalities, e.g. Batumi municipality is the part of Adjara autonomous region, which has the autonomous government). Some of the SDG targets that are not municipality prerogative couldn't be taken as a priority/responsibility. E.g. Targets under SDG 4 that are dedicated to secondary education were less localized due to the fact that it goes beyond the authorities of the municipality, versus the targets dedicated to preschool education, which is under the prerogative of the local authorities. The approach used by the expert together with municipalities is to avoid localizing those targets that are not fully "in the hands" of municipalities, thus not possible to influence or fulfill only by City halls.
- The delegated rights that the municipalities can receive from the central government are also being checked.
- Accordingly, the Local Self-Government Code - Article 16, Clause 2, (that defines the local self-government rights), Clause 3 and 4 as well as Laws of Georgia (such as the Child's Rights Code, Public Health) that define the delegated powers of the municipalities are the bases for the prioritization of the SDGs locally.
- Already existing local strategy and priority documents, as well as budget and programs, are being revised and analyzed to identify priority areas of operation chosen by a municipality.
- Available data produced in the municipality or for the municipality is being checked to identify which of the targets are realistic to be measured.
- A team is working on a draft document to identify local SDG targets and indicators in accordance with local needs, context and existing priorities.

Challenges identified in the process of preparation of SDG municipal priority documents:

- The mechanism of stakeholder involvement is not identified. The involvement level differs from municipality to municipality.
- The local actors are also in need of training on SDG implementation and monitoring to reach meaningful involvement.
- The process description given in the local SDG priority document doesn't fully cover the description of how local stakeholders were involved.
- The partial decentralization process and limitation of rights of the local governments make it impossible to adopt some of the SDGs that are considered crucial for the local context. (e.g. under SDG 4, the targets dedicated to school education mostly cannot be localized by the municipalities as only the preschool education is a municipality prerogative). It is an obvious limitation in the localization process.
- There is no clear monitoring strategy/mechanism identified for further implementation and monitoring processes.
- As the localization process is connected to the Development partners' involvement, approaches to the process might vary in different municipalities depending on the level of the involvement of a partner's organization in the processes.
- The lack of locally produced data creates limitations for the localization of some of the important SDG targets and indicators.
- As it is planned to cover 64 municipalities by the end of 2025, it creates short deadlines for each municipality (and an expert consulting them) to conclude all the stages of work thoroughly. E.g. Even though the Rule on public consultations creates the necessity of conducting public consultations before the adoption of any strategy document and it provides steps as well as sets standard timeframes, these processes are still differently approached by the municipalities. One of the main reasons is time shortage.

[10] საქართველოს პარლამენტის სტრატეგია მდგრადი განვითარების მიზნების განხორციელების ხელშეწყობისა და მონიტორინგისათვის, საქართველოს პარლამენტი, 2019

[11] მდგრადი განვითარების მიზნების განხორციელებისა და მონიტორინგისათვის საქართველოს პარლამენტის 2019-2020 წლების სამოქმედო გეგმის შესრულების ანგარიში, საქართველოს პარლამენტი, 2021, updated: 8.05.2023.

[12] Continued Nationalization of SDGs in Georgia, CENN, 2021-2023, updated: 8.05.2023.

Milestones of Georgia's SDG implementation

2015 – Georgia joined the 2030 Agenda Resolution;

2016 – First Voluntary National Review;

2017 – Interagency Council of SDGs, its secretariat and the thematic working groups were created;

2018 – SDG tracker - the online monitoring mechanism was created;

2019 – The state Audit Report on SDG implementation readiness;

2019 – National SDG Matrix was adopted;

2019 – The Parliament's Strategy for Supporting and Monitoring the Implementation of the SDGs in the country[10];

2020 – Second Voluntary National Review;

2020 – Localization Action Plan 2021-2025;

2022 – SDG Council Thematic Working Group's first Action Plan for 2023;

2022 – First municipal SDG documents created and adopted in pilot municipalities.

Milestones of the other activities

2021 – The performance report of the 2019-2020 Action Plan of the Parliament of Georgia for the implementation and monitoring of sustainable development goals;[11]

2022 – CSO co-coordinated work started for their meaningful involvement in the SDG Council's work (under CENN's initiative "Continued nationalization of SDGs"[12] supported by the German Government and GIZ);

[13] საქართველოს განვითარების სტრატეგია, ხედვა 2030, საქართველოს მთავრობა, updated: 8.05.2023.

2022 – Supporting the adaptation of the Georgian SDG Council into a multi-level mechanism, assessment report supported by GIZ;

2022 – "Vision 2030 - Georgia's development strategy" document was adopted with links to SDGs[13] ;

2023 – Spotlight report on SDG 6 and 7 (By CENN) and SDG 4 (by Coalition "Education for all") is prepared.

2.3 METHODOLOGICAL ANALYSIS
AGENDA 2030 AND METHODOLOGY OF ELABORATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIES

[14] Universal Values, Principle Two: Leave No One Behind, United Nations, updated: 8.05.2023.

[15] Roadmap for Localizing the SDGs: Implementation and Monitoring at Subnational Level, United Nations, updated: 8.05.2023;

European handbook for SDG voluntary local reviews, European Union, 2022, updated: 8.05.2023.

The methodological framework of Agenda 2030 of SDGs is based on a set of guiding principles, including universality, integration, and leaving no one behind.[14] The framework emphasizes the importance of a holistic and integrated approach to sustainable development, recognizing that economic, social, and environmental dimensions are interdependent and must be addressed together.

The methodology of elaboration and implementation of SDG strategies on local levels involves a number of steps, including:

1. *Assessment and analysis of local development needs and priorities:* This step involves gathering data and information about the economic, social, and environmental conditions in the local area, and identifying the key challenges and opportunities for sustainable development.

2. *Identification of SDGs and targets relevant to the local context:* Based on the assessment and analysis, local stakeholders can identify the SDGs and targets that are most relevant and important for their area.

3. *Setting targets and indicators:* Local stakeholders can then set targets and indicators to measure progress towards achieving the selected SDGs.

4. *Development of a local SDG strategy:* Based on the above steps, a local SDG strategy can be developed, outlining specific actions and interventions that will be taken to achieve the identified targets.

5. *Implementation and monitoring of the strategy:* The local SDG strategy can then be implemented, with regular monitoring and evaluation to assess progress and make any necessary adjustments.[15]

Overall, the methodology of elaboration and implementation of SDG strategies on local levels requires active participation and engagement of local

[16] VNR Georgia, 2020, updated: 8.05.2023.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Decree of the Government No. 629 "On the Approval of the Rules of Procedure for Development, Monitoring and Evaluation of Policy Documents".

stakeholders, including government, civil society, the private sector, and local communities. It also involves coordination and collaboration across different sectors and levels of governance to ensure an integrated and coherent approach to sustainable development.

Georgia has nationalized SDG targets in its 36 national strategies in various fields,[16] in addition to EU Association Agenda.[17] For the localization efforts to be effective, the SDGs need to be deeply integrated into the national policy process. Based on this reflection, the Administration of the Government worked with the line ministries, government agencies, local and international experts and its international partners to establish a new Policy Planning and Coordination System in Georgia.[18]

2.4 INSTITUTIONALIZATION

[19] VNR Georgia, 2020.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Performance Audit of Preparedness for Implementation Of Sustainable Development Goals, State Audit Office of Georgia.

[22] Resolution of the Prime-Minister of Georgia regarding the establishment of the inter-departmental coordination council for the reform of public administration and the approval of the regulation, 27 January 2020, updated: 8.05.2023.

Georgia started working on the SDGs in 2015, the same year the SDGs were adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. The government of Georgia has since developed a national action plan for implementing the SDGs, which was adopted in 2017. The plan includes specific targets and indicators for each SDG and outlines the roles and responsibilities of various government agencies, as well as the private sector and civil society, in achieving the goals. Georgia has also developed a monitoring and evaluation system to track progress toward the SDGs and report on its achievements.

The dedication to achieving the SDGs has been demonstrated by aligning the national policy process with the SDGs and by the Georgian Government's adoption of the "National Document for the Sustainable Development Goals". This document, which was developed through extensive consultations with both government officials and civil society stakeholders, outlines 93 nationalized targets and 200 indicators, as well as the institutional and procedural framework for monitoring their implementation.[19] Furthermore, SDGs priorities and objectives have been incorporated in the EU Association Agenda, which has been and remains to be an important guiding document for the country.[20]

Nevertheless, the localization of SDGs was one of the shortcomings identified by the State Audit Office.[21]

In 2020, based on the recommendations of the abovementioned SAOG audit report, the design of the Coordination Mechanism has been updated by the Prime Minister's decree.[22]

Another important aspect of the SDG localization process is the National Decentralization strategy. The significance of this document in the localization of SDGs lies in granting local municipalities sufficient independence, finan-

23 Decentralization Strategy 2020-2025, Georgia, 2020-2023, updated: 8.05.2023.

24 National Document on SDGs, Government of Georgia, updated: 8.05.2023.

25 VNR Georgia, 2020.

cial autonomy, and decision-making authority from the central government. These elements are crucial for the effective execution and implementation of the SDG Agenda 2030 and nationalization documents at the local level. The Georgian government began developing a new decentralization strategy in March 2018, which culminated in the adoption of the Decentralization Strategy 2020-2025 by the end of 2019. This strategy aims to establish local self-government that is dependable, transparent, accountable, and focused on achieving results.[23] Despite the efforts made by the Strategy to enhance the power, material and financial resources, reliability, accountability, transparency, and outcome-based performance of local self-government, criticisms of the Strategy persist. The specific methods by which these objectives will be attained remain unclear. One of the main issues lies in the insufficient comprehension of autonomy, coupled with the financial challenges faced by self-governing entities. The execution of authorities and responsibilities under the umbrella of local self-governance is interlinked with financial capacities. Although the Decentralization Strategy extensively deliberates on the necessity of augmenting the funds of municipalities, it does not explicitly mention the sources of these funds. Consequently, the aspect of rectifying fiscal concerns is marked by vagueness and unpredictability. It is imperative to elucidate this aspect. Most importantly, eliminating political reliance on the central government and catering to local requirements independently is crucial, especially, in the context of the SDG localization process. To achieve this, the primary responsibility lies with the Government, which must grant greater freedom and resources to local municipalities to pursue their objectives. It needs to exhibit political resolve to transfer genuine autonomy to these entities.

2.4.1 INSTITUTIONAL SETTING ON A NATIONAL LEVEL

In 2019, the Government of Georgia adopted a resolution with its annexes – SDG national document.[24] The document was prepared by the Administration of the Government of Georgia. The key coordination body for the implementation of the national SDG targets is the SDG Council, Chaired by the Head of the Administration of the Government of Georgia. Since 2015, the Administration of the Government of Georgia has led the nationalization and coordination process of the SDGs. The Council has 4 thematic working groups on: Social Inclusion; Economic Development; Sustainable Energy and Environmental Protection; Democratic Governance. The Council engages stakeholders from the public, civil, international, academic and private sectors in its working groups. The Policy Planning Unit of the Policy Planning and Coordination Department at the Administration of the Government of Georgia serves as the secretariat to the SDG Council. That unit also monitors the implementation of the national SDGs through a special electronic system (http://sdg.gov.ge).[25]

Following state agencies and other institutions are involved in this process:

- Ministry of IDPs from occupied territories of Georgia, Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Protection;
- Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia;
- Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia;
- Ministry of Justice of Georgia;

- Ministry of Finance of Georgia;
- Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia;
- Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia;
- Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia;
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia;
- General Prosecutor's Office of Georgia;
- Administration of the Government of Georgia;
- Office of the Public Defender of Georgia;
- Public Service Bureau;
- National Statistical Service of Georgia.

The SDGs undergo an annual monitoring process that takes place at the beginning of February each year. The agencies responsible for monitoring have a one-month deadline to report their findings to the Secretariat through the system. Although an annual report is presented to the SDG Council and thematic working groups at the annual Council meeting monitoring reports are not issued after to be accessible to the Working Groups or the public.

The monitoring process serves to collect data on task performance, identify long-term trends in sectoral policies, pinpoint challenges, and identify potential areas for intervention. It also actively engages civil society.

As outlined in the National Document, the electronic system will be used to provide annual reporting on the status of sustainable development goal attainment, with the following statuses being assigned (Figure 3.):

Figure 3 - Illustration of progress tracking through the monitoring process

№	Status	Progress
1	Has not started	0%
2	Ongoing – partially fulfilled	1%-50%
3	Ongoing – mostly fulfilled	51%-99%
4	Carried out	100%
5	Carried out with a time delay	100%
6	Annulled	0%-99%
7	Suspended	0%-99%

Currently, the statute of the council and the terms of reference of the thematic working groups ensure proper participation as well as mechanisms for increasing the ownership of the civil society of the process:

- Each working group has a chairperson (from governmental agencies) and two co-chairs: - 1 from a civil society organization – elected by the member CSOs of the working group for a 2-year period based on the rotation principle; 1 from the relevant UN agency.

- Chairs and co-chairs are part of the inter-agency council participating in the decision- making process.
- Co-chairs are involved in agenda setting process of a working group and can draft and submit a motion to the council.
- Each member of the thematic working group can submit a motion to the chair and co-chairs to defer it to the council.

It was anticipated that the spirit of the whole-of-society in the SDGs coordination will be further improved through the abovementioned mechanisms, creating incentives for the CSOs to be part of the process.[26]

These mechanisms were set in place to ensure the effective monitoring, evaluation and accountability of the institutions to implement SDGs.

2.4.2 INSTITUTIONAL SETTING AND SDGS LOCALIZATION ON THE LOCAL LEVEL

Initially, the SDG matrix was not integrated into the municipal priority documents, as municipalities were not involved in the implementation of the SDGs. Furthermore, currently, the Regional Development Strategies do not resemble the localization needs associated with the SDGs. However, some municipalities, including a targeted municipality, Dusheti, are currently working on the development of municipal SDG priority documents. It is worth mentioning that despite the presence of the SDG Council and institutional measures implemented at the national level, local municipalities are still not adequately engaged in these mechanisms. Specifically, at this point, it is still planned, but none of the municipalities have set up a local council for sustainable development or any analogous consultative entity. Additionally, local municipalities, including the municipality of Dusheti, face a shortage of space for cooperation between the municipal council and the city hall, which often may hinder the implementation of the localization process. Another point of acceleration that has not been used so far is partnership and exchange between the municipalities on their actions and good practices in SDG localization.

3. BELARUSIAN EXPERIENCES IN SDG LOCALIZATION

3.1 HISTORICAL REVIEW OF THE SDG LOCALIZATION DEVELOPMENT

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AT THE LOCAL LEVEL IN BELARUS: 90S. XX CENTURY - 2015

"Agenda for the 21st Century" (hereafter *Agenda 21*), adopted in 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, provided that governments would adopt national strategies for sustainable development in order to ensure an integrated approach to environment and development and create an effective regulatory framework (hereinafter NSSD). The sustainable development strategy should be developed on the basis of existing sectoral economic, social and environmental policies, programs and plans and ensure their coherence (integration). Among the goals of such a strategy, the paper mentions *"Ensuring socially sustainable economic development, in which measures are taken to protect the resource base and the environment in the interests of future generations. It must be developed with the widest participation of all sectors of society. It should be based on a careful assessment of the current situation and initiatives."* (Agenda 21, pp. 105–106).

In Belarus, the first National Strategy for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development for the period up to 2010 (NSSD-2010) was developed and approved by the Government of the Republic of Belarus in 1997. Subsequently, the NSSD-2020, NSSD-2030 and NSSD-2035 were developed and approved.

Following the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On State Forecasting and Programs of Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus" (1998), the National Strategy for Sustainable Development is included in the system of mandatory state planning documents in the Republic of Belarus and should be developed for a period of up to 15 years (Methodological guide).

Local Strategies for sustainable development are an integral part of the *concept of sustainable development* that emerged in the last decades of the twentieth century. Already in Agenda 21, there is a recommendation to states to develop and approve, through consultations with all sectors of local communities, Local Agenda-21 (hereinafter LA-21) (Agenda 21, Chapter 28).

The ability to develop LA-21 was already laid down in the NSSD-2020 (adopted in 2004). It included recommendations on the development of sustainable development strategies for territorial entities of various levels. "The mechanism for the implementation of regional policy includes instruments of a legal, economic, and financial nature aimed at ensuring the sustainable development of regions - the development and implementation of LA-21. LA was called one of the most important tools for the development of territories in the NSSD-2020, "allowing local governments to effectively plan and implement the most promising areas for increasing the economic potential of territories, improving the social and environmental living conditions of the population" (NSSD-2020, p. 187).

Due to the fact that the opportunity to develop the SSD (LA-21) was included in the NSSD-2020, as well as the activity of non-governmental organizations and local public initiatives since the late 90s, the process of developing the LA-21 began in several territories of Belarus. The first such document was developed for Turov in 1999.

By 2015, about 30 strategies had been developed and published at the level of cities, districts and village councils (or concepts) UR. For example, "Strategic Plan for the Sustainable Development of the City of Minsk", strategies (or concepts) for the sustainable development of cities - Novopolotsk, Zhodino and Disna, districts - Vetka, Lepel, Chausy, settlements - Zheludok and Borovukh, village councils - Vidomlay, Zanaroch'e and Vygonoshchansk.

It should be noted the different content levels and status of these documents, as well as different degrees of their practical implementation. Some of the concepts and strategies were mainly the result of the work of experts and the initiative group. Others were the result of the active involvement of local authorities and representatives of various sectors, local and external experts.

A number of SSD were approved and supported at the level of the respective councils of deputies and, thus, acquired a certain status in the system of normative documents and were used as a tool for the sustainable development of territories.

Methodologically and methodically, these documents also differ from each other.

During the development and implementation of the SSD, already at this stage, some territories used the principles proposed by the European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN): *a shared vision for the future and strategic goals; a high degree of political support; horizontal integration; vertical integration; public participation; mechanisms for implementation and provision of resources; monitoring, evaluation and improvement* (These principles are described in detail in the Methodology section).

The implementation of the principle of participation of various stakeholders in the development and implementation of local SSD has fundamental importance. Only the joint work of all actual players at the local level, including representatives of local authorities, businesses, public organizations, institutions and organizations, and experts, can lead to the achievement of tangible results in the direction of sustainable development. This is what makes it possible to maximize the use of social capital in the region, as well as to go beyond the solution of specific departmental and sectoral tasks, to establish genuine intersectoral interaction.

Unfortunately, in practice, it was the implementation of the partnership principle, namely the cooperation of representatives of different sectors, that was very difficult to achieve. In some cases, the activities of local initiative groups in the field of sustainable development took place without the active participation of local authorities. This led to parallel actions in the field of sustainable development. One of the ways to overcome this problem was the creation and active work in a number of territories of Public Councils for the development and implementation of sustainable development strategies, consisting of representatives of various interested organizations, institutions and experts and created under the executive committees of the respective territories.

As noted above, during this period, SSDs were developed primarily at the level of village councils and districts. There was no such activity at the regional level. The EU project "Assistance to Regional and Local Development of Belarus" (2013-2015) was supposed to change the situation. Within the framework of which, with the participation of the authorities and the public, SSD projects were developed in all six regions of Belarus, but they were never approved.

It is important to mention that already at this stage, the process of conceptualization and analysis of the experience of developing and implementing local SSD was periodically going on. A number of teaching aids have been developed and published. Among them, it is worth highlighting the following: *Sivograkov A. We think globally, we act locally. Strategies for sustainable development. Local agendas for the 21st century in Belarus, 2007; Sustainable development: a conceptual framework for management strategy: manual / V.V. Ermolenkov. Mn.: Acad. ex. under the President of the Republic of Belarus, 2011. And also prepared in 2015 jointly by the Research Institute of Economics of the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Belarus and the Land Association "Agenda-21" of the Land of North Rhine-Westphalia (LAG 21 NRW) Methodological guide for developing strategies for the sustainable development of districts and cities of regional subordination in the Republic of Belarus.*

LOCALIZATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The UN Summit in September 2015, which adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030), was another important step in the search for answers to the environmental, social and economic challenges facing the global community. A feature of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is to bring together development policy and sustainable development policy agendas, which up to that point had been

considered in parallel. Thus, the 2030 Agenda is the result of the development and intersection of the discourses of Agenda 21, adopted in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and the Millennium Development Goals.

In order to localize the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs at the national level, the architecture for managing the process of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the Republic of Belarus has been formed. The main elements of this architecture were established by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus on May 25, 2017, No. 181 "On the National Coordinator for the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals". The document appoints that the overall coordination of the activities of state bodies and other organizations on the implementation of the resolution of the UN General Assembly dated September 25, 2015, No. 70/1 "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" is carried out by the National Coordinator for the achievement of the Goals sustainable development. This document approved the Regulations on the National Coordinator for the achievement of the SDGs, which defines the functions of the coordinator and a new institution for the localization of the SDGs - the Council for Sustainable Development. Monitoring of the achievement of the SDGs by the Republic of Belarus is carried out by the National Statistical Committee for national. Details on the SDG management architecture in Belarus are available in the Institutionalization section after the Review.

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, as well as the creation of an architecture for managing the achievement of the SDGs in Belarus, process activities at the local level in the context of SD have significantly intensified and have become clearly focused as "**SDG localization**". This means the implementation of the principle of vertical integration when the goals and principles of the 2030 Agenda must be correlated and integrated with the challenges and tasks for the sustainable development of a particular territory.

In the Republic of Belarus, until the end of 2022, the "Strategy for the Development of state statistics of the Republic of Belarus for the period up to 2022" was implemented. (Strategy for the Development of State Statistics, 2017), within which the Roadmap of the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus for the development of statistics on the Sustainable Development Goals (Roadmap for the development of statistics for the SDGs) was developed. This Roadmap sets out the tasks of "building statistical capacity in relation to the SDGs" or, in other words, developing tools and mechanisms for its application for collecting and processing data on the SDG implementation processes in the Republic of Belarus, which are gradually being implemented.

By the end of 2022, 268 indicators have been already developed in the Republic of Belarus, 155 of which correspond to the indicators included in the global list of indicators for achieving the SDGs, and data for 108 indicators have been collected and are available for analysis (for more details, check the Methodological Analysis section).

For most indicators of the national list of indicators for achieving the SDGs, data are regularly collected and analyzed.

An important platform for promoting the 2030 Agenda at regional and local levels was the **Sustainability Weeks** in Belarus, which took place in the autumn of 2017. The main focus of the SD Weeks - 2017 was the demonstration of the initiatives of their contribution to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. As part of this SD Weeks, 158 events took place at the national, regional and local levels. About 15,000 people across Belarus took part in round tables, actions, competitions, ecological excursions, local festivals and holidays, and informational as well as educational meetings on the topic of sustainable development. More detailed information and events of the weeks of sustainable development in Belarus on the website https://sdweeks.ibb-d.org/

Localization of the SDGs at the regional level is intended to be coordinated by the Regional Working Groups on SD, which are also included in the SDG management architecture in Belarus. It is worth highlighting the activities of the Regional Working Group on SD of the Mogilev Region, within the framework of which during 2019-2020 the Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Mogilev Region (SSD of the Mogilev Region) was developed and approved by the regional authorities (To get more information about the SSD of the Mogilev Region and the process of its development, check the Methodology section).

During this period, the process of finalizing and developing new SSD at the district level has enhanced, taking into account the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. So, in the revised SSD of the Chausy district in 2016, the Sustainable Development Goals were reflected.

Along with the Strategies for Sustainable Development at the local level, other strategic documents were developed and implemented in the context of SD and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

Due to this, it is worth highlighting the following documents and processes:

1. *The Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP)* within the framework of the European initiative "Covenant of Mayors on Climate and Energy". The Covenant of Mayors on Climate and Energy has become a popular initiative among local governments in the Republic of Belarus. The Belarusian signatories of the initiative developed Action Plans for sustainable energy development and climate until 2030 and constantly monitored the implementation of activities. Most of these activities were aimed at the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals.

2. *Area-Based Development (ASED) Passports* were prepared for 30 districts from all 6 regions of Belarus within the framework of the EU/UNDP project "Promotion of Local Development".

3. *Plans for "Green Urban Development"* were developed for several cities and regions of Belarus within the framework of the GEF-UNDP-Ministry of Natural Resources project "Belarus: Support for Green Urban Development in Small and Medium Towns of Belarus" ("Green Cities").

4. *Local Economic Development Plans* were developed as part of the Covenant of Mayors for Economic Growth.

5. *Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans* in some projects were supported by various international cooperation programs.

6. *Smart city concepts* for the cities of Orsha, Baranovichi, Pinsk, Novopolotsk, Polotsk, Mozyr, Lida, Borisov, Soligorsk, Molodechno, Bobruisk with a population of more than 80 thousand people, which are potential cen-

ters of economic growth, were created. The concepts were developed as a part of the State Program for the Development of the Digital Economy and the Information Society for 2016-2020.

A significant contribution to promoting the localization of the SDGs was made by the first National Forum on Sustainable Development, which took place on January 24, 2019, in Minsk[27]. The purpose of the event was to review and analyze the work in Belarus on the implementation of the International Agenda for Sustainable Development for the period up to 2030 and the achievement of the 17 SDGs mentioned in it.

Starting from 2020, the process of SDG localization is largely influenced by the socio-political and economic situation in Belarus. At the same time, it should be noted that the process of developing local SSD continues. So, in 2021-2022, the SSD of Klichev, Krasnopol'e, Miory districts, as well as the city of Bobruisk were developed and approved.

3.2 METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF SDG LOCALIZATION

The success of SDG localization in the country and at the local level (a district in Belarus and a municipality in Georgia), is determined by the progress in achieving SDG indicators. This process depends on many factors that must be constantly taken into account.

In this context, when localizing the SDGs, it is important to observe multiple methodological content and organizational aspects. The content aspects contain several principles, including the "principle of five components", "MAPS mission recommendations" and others, following which allows maintaining thematic integrity and complexity, highlighting accelerators and priorities for achieving the SDGs. The organizational methodological aspects include principles, the following of which allows for a consistent, logically verified and integrated with existing approaches process of SDG localization with multilateral participation of interested stakeholders.

In this section, we will consider the main methodological principles and approaches that were pursued during the localization of the SDGs at all levels from national to local, namely:

- the principles of the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda [Agenda-2030];
- the principle of five components [Agenda-2030];
- model of strong development sustainability;
- the recommendations of the MAPS [Roadmap for Implementing the SDGs] mission;
- setting sustainable development goals;
- institutional framework for the development of SSD [Methodological guide for the development of SSD];
- organizational bases for the development and implementation of SSD.

28 Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

29 Ibid

PRINCIPLES OF THE SDG 2030 AGENDA[28].

⚑ *Universal Values,* which means that the 2030 Agenda is universal and commits everyone, regardless of their level of income and development, to contribute to the common effort towards sustainable development. The document can be used in all countries, in any context and at any time. In this context, the 2030 Agenda is seen as a universal guideline at all levels of strategic development planning based on the principles of sustainable development.

⚑ *Leave no one behind*, which means that the 2030 Agenda is intended to benefit everyone without exception. It notes the importance of providing support to those who need it most, regardless of their location, in accordance with their specific needs and vulnerabilities.

In this context, it is important to take into account the interests of all groups of the population and create conditions for their involved participation in the development and implementation of the SSD.

⚑ *Relationship and indivisibility*, which means that the 2030 Agenda is formed based on the principle of interconnectedness and indivisibility of all 17 goals contained in it. All 17 SDGs should be considered as a whole and one cannot get away from an approach that allows for a separate implementation of goals and an arbitrary, not always sufficiently justified, choice of separate goals for subsequent implementation.

In Belarus, a number of SDGs are often ignored, for example, SDG 14 "Preservation of marine ecosystems". The districts do not have direct access to the sea, which is why this goal is not considered. However, there are many rivers in Belarus that carry their waters to the seas and the quality of river water affects the ecosystem of the sea. The main task of the experts accompanying the development and implementation of the SSD is to help local partners to follow this principle.

⚑ *Inclusion*, which means that the 2030 Agenda calls for participation in its implementation by representatives of all sectors of society, regardless of their race, gender, ethnicity or identity.

⚑ *Multilateral partnership,* which means that in order to promote the implementation of the SDGs in all countries, the 2030 Agenda calls for building multi-stakeholder partnerships to mobilize and share knowledge, experience, technology and financial resources.

PRINCIPLE OF FIVE COMPONENTS[29].

The 2030 Agenda is based on five main components: *people, prosperity, planet, partnership and peace.* Traditionally viewed through the prism of three main dimensions - social inclusion, economic growth and environmental protection - with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the concept of sustainable development has acquired a deeper meaning, being complemented by two essential components: partnership and peace. This has become especially true in our days, the geopolitical struggle. Crucially, true sustainability is achieved and concentrated at the very core of these five interconnected components.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MAPS MISSION[30]

When designing sustainable development strategies, it is recommended to focus on the findings of the MAPS mission - Mainstreaming, Acceleration, Policy Support ("Integration, Acceleration and Policy Support"), which has been developed in Belarus since the end of 2017 and was organized by the UN in cooperation with the Government of the Republic of Belarus. The essence of the findings of the MAPS Mission is that the Republic of Belarus has made significant progress in sustainable development since its independence. For Belarus to maintain this positive development trend and further capitalize on its advantages in the context of significant global and regional economic, technological and demographic changes, Belarus needs to focus on key aspects of sustainable development. The country must also secure and attract significant and sustainable funding for development accelerators.

Based on the results of the MAPS mission, SDG Acceleration Platforms have been identified as areas where implementation can help overcome challenges and achieve development outcomes, contributing to the transformational benefits of all SDGs. The following platforms are proposed to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs (Figure 4):

Figure 4 - Brief overview of the roadmap for the implementation of the SDGs in the Republic of Belarus

1. Green transition towards inclusive and sustainable growth;
2. Focus on future generations;
3. Digital transformations and social innovations;
4. Gender equality in society.

"GREEN" TRANSITION TO INCLUSIVE SUSTAINABLE GROWTH	ORIENTATION ON FUTURE GENERATIONS	DIGITAL TRANSFORMATIONS AND SOCIAL INNOVATIONS	GENDER EQUALITY IN SOCIETY
Target growth in low-carbon sectors (information and communication technologies (ICT), sustainable transport, sustainable tourism)	Access to more effective services for adolescents and youth, in particular for those at risk (sexual and reproductive health, justice, psychosocial services, violence reduction)	Enterprise efficiency and digitalization	Expanding and deepening economic opportunities for women to overcome the gender gap in terms of wages and opportunities
Strengthened MS.ME development and availability of financing, better corporate governance	Excise taxation, restrictions on the sale of alcohol, cigarettes and anti-tobacco policy	Enterprise efficiency and digitalization	Family and work policies to reduce women's costs of raising children and promote equality in the distribution of family roles
Sustainable use of natural resources with public involvement	New skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics / ICT / innovation and labor market-oriented support	Capacity building for e-govemance and e-justice	Legal, management and other basic services aimed at combating gender-based violence in the personal and public spheres
Energy efficiency and emissions' trading	Decision making and urban space for public engagement	Space for decentralized prototyping, behavioral insights, new forms of big data processing, systems thinking, and alternative financing techniques (crowdfunding and peer-to-peer lending)	Preventive measures aimed at combating stereotypes and contributing to the change of social and cultural behavior

The concept of "platforms" is in line with the partnership dimension of the 2030 Agenda and SDG 17, which calls for cooperation, partnerships and commitment by all actors, recognizing the critical role of government actors and considering the contribution and participation of business, the media, civil society organizations, international partners and the people of Belarus as agents of development and progress. The acceleration platforms are designed to be mutually reinforcing and have intersection points.

PRINCIPLES OF THE EUROPEAN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT NETWORK[31]

The European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN) has defined 7 (seven) principles for managing the development and implementation of the SSD and other similar documents. These principles became fundamental in the development of most SSD in Belarus.

1. *Shared vision and strategic goals.* The SSD should contain a jointly articulated vision of the desired future that sustainable development will lead to in the long term.

   At all levels of development, including at the level of districts and village councils, communities should form a vision of their development in 10-15 years and ways to achieve it. This will give them an understanding of what goals and activities are needed to achieve the desired vision.

2. *Support at the highest political level.* The development or implementation of an SSD should be fully supported by higher authorities and/or other influential structures. The process of localization of the SDGs at the local level must be supported by the first persons of the district, as well as by the regional and national governments. This support ensures that local development goals are vertically integrated with higher-level goals and the SDGs and facilitates interaction between partners.

3. *Horizontal integration.* It is necessary to take into account the integration of economic, environmental and social issues both in the document on SSD (cross-sectoral areas: green economy, smart city, etc.) and the management of the implementation of SSD (for example, the digitalization council, which discusses the development of the economy, improving social services and minimizing the impact of life activities on the environment). In Belarus, the model of strong development sustainability was widely used, according to which ecology is at the center of development.

4. *Vertical integration.* The SSD should be consistent with priorities and implementation activities at other levels of government (UN, the Republic of Belarus, region, district, village council /sometimes/).

5. *Participatory (involved) development.* In the development and implementation of the SSD, the involvement of all parties should be ensured: civil society, authorities, business, NGOs, initiatives, etc. To ensure participatory development, a wide range of tools and mechanisms should be used, for example, informational and advisory Internet campaigns, thematic dialogues with stakeholders, etc.

[31] ESDN. Basics of SD strategies

6. *Mechanisms for implementation and capacity building.* The development and implementation of the SSD require the mandatory adoption of relevant regulations and the creation of mechanisms for the implementation of the SSD (for example, work plans, budgeting, etc.) with a clear definition of areas of responsibility, as well as required institutional and (or) human resources or measures to increase them, and potential to achieve goals.

    For example, the SSD implementation management structure, Digitalization Council, Entrepreneurship Council, etc. - are all mechanisms for the implementation of the SSD. These structures are created to perform new functions, which can only be ensured if the participants in these mechanisms are trained in both the basics of sustainable development and specific knowledge in a particular area. It is also important to increase the material and technical potential of these mechanisms and give them the status and necessary resources.

7. *Monitoring, evaluation and updating of the strategy.* The effectiveness of the SSD in terms of achieving its goals should be constantly monitored against several indicators of sustainable development (usually quantitative) and evaluated at regular intervals (usually qualitative). The results of monitoring and evaluation should lead to regular adjustments and updates of the strategy, based on the evidence base.

When localizing the SSD, it is important that the same indicators can be compared at all levels, which will facilitate monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the SSD. But in fact, SDG indicators are difficult to compare with national indicators. The situation is even worse when comparing SDG indicators with indicators at the regional and local levels.

When developing the SSD, their unique development indicators that are understood by local stakeholders can be adopted. In this case, it is necessary to determine the ways of monitoring and evaluating development according to these indicators.

SETTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

When developing the SSD, the goal-setting structure should be clear, understandable, and accessible. To this end, when setting goals, it is recommended to rely on the following SMART criteria:
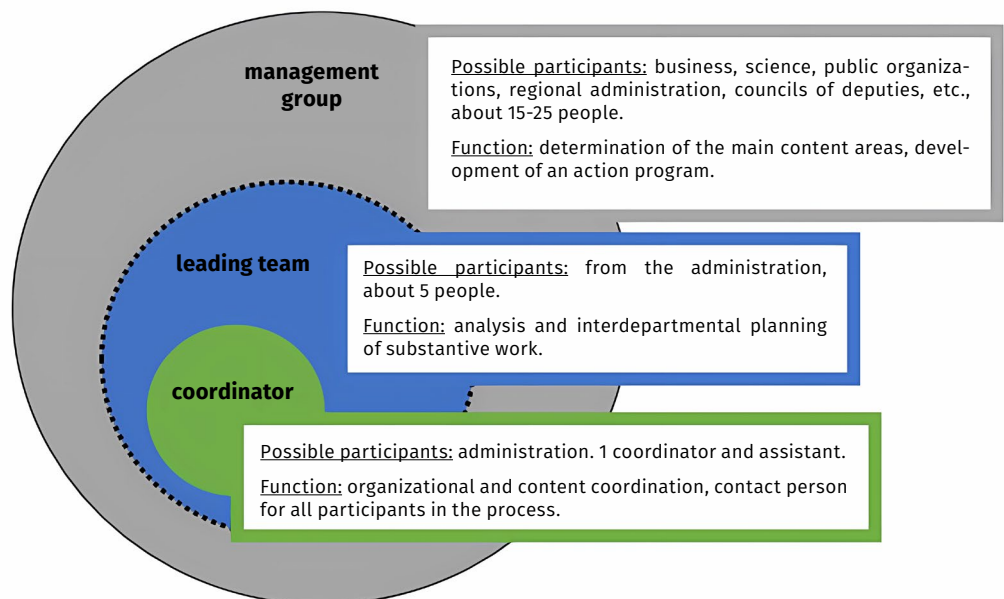
- Specific - specific (ideally with an indication of a quantitative goal);
- Measurable - measurable (with SD indicators, see below);
- Achievable - achievable (neither too easy nor too demanding);
- Relevant - realistic (achievable under given resources and political circumstances);
- Time-bound - limited in time (indicating the start date and target year).

THE ORGANIZATIONAL BASIS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SSD[32]

There are no generally accepted rules regarding the formation at different levels of methods of activity focused on achieving the SDGs in the near and long term. However, the factors for the success of SSD implementation can be the creation of management structures and bodies responsible for its implementation, the introduction of new management positions and functions, as well as a clear designation of areas of interaction between existing structures and innovative concepts of SD (Masilevich, 2018), in other words, the institutionalization of the localization process SDGs.

To analyze the current stage of development and implementation of the SSD in the districts, organizational structures with a permanent status were created based on the order of the head of the district. Such a structure defines the areas of role, responsibility and functions in relation to the development of the SSD, ensures the openness and participatory nature of the process, as well as the dialogue and cooperation of the actors involved: government, business and civil society. Organizationally, such a structure consists of three components: a coordinator, a leading team, and a steering group (Figure 5).

Figure 5 - The structure of the SSD development team

management group

Possible participants: business, science, public organizations, regional administration, councils of deputies, etc., about 15-25 people.

Function: determination of the main content areas, development of an action program.

leading team

Possible participants: from the administration, about 5 people.

Function: analysis and interdepartmental planning of substantive work.

coordinator

Possible participants: administration. 1 coordinator and assistant.

Function: organizational and content coordination, contact person for all participants in the process.

The coordinator provides organizational management of the SSD development and implementation process. The coordinator is the main point of contact for all participants and stakeholders, who ensures that the results of the process are recorded and provides continuous communication within and outside the organizational structure (work with the public). The coordinator may have assistants.

The leading group is formed mainly from representatives of the local government. Representatives of significant enterprises and organizations of the district may be invited. The leading group supports the coordinator in organizing

[32] Methodological guide for developing strategies for sustainable development of districts and cities of regional subordination in the Republic of Belarus. Publication of GNU NIEI ME RB, LAG 21 Land Association "Agenda XXI" of North Rhine-Westphalia, 2015 [Electronic resource] – Access date: 02/25/2023

and supporting the development and implementation of the SSD. The group prepares a substantive basis for the work of the steering group, for example, by conducting research, reviewing previous processes related to SD, or collecting other necessary information.

The leading team can consist of 5 to 15 people representing different departments/agencies (e.g. planning, health, environment, transport, social services, youth affairs, etc.). Thanks to this representation, the integration of various spheres of life and approaches to solving problems is ensured. Depending on the direction of the substantive work, other representatives of the administration or external experts may also be temporarily involved in the work of the leading team (for example, for deeper analysis, data collection, etc.). The leading team is a part of the steering group.

The management group is responsible for the meaningful development of the objectives and measures included in the SSD. It brings together up to 25-30 people representing the interests of the general public. All group members are equal. As practice has shown, the composition of the group changes over time.

In practice, in Belarus, most often the regional organizational structure for the development of SSD was formed from two components: a coordination group and a public council for sustainable development (sometimes called an initiative group). In an expanded composition, such councils performed the functions of a management group, and in a narrower composition, consisting of representatives of the district administration, they performed the functions of a leading group (Figure 6). The right to make final decisions regarding the SSD and the implementation of various measures remains with the state authorities.

Figure 6 - Framework format of the public council on SD under the district executive committee
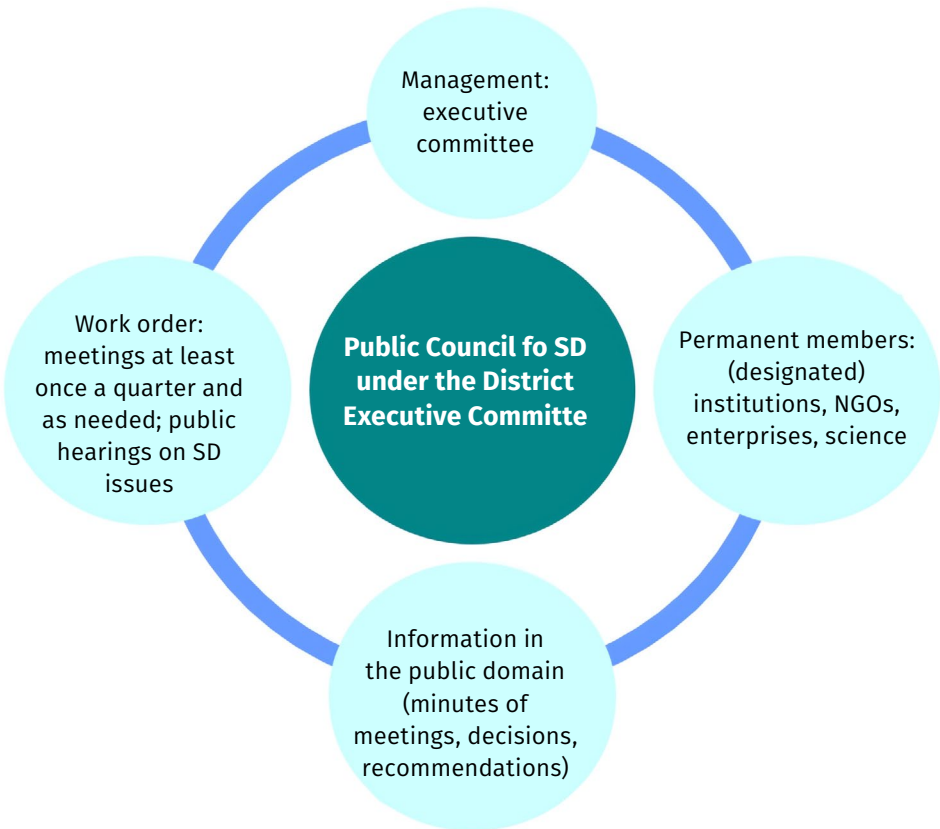
PRINCIPLES FOR ORGANIZING THE DEVELOPMENT AND ADOPTION OF SSD [METHODOLOGICAL GUIDE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SSD]

The model presented in Figure 7 was widely used to organize, consider and adopt the SSD in Belarus. This model allowed us to cover a variety of topics and a large number of potentially significant participants. The presented model includes six main steps.

Figure 7 - Scheme of the SSD development process
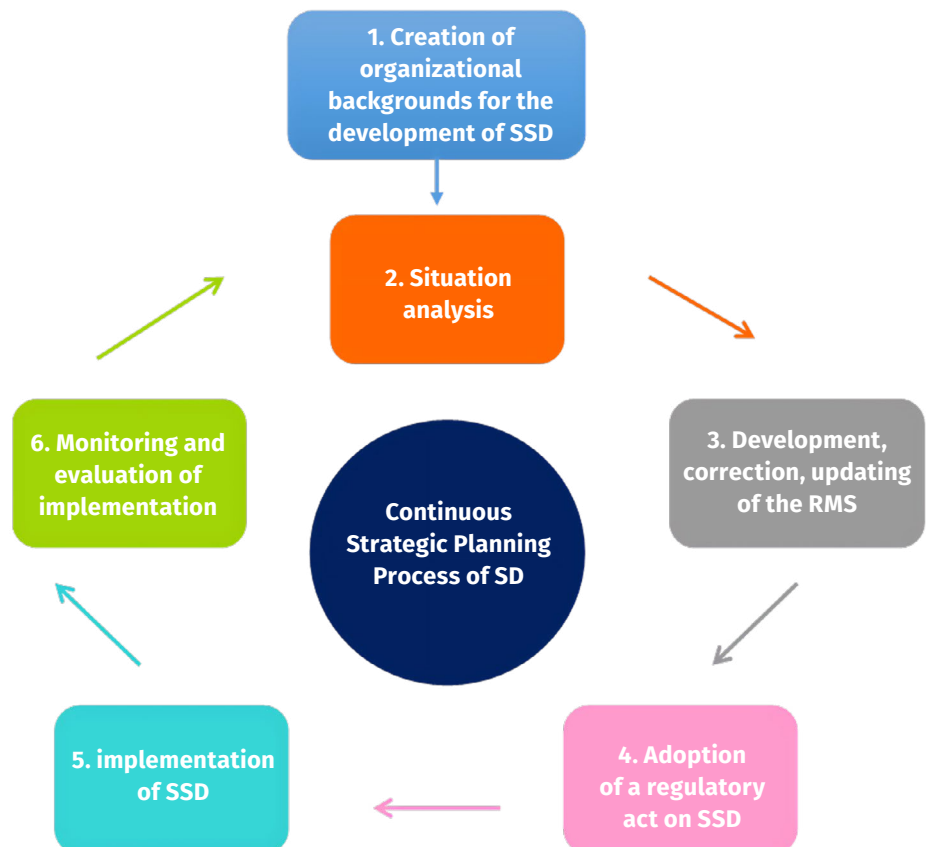
First step - formation of organizational bases for the development, implementation, monitoring and adjustment of the SSD and informing all subjects and the public about the process of developing and implementing the SSD, as well as about created process management bodies.

Second step – analysis of the current situation to determine the area (for example, healthcare, economy, energy supply, ecology, housing stock, etc.) where urgent actions are required to ensure SD.

Third step - the actual development of the SSD is based on the analysis and involves the participation of all subjects in the process. The result of the step is the SSD in the form of a written document.

Fourth step – the adoption of the SSD by the authorities as a normative act.

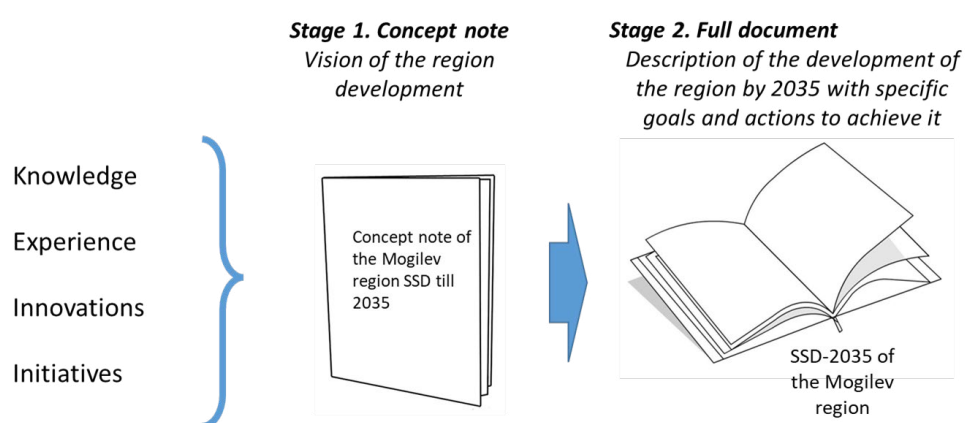*Fifth step*– implementation of the measures formulated in the strategy following the procedure given there.

⊠ *Sixth step* – monitoring the implementation of the strategy based on relevant indicators with an assessment of the success of the strategy, and the result of the assessment is recorded in reports. Based on the assessment, the strategy document is adjusted, i.e. back to the first step.

As part of this process, the SSD is constantly developed, adjusted and updated. This ensures its adaptation to changed external and internal conditions and its constant updating.

EXAMPLE OF THE PRACTICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SSD

In the Republic of Belarus, the process of developing an SSD from the first step to the full approval of a full-format comprehensive document usually takes from one to two years, as a rule, and is divided into two stages. Let's consider an example of the development of the SSD of the Mogilev region for the period up to 2035 (Figure 8). This approach was also used in the development of SSD in the districts.

Figure 8 - Stages of development of the SSD of the Mogilev region (Source: author's development)

Stage 1. Concept note
Vision of the region development

Stage 2. Full document
Description of the development of the region by 2035 with specific goals and actions to achieve it

Knowledge

Experience

Innovations

Initiatives

Concept note of the Mogilev region SSD till 2035

SSD-2035 of the Mogilev region

The first stage in the development of the SSD was to analyze the situation of the current development of the region and to design, on its basis, the concept of the SSD document or a short version of the future SSD (Figure 9). The concept allows for preliminary approval of the document with the public, and if necessary to return to the initial document, to the analysis of the situation and finalize the necessities. The subsequent second stage of the development of the SSD consists of filling in the SSD concept with more detailed information, a description of the second-order goals, mechanisms for implementing the SSD, etc.

In turn, each of the stages includes a number of activities. For example, Figure 6 shows the scheme for developing the concept of the SSD of the Mogilev region for the period up to 2035. Analogously, an action plan was drawn up for the implementation of the SSD development stage from the concept to the full version of the document (Figure 10).

Figure 9 - Roadmap for the 1st stage of the development of the SSD of the Mogilev region (Source: author's development)
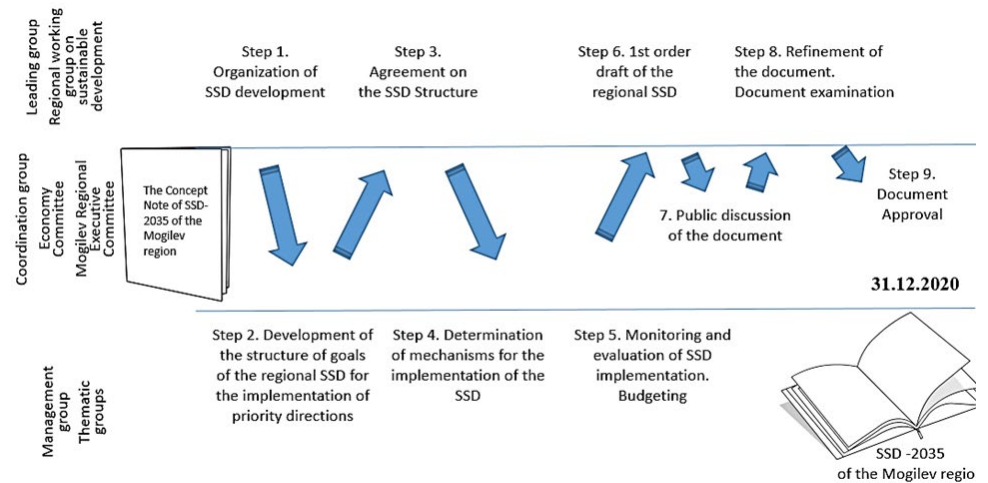
Figure 10 - Roadmap for the 2nd stage of the development of the SSD-2035 of the Mogilev region for the period up to 2035 (Source: author's development)
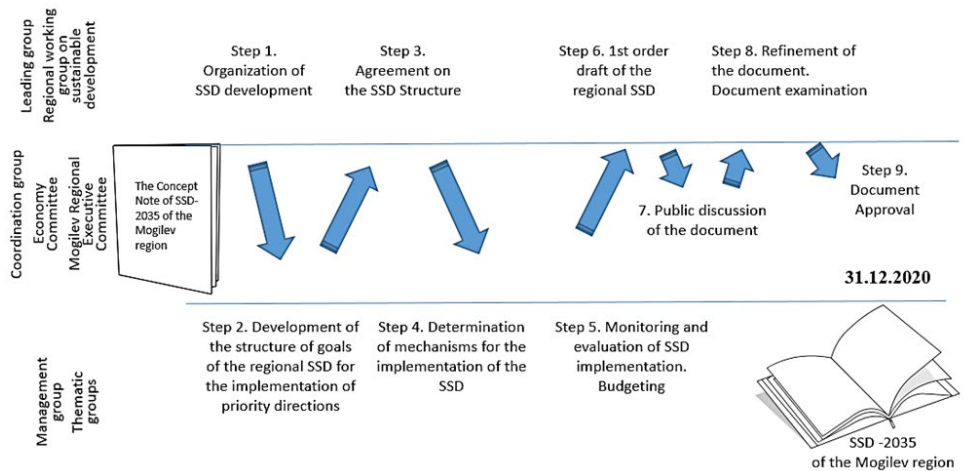
This organization of SSD development provides a participatory process that takes into account the large number of opinions expressed in consultations by the general public in the region. The lead group ensured consistent and meaningful work on the strategy. The steering group provided a broad discussion of the problems of the development of the region, approaches and measures to solve them (Figure 11). Specialists from enterprises and organizations, districts, public figures and representatives of non-profit organizations were involved in the meetings of the steering group.

Figure 11 – Steering group meeting (Source: Photo by the author)

3.3 INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF SSD DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

The development and implementation of SSD requires institutionalization or the creation of new forms of relations between the involved entities, with the development of rules, norms and foundations for their self-regulation. Institutionalization creates a solid framework for the localization of SSD from national to local, multilateral participation, effective vertical communication and integration, as well as the possibility of solving cross-sectoral issues, which include "smart" city, "green" economy, etc.

In this section, we will evaluate the experience of institutionalizing the achievement of the SDGs in Belarus at the national, regional and local levels, which will allow us to form a complete picture of the infrastructure created and developing to date for the localization of the SDGs.

AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

In order to localize the SDGs at the national level, an *architecture for managing the process of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the Republic of Belarus* has been created. The architecture is described in detail on the website of the National Coordinator for SDGs [website of the National Coordinator for SDGs] and is depicted in Figure 12 [Roadmap for the development of statistics on SDGs].

Figure 12 - Architecture for managing the process of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the Republic of Belarus [website of the National Coordinator for the Achievement of the SDGs]
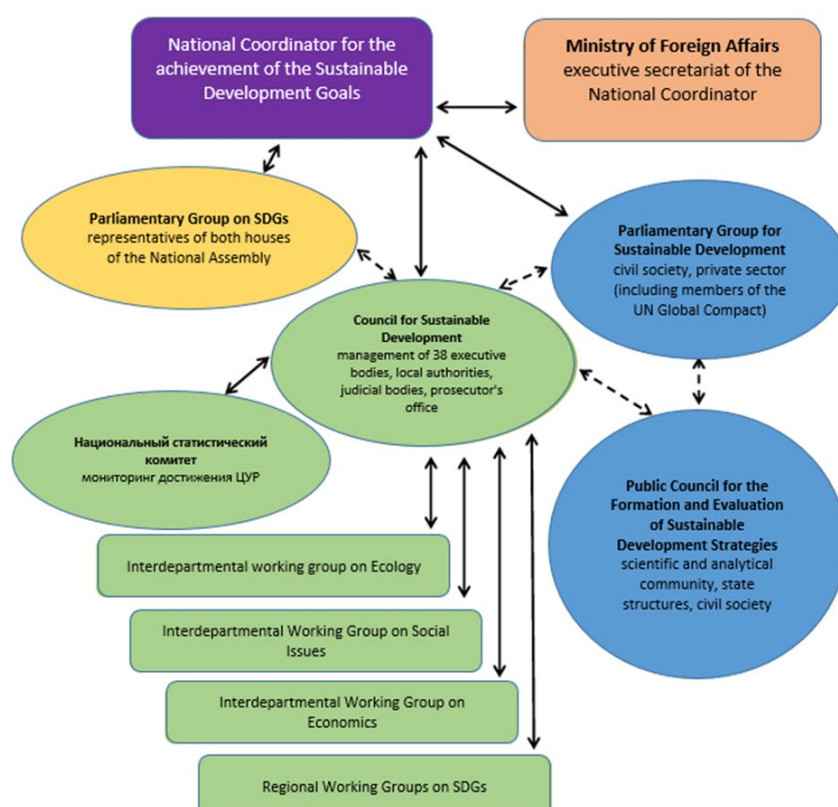
The Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus dated May 25, 2017, No. 181 "On the National Coordinator for the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals" became the fundamental document for the formation of the architecture for managing the process of achieving the SDGs. The document establishes that the overall coordination of the activities of state bodies and other organizations to implement the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly dated September 25, 2015, No. 70/1 "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" is carried out *National Coordinator for the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals*. The Decree approved the Regulations on the National Coordinator.

The same Decree established a new institution for the localization of the SDGs – the *Council for Sustainable Development*, which includes 5 intersectoral groups on economics, ecology, social issues, education and on monitoring and evaluating the achievement of the SDGs. Intersectoral groups are led by deputy heads of the relevant state bodies (ministries). Representatives of business circles, public associations and international organizations are involved in the work of the Council for Sustainable Development.

Meetings of the Council for Sustainable Development are held once a year. At the first meeting of the Council, held on September 4, 2017, the issues of building the Belarusian architecture to achieve the SDGs were considered, and the course of interdepartmental cooperation was determined to form a national system of indicators for monitoring the SDGs, as well as international cooperation in the field of achieving the SDGs.

The activities of the National Coordinator and the Council for Sustainable Development are supported by the Secretariat of the National Coordinator for the achievement of the SDGs, whose functions are performed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus.

The Group of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by the Republic of Belarus (parliamentary group of sustainable development) was established by the decisions of the Presidium of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus and the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus in March 2020. The group was created to expand the awareness and involvement of parliamentarians in the localization of the SDGs.

Regional Sustainability Groups were created to organize work to achieve the SDGs by the regions and promote their balanced development. These groups are headed by members of the Council for Sustainable Development - deputy chairmen of the regional and Minsk city executive committees. These groups, along with employees of local authorities, also included representatives of business circles and public associations.

Sustainability Partner Group functions within the framework of the SDG process management architecture in the Republic of Belarus and has the status of an open-ended group. It is formed from representatives of commercial and

non-profit civil society organizations, including public organizations duly registered in the Republic of Belarus, and international organizations that share the principles and provisions of the 2030 Agenda and actively participate in the implementation and promotion of the SDGs in the Republic of Belarus.

The Public Council for Formation and Monitoring of Sustainable Development Strategies was established as an advisory body under the Research Institute of Economics of the Republic of Belarus to involve scientific and educational circles, international organizations, the business community and other civil society structures in the development of the SSD and monitoring its implementation, identifying goals and priorities for socio-economic development for the long term.

The SDG Media Coordination Group was created to ensure that the public is informed about the need and mechanisms for achieving sustainable development indicators at the local and national levels. This will be done with the help of state print and electronic republican and regional media, as well as accounts on instant messengers and social networks.

SDG Youth Ambassadors. The SDG Youth Ambassador is a student representative selected to promote the SDGs and guided by the slogan "Together for a sustainable future". According to the number of SDGs, 17 youth ambassadors were elected. They promote the SDGs among young people, inform them about the mechanisms for achieving sustainable development indicators at the local and national levels, help young people acquire knowledge and professional competencies of the 21st century, and master the ideas and principles of sustainable development.

As of January 1, 2023, the date of writing the review, the main document for localizing the SDGs at the national level is *the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Belarus for the period up to 2035*. This is the fourth officially adopted national strategy for sustainable development.

The National platform for reporting on SDG indicators developed by Belstat for open monitoring and evaluation of the achievement of the SDGs by the Republic of Belarus [National SDG Reporting Platform].

AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

To localize the SDGs at the regional level, by the order of the head of the region (the chairman of the regional executive committee or the Minsk City Executive Committee, which has the status of the regional executive committee), *Regional Sustainability Groups.* They included representatives of authorities, regional committees and other key enterprises and organizations. The regional groups were headed by the deputy chairmen of the regional executive committees. Support for the activities of regional groups on sustainable development and coordination of sustainable development activities are carried out by the economic committees of the regional executive committees.

Nowadays, in the Republic of Belarus, the main document regulating regional development is the regional plans for socio-economic development for five years which integrated as a part State program of socio-economic develop-
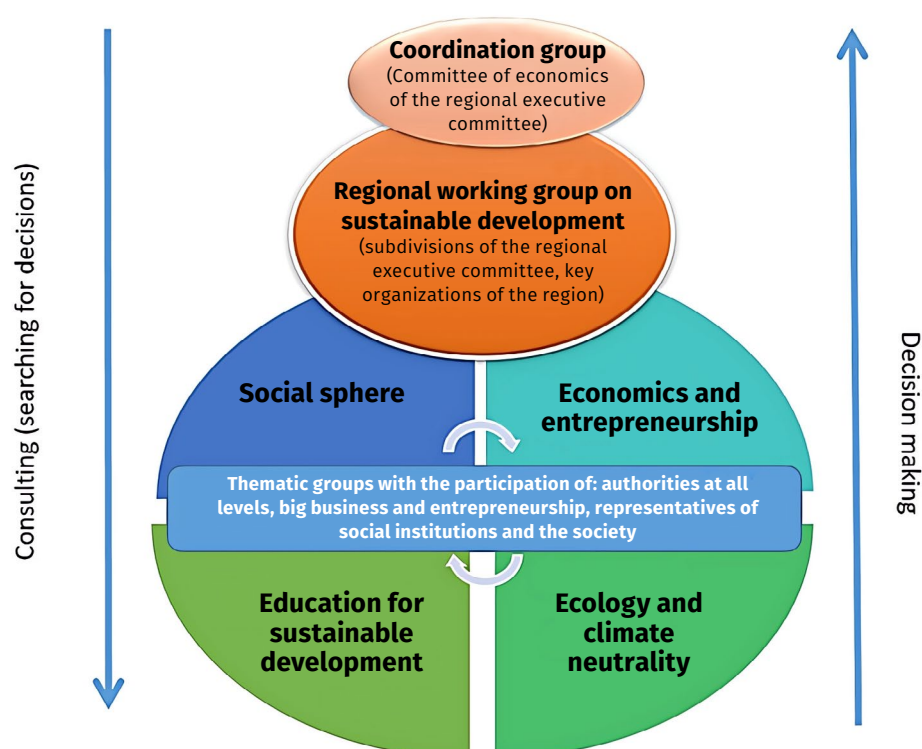
ment. There are no legislative requirements for the mandatory development of regional SSD, and there to other regulatory documents is not defined. In fact, the SSD document is advisory in nature. In this regard, the development, adoption and implementation of the regional SSD document is voluntary for the regional governments.

In Belarus there is only one regional authority developed and approved regional SSD for implementation. In 2019-2020 the regional SSD was developing for the period up to 2035. The document was adopted on December 31, 2020, and signed by the chairman of the Mogilev regional executive committee after public discussion, and approval by the decision of the Presidium of the Mogilev Regional Council of Deputies. At the level of other regional executive committees and the Minsk City Executive Committee, action plans for work in the field of sustainable development are annually adopted.

Previously, the SSD documents were developed for all regions of Belarus in 2015, but they were never officially adopted.

The structure of SDG localization management at the regional level is similar to that recommended (see institutionalization). Thus, in the Mogilev region, a structure was formed to manage the process of achieving the SDGs (Figure 13). This structure included two components: a coordination group and a regional working group on sustainable development with thematic groups. Drawing an analogy with the recommended model of the organization structure for managing the development and implementation of the SSD, in the Mogilev region, only the leading group was singled out and approved by the order of the deputy chairman of the regional executive committee. Experts and specialists with specific competencies were invited to the meetings of the leading group, if needed.

Figure 13 - Management structure for the development and implementation of the regional SSD for 2035 (Source: author's development)

Consulting (searching for decisions)

Decision making

Coordination group
(Committee of economics of the regional executive committee)

Regional working group on sustainable development
(subdivisions of the regional executive committee, key organizations of the region)

Social sphere

Economics and entrepreneurship

Thematic groups with the participation of: authorities at all levels, big business and entrepreneurship, representatives of social institutions and the society

Education for sustainable development

Ecology and climate neutrality

The Main Statistical Department of the Mogilev Region summarizes statistical data on indicators of the regional SSD, analyzes and submits them to the Economics Committee of the Mogilev Regional Executive Committee and the Regional Group on Sustainable Development for monitoring, evaluation and adjustment of the process.

The work of the coordination group and the regional working group is regulated by the orders of the chairman or deputy of the Mogilev regional executive committee in charge of sustainable development issues. The full complement of the regional working group meets during significant events (conferences, seminars) or at the request of the coordination group.

The regional working group includes thematic groups, which are formed according to a specific topic or request of the leading group. For example, on the greening of development, the circular economy, education for sustainable development, etc. The leaders of the thematic groups are representatives of the key structural units of the Mogilev Oblast Executive Committee, who are part of the leading group.

To implement the SSD in the Mogilev region, such innovative institutions were created:

- Regional Academy of Sustainable Development (scientific, methodological and consulting support);
- Loyalty program for achieving the goals of the regional SSD (increasing the motivation of business entities to join in the achievement of regional SSD);
- Network of regional and local resource centers (support for activities to implement the sustainable development strategy);
- Conference on sustainable development (monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the implementation of the sustainable development strategy).

This list is not exhaustive, soon it will be possible to create new institutions or change the functions of the current one. A significant contribution to the implementation of the regional SSD is made by the development of project activities.

AT THE LOCAL (DISTRICT) LEVEL

The localization of the SDGs at the district level is carried out exclusively voluntarily by the decision of local authorities. About 40 out of 118 regions of Belarus started and developed concepts as well as full-format documents of the sustainable development strategy. Some of the districts have not completed the work begun. There are no official statistics on this issue.

The institutional foundations for the localization of the SDGs at the local level, similarly with regional institutions, are:

- district councils for sustainable development;
- strategies for sustainable development of districts;
- regional work plans in the field of sustainable development.

District councils for sustainable development (district initiative groups for sustainable development) are formed based on the order of the chairmen

of the district executive committees, and these groups are headed by the deputy chairmen of the district executive committees. The district councils include representatives of the authorities, organizations and enterprises, and public entrepreneurs. If necessary, within the framework of the councils, thematic groups are formed according to development priorities without formalization (institutionalization) since their composition often changes to solve specific problems.

Support for the activities of district councils for sustainable development is carried out, generally, by the departments of the economics of district executive committees. Often the key role is played by those divisions of the district executive committee, the head of which actively promotes the values of sustainable development.

Monitoring of the achievement of indicators of the local SSD is carried out by economic departments in cooperation with other structural units whose competence includes the collection of relevant thematic indicators.

A significant role in the localization of the SDGs at the local level is played by non-profit organizations that perform several key functions in addition to the efforts of the authorities. First, they supported the coordination of sustainable development activities. Secondly, they attracted external resources and expertise for the development of local SSDs and thirdly, they directly carried out some of these activities to organize the development of local SSDs.

To implement the sustainable development strategy in the districts, such institutions could be created as:

- resource centers based on non-profit and government organizations (support for activities to implement the priority areas of the sustainable development strategy);
- deputy commissions (councils) for SSD localization for interaction and integration of activities with the general public.

MONITORING

The basis for monitoring the localization of SSD in Belarus is indicative planning. The implementation of the SSD and the achievement of the SDGs should be monitored quantitatively (indicator reports) and qualitatively (progress reports). The experience gained becomes the basis for a systematic adjustment of the strategy. The process of SSD planning at the local level occurs, as a rule, "bottom-up", i.e. goals, objectives and, accordingly, indicators were composed based on the definition of local needs, desires and competencies of SSD developers in specific areas. The vast majority of local SSD has developed over the past 15-20 years have a set of indicators to monitor progress toward the goals of these strategies. In some local SSD developed after 2017, you can find indicators that are specifically linked to the indicators of the Na-

tional level and the SDGs. Nevertheless, at the local level, there are no mechanisms for collecting, systematizing and analyzing data, and for this reason, monitoring systems for local SSD are not fully implemented.

However, we have several examples of the development and implementation of systems for monitoring strategies and development programs at the local level (SURT of the Bragin district, the Program for the development of sustainable tourism in the Braslav district). Experience shows that these systems can work with the support of local authorities and a responsible attitude to the processes of strategizing the sustainable development of their territory.

Let us briefly consider how the system of indicators for monitoring the localization of the SDGs from the global to the local levels is formed.

⚐ *Global level.* The SDG system has a three-level hierarchical structure: "goal - objectives - indicators", i.e. each goal is specified by several tasks, each of which, in turn, is supported by indicators for monitoring and evaluating the progress of their implementation until 2030. Thus, within the framework of the SDGs, 17 goals are defined, each of which is specified from 5 to 19 tasks (in total 169 tasks) and, accordingly, 231 unique indicators and 13 indicators duplicated in two or three different tasks. Data on these indicators are accumulated, systematized and provided for analysis on the UN Internet portal [Global Database Dissemination Platform].

⚐ *National level.* The national list of SDG indicators in the Republic of Belarus contains 268 indicators, of which 155 correspond to the Global List, 106 are proxy indicators and 7 indicators are additional, taking into account the national characteristics of the country and proposed by government authorities due to the lack of methodology at the international level.

The national SDG indicator system has the same numerical designation system as at the global level. At the same time, proxy indicators are indicated by four digits, where the first three digits correspond to the numerical designations of global indicators, and the fourth is the ordinal number of the proxy indicator.

The work on updating the National List of Indicators is carried out continuously both as metadata is developed and taking into account the proposals of interested parties.

As a part of the development of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Belarus for the period up to 2035 (NSSD -2035), active work is underway to determine target values for indicators included in the National List of Indicators for the achievement of the SDGs. As of early 2019, targets have been set for 53% of the available SDG [First National Forum on Sustainable Development] indicators, with more now. The target values are placed in the NPP in the "target values" tab.

⚐ *Local level.* Indicators for local-level strategies are divided into two types: indicators of the achievement of the objectives of the strategy and general indicators (indicators of the impact on the external environment). The former is prepared based on the goals set in a specific SSD and are unique, and suitable only for this SSD. The second ones are common for any territory and reflect changes in the external environment that occur during the implementation of the SSD.

Since changes in the external environment occur not only as a result of the implementation of local SSD, but also under the influence of other processes taking place in the country or the world, monitoring general indicators makes it possible to assess the effectiveness and contribution of a particular SSD to the overall process of achieving the SDGs at the local, national and global levels.

MONITORING ARCHITECTURE FROM GLOBAL AND LOCAL LEVELS

Monitoring of the disaggregation of SDG indicators (by sex, age, nationality, income, migratory status, disability, and geographic location) is carried out with the help of the UN Statistical Commission and the Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDG), which consists of Member States and includes regional and international institutions. The Republic of Belarus has been a member of the IAEG-SDGs since July 2017 and represents the region of Eastern Europe in it.

The main mechanism for monitoring and disseminating data on SDG indicators in the Republic of Belarus is the National SDG Reporting Platform (NRRP). Since the end of 2018, this platform has been hosted and available for use on the official website of Belstat [National platform for reporting on SDG indicators].

The National Coordinator for the achievement of the SDGs is responsible for organizing all work to achieve the SDGs in the Republic of Belarus, including ensuring the monitoring of the system of national SDG indicators.

Since the statistical services of all countries play a key role in reporting on the achievement of the SDGs, the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus (Belstat) has been appointed as the National Focal Point for monitoring the achievement of the SDGs, which itself is the producer of data on most parameters of the national list of SDG indicators. In addition to Belstat, 26 state bodies (organizations) have been identified as producers of data on the national list of SDG indicators (both indicators of the UN Global List and proxy indicators) that provide data on the SDG indicators assigned to them.

The NRP, which is located on the official website of Belstat, contains the global and national lists of SDG indicators, the roadmap for the development of SDG statistics, and documents developed in the field of sustainable development, as well as links to similar headings and documents posted on the websites of international organizations [Thematic section on SDGs].

At the local level, Public Councils (PCs) are responsible for monitoring the development and implementation of SSD in specific areas. Responsibility for collecting and analyzing data can be assumed by any member of the OS, but as a rule, this function is carried out by the economics department of the district executive committee.

All data collected during the monitoring process is accumulated and then used at the local level during the periodic assessment and modification of the local SSD. If the "general indicators" of local SSD intersect with the indicators of the national list of SDG indicators, then all data on these indicators are transferred to the regional level and above.

Ensuring the monitoring of progress in the implementation of the SSD is one of the mandatory principles of ESDN. Monitoring is designed to ensure the manageability of strategizing as a cyclic, continuously improving process of achieving the SDGs.

At the same time, monitoring itself should also be carried out in accordance with the principles of ESDN, namely:

- reflect the important characteristics of the Shared Vision and make them measurable and controllable;
- ensure broad public participation both in the development of indicators and in data collection, analysis and evaluation;
- ensure vertical integration between indicators of strategies at different levels, as well as horizontal integration of indicators that reflect intersectoral and interdepartmental interests;
- the monitoring system should be provided with a tool for collecting, systematizing and analyzing data, requiring the contribution of human, financial and administrative resources. This requires the developed monitoring system to be approved by the local authority, and then be accepted for execution by all organizations and institutions related to the implementation of the SSD.

ISSUES OF MONITORING

One of the main problems faced by the Republic of Belarus in the formation of a national system of indicators by global indicators is the lack of a methodology for calculating global indicators. For this reason, individual indicators of the national list are not currently available, and proxies have been identified for some indicators.

Another problem in monitoring the achievement of the SDGs is the real coordination and cooperation between the various participants in the processes of sustainable development, especially in involving non-governmental organizations and international partners in this activity.

At the local level, there are several problems in organizing and implementing SSD monitoring, and one of them is the lack of skills and experience among members of local CBs in developing and implementing a monitoring system.

Another problem is the difficulty of recognizing indicators that appropriately reflect the aspects of activity that are important for the successful achievement of the SSD goals. In addition, ideally, indicators should be measurable, unambiguously interpreted, not subjected to administrative influence, etc., corresponding to other requirements for the quality of any indicators.

Another problem appears at the intersection of the two previous problems. Often, the process of developing and implementing monitoring systems is

not provided with either human or administrative and financial resources. That is, at the local level there may not be people who would be ready (knew, able, and would like) to take on the functions of regular monitoring, and business entities that should have provided data may not consider themselves obliged to provide it, and there may also be no methodology for obtaining or calculating indicators that are unique to the local SSD.

All these problems are fundamentally solvable if there is a desire and a conscious need among members of public councils, as well as with external expert support for the development and implementation of the SSD in general, and the monitoring and evaluation system in particular.

3.4 MECHANISMS AND TOOLS FOR SDGs LOCALIZATION

The results of SDG localization are the integration of global goals into local strategic and operational programs and development plans (policies), practical measures to achieve the SDGs, as well as their monitoring and review in relevant reports with the participation of all stakeholders at the local level, with proper coordination with others, especially national and regional stakeholders. Therefore, this section of the review is devoted to describing the tools and mechanisms that are used to create an effective institutional structure that contributes to the achievement of the SDGs at the local level.

First of all, let us clarify the concepts of the mechanism and tool, which are often confused. *Mechanisms for* localization of the SDGs are processes and elements of the management system SDGs that contribute to the creation and functioning of structures and social institutions whose activities are aimed at localizing and achieving the SDGs, promoting the ideas of sustainable development and designing the management system itself of sustainable development at the local level under the influence of both internal and external factors.

Tools are organizational, informational and educational resources needed to arrange and support the SDG localization process. The tools are designed to ensure the implementation of SDG localization mechanisms. At the same time, the exact tool can contribute to the implementation of several mechanisms at once.

SDG LOCALIZATION MECHANISMS

In Belarus, the localization of the SDGs at the local level is associated with the need to build an architecture that allows people to create an organiza-

tional infrastructure and provide support for the process carried out by the authorities together with the community. It is required to ensure the involved (included, participatory) participation of representatives of the entire community in the process of localizing the SDGs. And of course, the localization of the SDGs can take place only by building up our expert potential and monitoring, evaluating and adjusting local SSD.

In addition to the organizational structure of SDG localization described above, new mechanisms with new functions are needed. All of these mechanisms are innovative for Belarus, their implementation is associated with the need for their deep integration with the existing mechanisms and for increasing the capacity of local experts to manage these mechanisms. Mechanisms can be specific to achieve a specific goal (a specific topic), or a wide range of impact - the localization of the SDGs.

This is a very complex and ambitious task both in terms of quality and time. The lack of human resources and their lack of competence is common and one of the key challenges for deepening the SDG localization process and developing local SSD. In this case, the solution could be the creation of resource centers based on the existing organizations of the district, which would perform information and training functions, serve as points for the formation of initiatives and institutional memory, and also provide vertical and horizontal integration.

Consider the list of mechanisms that are most often encountered in practice in Belarus:

- The management structure for the development and implementation of the SSD;
- public councils (initiative groups) for sustainable development;
- non-profit organizations positioning themselves as local centers for supporting sustainable development (localization of SSD), in particular, local development funds, public associations, private institutions, etc.;
- resource centers with a thematic focus (inclusion, energy efficiency, biodiversity conservation, etc.) created on the basis of public and private organizations;
- network associations of resource centers based on the territorial principle and / or thematic focus of activities.

Local resource centers are the information, educational and development platform for:

- coordination of activities and promotion of sustainable development ideas;
- building export potential and educational activities in the field of sustainable development;
- development of practical recommendations and methodological manuals for the practical implementation of the SDGs at the local level;
- assistance to state bodies and local administrations for sustainable development;
- creating a network of contacts and partnerships with Belarusian organizations and foreign organizations in the field of sustainable development, including similar centers and public-private cooperation, providing

communication within the region, as well as the exchange of experience at the regional, national and international levels;

■ maintaining institutional memory.

In Belarus, since 2015, several thematic resource centers have been created based on of educational institutions, libraries, district executive committees, and state environmental institutions. The thematic focus of the work of the centers covers either SD as a whole or concerns any of its components, for example, energy efficiency, digital literacy, greening and respect for nature, preservation of cultural heritage, etc. In the field of education in Belarus, a network of resource centers "Education for Sustainable Development" has been created on the basis of schools and other educational institutions.

A unique mechanism for localizing the SDGs is the Regional Council for Sustainable Development established in 2016, formed by five districts. The purpose of the association is to solve the most pressing problems for the districts by pooling their resources and increasing the potential to attract external resources. Thus, representatives of Bykhov, Krasnopol, Klichevsky, Slavgorod and Cherikov districts of the Mogilev region over the past three years of cooperation have developed over 150 initiatives (23 of them received grant support). To improve the access to external potential, summer schools were organized on the topics of economics, territorial marketing, and public participation. Over 432 trainings and master classes and more than 100 working meetings were held for local initiatives.

It should also be reflected that there are external mechanisms to support the localization of the SDGs, which include the Dortmund International Education Center (IBB), which implements the Belarus Support Program, and the representative office of the United Nations Development Program in Belarus, which developed and implements local projects, as well as supporting the development of an Integrated National System SDG financing. At the beginning of 2020, around a dozen external mechanisms provided support to authorities and communities at all levels, whose expert and resource base contributed to strengthening the localization of the SDGs.

Inclusive participation is the main component of civil society, which implies legitimate opportunities for the direct influence of citizensand members of the community, on decisions regarding the definition of goals, methods and resources for solving the vital problems of this community, as well as the use and mobilization of its resources through creating participatory development management systems (Savelova et al., 2019).

In the context of inclusive participation, local initiative groups become an important tool. The IG is usually formed in a certain territory to reflect the opinion of the local community. The IG includes people who know each other well, which allows them to discuss local problems with enthusiasm, establish a constructive dialogue when the interests of various groups contradict, make decisions based on consensus and implement them, which is the strongest motivator for the active participation of everyone in this territory. In Belarus, IGs are usually led by representatives from the leadership of local (district / village / city) executive committees, as well as heads of local non-profit

organizations. The IG includes employees of the administration, government organizations, representatives of all forms of business, public associations, local media, and activists from among the residents of the area.

Another mechanism for managing the SDG localization process that provides an integrated approach is the improvement of the regulatory and legislative system. This mechanism has an extremely weak capacity at the local level due to the fact that the main decisions regarding life activities are made at higher levels. However, this mechanism cannot be discounted. Knowing how to handle this mechanism, it is possible, albeit slightly, to influence the redistribution of resources, the creation of territorial zones with special conditions for visiting, the provision of property for use on favorable terms, and assistance in promoting projects.

Progress in achieving specific SDGs is facilitated by the development and implementation of a number of programs and plans, the focus of which is sustainable development and the greening of all spheres of human activity.

SDG LOCALIZATION TOOLS

Modern tools used to localize SDGs and develop SSD can be divided into three main groups:

- analysis tools;
- planning tools;
- monitoring tools.

ANALYSIS TOOLS

Analysis tools are designed to investigate and assess the existing social, economic and environmental conditions in an area, as well as to identify problems and their suggested solutions. They include *research tools* (e.g., data collection, social diagnostics, expert opinions, etc.), *risk assessment tools* (e.g. models and projections of potential risks and their consequences) and *prospect assessment tools* (e.g. assessment of possible natural and economic impacts and examination of environmental value).

Typically, such an analysis proceeds in several stages (Figure 14):

Figure 14 – Stages the process of analysis and generalization of previous experience (Methodological guide for the development of SSD, 2015)
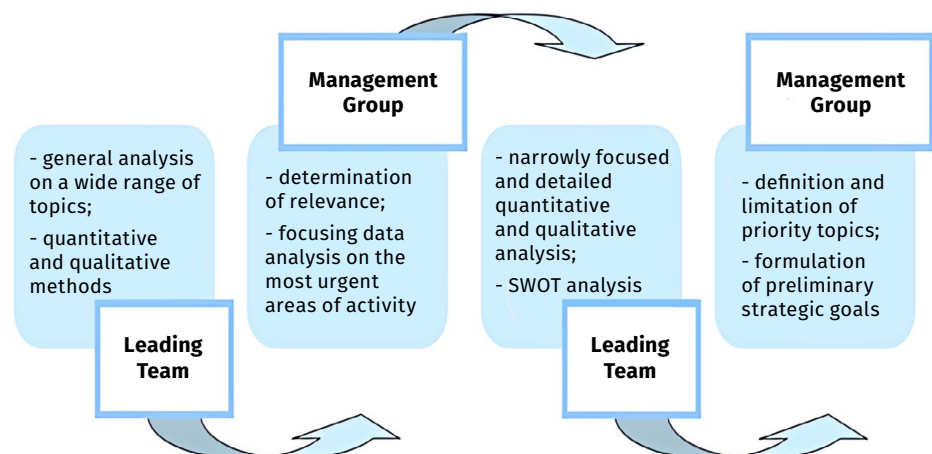
Main tools analysis and generalization of the region's previous experience in the development of SSD, the most commonly used in Belarus:

⚑ *Analysis of existing data and documents*: such data may include data on previous projects related to the preparation for the development of the SSD in the area, plans for the implementation of new projects, progress reports of projects, and other documents.

⚑ *Collection and analysis of stakeholder feedback*: feedback on the situation and development prospects, on the SDGs and the opportunity to develop SSD from the district administration, organizations with different forms of ownership and activities, public figures, residents of the district and other stakeholders will improve the quality of the SSD development process.

⚑ *Questioning and interviews* with an assessment of the situation of local development today and a vision of the desired future of local development can be carried out with active participants in projects for the localization of SSD. For example, surveys and interviews can be conducted with project managers, project experts, resource center specialists and initiative leaders, including the use of remote methods (for example, online).

⚑ *Round tables and expert meetings* may be carried out with the involvement of external experts to obtain independent assessments of the district's previous experience in the development of SSD and development plans for the future.

⚑ *SWOT analysis* is a tool that helps performers decide how to achieve their goals. It is used to evaluate four main categories: strengths (Strengths), weaknesses (Weaknesses), opportunities (Opportunities) and threats (Threats). These categories help to provide a detailed analysis of the internal and external factors that can affect the success of the SDGs. Also, the SWOT analysis tool helps to adapt to changing conditions and remain competitive.

In Belarus, when developing SSD, special attention is paid to the following as strengths in terms of SDG localization:

- experience in attracting investments and developing infrastructure;
- the openness of the region for cooperation with external partners;
- availability and accessibility to local resources such as transportation, natural resources, etc.;
- development of project activities.

Weaknesses include:

- limited internal human, information and financial resources for the development and implementation of the SSD;
- insufficient level of awareness and competence of local specialists and the population in the field of SSD;
- insufficient cooperation and trust between initiatives, organizations and public institutions.

Opportunities include:

- new technological and financial resources for sustainable development,

- high export potential of foreign partners;
- resource potential of external networks and clusters to assist in the development and promotion of joint projects.

Threats include:

- instability of the global economy and geopolitical struggle for resources;
- global climate change and biodiversity loss;
- massive migration flows.

PLANNING TOOLS

Planning tools are designed to formulate and make decisions to achieve the SDGs. The SSD development process includes six main steps, which are described in detail in the Methodology section of this review. Each stage of SSD development has its own tools that ensure the integration and implementation of the basic principles of SD.

"Workshop of the Future". SSD at any level, including the local level, must necessarily be based on a common vision of the future and strategic goals that correspond to various criteria for the development of SSD (for more details, see the "Methodology" section of this review). In Belarus, at all levels of SSD development, international experience in conducting the "Workshop of the Future" was used to form the image of the desired vision of the future (Methodological Guide for the Development of SSD, 2015). The "Workshop of the Future" goes through 3 phases: criticism, development of a vision (image) of the future, and the implementation phase.

At the "Criticism" stage, the factors hindering or, conversely, contributing to the development of the area should be critically assessed. All aspects are recorded on separate cards, and then grouped into thematic blocks. At the "Development of vision/image" stage, an image of an ideal future is created, in which problems identified at the stage of criticism do not exist. At the same time, participants must go beyond their idea of the real world and, in some way, imagine an "ideal world" by showing all their creativity. During the Realization phase, participants think about and discuss possible paths that are needed to get from the "now" to the "ideal future". This is a kind of specification and starting point for formulating the strategic goals of the SSD and long-term realistic ways to achieve the desired position. The most convenient format for conducting all stages of the "Workshop of the Future" is brainstorming. Each stage should end with a debriefing of a clear statement of the results achieved, preferably in writing.

TOOLS FOR ENSURING PARTICIPATION

Various methods and tools can be used to ensure engagement and participation in the development of an SSD. These can be decision-making methods such as system analysis, interest dialogue, event chain analysis, etc. Various technologies are used as informational support for active participation, such as district and regional websites, applications for exchanging ideas and information, pages in popular social networks, information through the media, online voting, online polls, etc.

An example of the successful use of social networks is the Facebook page of the Klichev Initiative Group for SD (Figure 15, https://www.facebook.com/groups/1141152929239884).

Figure 15 - Face-book Page of the Klichev District Initiative Group for SD
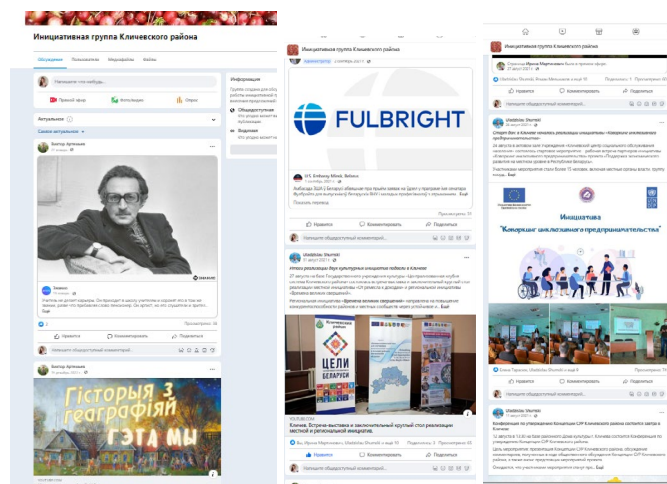
The group contains all news related to the SDG localization process in the district, interesting information about ongoing events, project activities in the district and open grant competitions, exhibitions, celebrations, etc. This tool has become powerful information support in the process of development and public discussion, first of the draft Concept of the SSD, and then the draft of the SSD of the Klichev district itself.

In addition to web pages, the draft documents were also available via QR code so that they can be easily and quickly opened from a mobile phone (Figure 16).

Figure 16 - QR code of the page with the draft Concept of the SSD of the Klichev district under development during the public discussion procedure

Another useful tool for sharing information between residents of the districts is the Local Market SMART application (Figure 17). This digital tool was created to solve several problems at the same time: promotion of initiatives, business, as well as any public activity. The Local Market app is designed to help people to find what every resident of the area is looking for a product, service, partners, new ideas and resources for their implementation.

Figure 17 - SMART application "Local market" (https://localstore.by/)
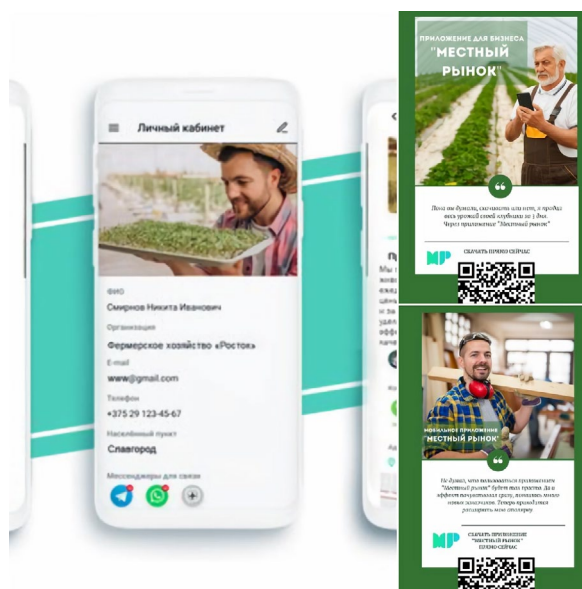
The SMART application contains a section where representatives of initiatives and local businesses can find training programs and improve their knowledge in a variety of areas. Unfortunately, the app is currently temporarily unavailable.

In some cases, only informing and providing feedback is not enough. In such cases, the need to organize carrying out separate consultations of the project team / steering group with representatives of the public and / or organizations of the area appears.

In order to widely inform local residents and interested partners, it is necessary to actively use available resources in the districts, which include websites and social pages of local authorities, the media and organizations of the district, as well as the published district newspaper.

DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNAL POLICIES BY ORGANIZATIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

To include sustainable development issues in the activities of organizations and in the process of developing local SSD, it is good practice to develop "Checklists", "Policies", and "SD Codes" (both for implementing organizations and for partners) that regulate the issues of greening activities, increasing inclusiveness and participation, including in the planning and implementation of events.

In Belarus, a number of organizations (mainly NGOs) have developed and implemented such internal policies and checklists. The checklist is a regular

list that reflects certain aspects of improving the sustainability of ongoing activities, in front of which ticks are put on their implementation. The business sustainability policy is a more complex document. It clearly formulates the mission of the organization, target groups, and activities, as well as describing the purpose and objectives of the development of the Policy. The following is a list of tasks and ways to implement them, as well as restrictions on the applicability of the Policy. All members of the organization should be involved in policy development. The principles and specific actions outlined in it must be supported by all employees of the organization since communicating the Policy to employees on a top-down principle on a directive basis will not produce the desired results.

The following aspects are most often reflected in Checklists and Policies:

⚐ Ecology:

- Analysis of environmental risks and their possible consequences at the stage of planning and carrying out activities;
- Analysis of environmental requirements in the procurement of technologies, materials and equipment, performance of work and services by contractors;
- Waste reduction and reuse;
- Energy efficiency and energy saving;
- Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere, calculation of greenhouse gas emissions for different options when planning activities / events;
- Creation and development of ecological culture, support of ecological values.

⚐ Social aspect:

- Analysis of social risks, their possible consequences at the stage of planning and carrying out activities;
- When planning the event, make sure that the conditions for accessibility and inclusiveness are implemented for various groups of people: people with disabilities, LGBTQ communities, parents with children, people with nutritional needs, etc.;
- Openness and accessibility of information about the activities of the organization (for example, the preparation of voluntary reports on activities for the year);
- Active free voluntary participation of employees in socially significant activities, public hearings, and public discussions of adopted documents and regulations.

It is important to understand that the implementation of such a policy may require additional resources. For example, certified eco-friendly products tend to be more expensive than economy-class consumer goods. This should be taken into account when drafting the budget of the project/activity and described in detail in the project proposal and when announcing a tender for the purchase of goods or services.

The preparation of annual reports on the activities of the organization includes the publication of ongoing activities and their priorities and principles on the official website of the organization, the purpose of which is to inform general public and promote the ideas and values of SD.

IMPLEMENTATION AND RESOURCE SEARCH TOOLS

To achieve the goals outlined in the SSD documents, tools are needed to ensure their implementation and attract necessary internal and external resources for this. Of course, it is important to increase the capacity of local experts in resource provision of activities aimed at achieving the goals of the SSD.

Implementation and resource search tools include the following:

- designing of strategies and programs for territorial development;
- designing of thematic initiatives and projects that enhance the effectiveness of development programs and strategies;
- competitions of initiatives and projects that provide resources for the implementation of initiatives and development projects that are announced both within Belarus and abroad for the implementation in Belarus;
- creation of local reinvestment mechanisms, when raised funds are invested in a type of activity that allows solving social, environmental and economic local challenges, but at the same time is able to generate new additional resources, which can be later redirected to other purposes for which it is not possible to attract resources. For example, fruit and berry crop nurseries, solar power plants, etc.

These tools should also include event-based activities that allow people to discuss, agree on and successfully solve urgent problems of local development. **These include:**

- workshop of local initiatives and projects - training and support of the local community in the basics of development and implementation of development projects. Belarus has experience in implementing such programs for more than 10 years;
- workshop of micro-regions of development - training and support of the local community in the basics of planning based on the principles of sustainable development, including plans for their implementation. This tool is applicable to small territorial communities: village streets, villages and village councils. Belarus has a successful track record of implementing three such programs;
- workshop on the development of SSD - training and support of the local community in the basics of planning established on the principles of sustainable development, including plans for their implementation. This tool applies to small territorial communities: village streets, villages, and village councils. Belarus has a successful experience implementing one such program for 8 districts;
- educational course for experts in the field of SD - a special course for specialists from local authorities and non-profit organizations to train and support the local community in the development and implementation of sustainable development strategies;
- fairs of initiatives at various levels, from the village to the region, are events both to coordinate the efforts of the developers of initiatives and projects with the local community and to promote them to attract resources. These events are of interest to representatives of donor organizations and higher-level authorities;

- weeks of sustainable development - special events that have been held in Belarus for 10 years with a frequency of 1 time in three years, allowing initiative groups to declare themselves, find like-minded people and partners, as well as to receive funding for the implementation of the first actions;
- mobile exhibitions (offline) and websites (online) - which contributed to the dissemination of information among those interested, establishing interaction between them and finding the necessary resources.

This list of tools is far from being completed and can be expanded. The key to these tools is the interested and involved participation of local communities, which, by disseminating their initiatives, attract resources that they independently manage and achieve the desired results.

3.5 SSD THEMATIC PRIORITIES AT DIFFERENT LEVELS

This section summarizes the data of thematic priorities that are indicated in the sustainable development strategies of different levels at different times. This information allows us to see the development of thematic, the strengthening of the integrity of approaches to the localization of the SDGs and the exact gaps that will need to be addressed very soon.

THEMATIC PRIORITIES AT THE LOCAL (DISTRICT) LEVEL

Belarus has developed and approved 4 national strategies for SD (hereinafter referred to as NSSD). A meaningful analysis of these documents allows us to trace how the SDG priorities have changed at the national level depending on the existing external and internal challenges and what mechanisms underlie the achievement of the SDGs at the national level.

The conceptual core of the NSSD is the Model of SD, forming its ideological and political basis, directions of activity, targets and framework conditions for the short and long term.

At *NSSD for the period up to 2010 (NSSD -2010)* **Three fundamental blocks acted as framework provisions in the sustainable development model:**

- a new civilizational strategy, a paradigm of social progress and new principles of interaction between nature, economy and a human;
- a new type of emerging state and society;
- a perspective model of the economy.

The NSSD-2010 model consists in changing the paradigm of social progress with the transition to new principles of interaction between nature, society and a human. It is based on human-centrism - the highest goal of scientific, technical and socio-economic progress should be a person, his spiritual and physical health in a favorable and safe environment. At the same time, new concepts of social justice, economic efficiency and environmental protection are vital for the world community. It is also important to move from the existing practice of nature protection to the implementation of measures for the greening of economic activity, changing the patterns of consumption and production. In the NSSD-2010, special attention is paid to the creation of prerequisites and mechanisms for the transition (including socio-political ones) to SD.

At *NSSD-2020* globalization, in particular the intensification of world trade, is indicated as a significant external condition for development, which to some extent led to the national imperative to actively and constructively participate in the global process of transition to sustainable development. **The following points are defined as the main directions of transformations:**

- construction and development of a unitary democratic social legal state;
- formation of a modern civil society;
- building a socially oriented market (mixed) economy.

In the NSSD-2020, the Belarusian model of a socially oriented market economy is defined as follows: a highly efficient economy with developed entrepreneurship and market infrastructure and effective state regulation. At this stage, the economy of Belarus was characterized as a mixed economy with developed market relations, a new role for the state, and a strong but already selective social policy. As a further development path, it was envisaged to create a new economic system in which the state determines the framework of political, economic and legal conditions, interacts with a developed civil society and an effective private sector based on the Constitution, the entire system of laws in a democratic mode of social partnership. The fundamental role in carrying out the transformations should be played by the formation of a systemically complete legislative and legal framework that regulates market-type economic relations and the implementation of administrative reform. The social development paradigm, as in the NSSD-2010, proceeds from the fact that the driving forceof economic growth is a person who has qualification and employment opportunities, social activity and mobility, and the ability to legally adapt to the prevailing conditions and effectively realize the possibilities of his activity.

The main priorities and directions of development in the NSSD-2020 are:

1. Ensuring a high level and quality of life for all strata and groups of the population;

2. Enrichment of culture and morality of the population;

3. Protection and promotion of people's health;

4. Improvement of consumption and production structures;

5. Social protection and counteraction to the criminal life of society;

6. Environmental and energy security;

7. Building a highly efficient socially oriented market economy with developed business institutions and market infrastructure, effective mechanisms of state and market regulations;

8. Increasing the competitiveness of domestic goods and services in the domestic and world markets, export-oriented economy.

The NSSD-2020 does not sound clear, but the foundations for the formation of a new post-industrial information society with a new technological basis have been already laid.

NSSD-2030 marked the transition to a post-industrial society and innovative development of the economy while guaranteeing the all-around development of the individual, raising the standards of human life and ensuring a favorable environment (NSSD-2030). In this document, the transformation of the promising National Economy Model is aimed at the transition from a predominantly administrative to an indicative planning mechanism, achieving an equal contribution of state and private property to the creation of the country's gross domestic product, introducing the principles of a "green economy" into production, forming a high-tech sector and advancing the development of the service sector, providing maximum opportunities for the realization of a person's potential.

The following priorities are named in the model of sustainable socio-economic development in the NSSD-2030:

■   Human is the goal of progress; the level of human development is a measure of the maturity of society, the state and its socioeconomic policy;
■   Raising the standard of living of people, overcoming poverty, improving the structures of production and consumption;
■   Priority development of healthcare systems, education, and culture, as the most important spheres of society's life, factors of long-term growth of labor activity and creative development of the individual;
■   Rational use of natural resources, preservation and improvement of the natural environment;
■   Transition to a resource-saving innovative type of economic development within the economic capacity of ecosystems;
■   Improving the management system, and mechanisms for making and implementing management decisions;
■   Development of international cooperation and social partnershipto preserve, protect and restore ecosystems;
■   Increasing the level of coordination and interaction between the state, private business and civil society in the implementation of the goals and objectives of sustainable development.

The resources for development in the NSSD-2030 are investments in the development of human potential, the formation of a class of "intellectual employees" ("people of knowledge") through advanced education, cultural and spiritual sphere, new content of work and a healthy lifestyle. To do this, must be created conditions for obtaining continuous high-quality and affordable education throughout life, a greatly effective high-quality healthcare system

based on high-tech types of medical care, telemedicine and informatization, medical expenses insurance, and a developed market for medical services has been formed.

An important aspect of the NSSD-2030 is the formation of a basis for a well-established constructive dialogue between the state-society-business. Optimization of the structure and functions of government bodies should ensure a policy coordinated with local authorities and the public on the development and implementation of strategies for the sustainable development of regions and the country as a whole. The main tools of public administration should be the forecasting of development scenarios, indicative planning, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of performance. At the same time, a significant contribution to economic growth should belong to small and medium-sized businesses. It should be based on high-tech industries, innovative and digital technologies, a "green" economy and the development of new types of market services. In the field of ecology, the "natural framework" of the country should be formed and function effectively in the form of a national ecological network, the elements of which are spatially interconnected and integrated into the pan-European ecological network.

To accelerate the achievement of the SDGs at the national level, UN experts, as part of the MAPS mission, have identified acceleration platforms (accelerators): a green transition for inclusive and sustainable growth, focus on future generations: children and youth, digital transformations and social innovations and gender equality.

In accordance with the provisions of the NSSD -2030, one of the strategic goals of the regional policy of Belarus is defined as "the integrated development of each region and the reduction of existing regional differences, taking into account the effective use of its resource potential and competitive advantages in the interests of ensuring high social standards of living for the population, preserving nature and the positive contribution of the regions into national competitiveness and security" (NSSD-2030). In achieving this goal, the key priorities are an active regional policy aimed at the development of each region with the formation of several centers of economic growth, as well as a systematic approach to the territorial distribution of productive forces, taking into account the competitive advantages and existing competencies of each region.

By the beginning of 2020, Belarus took the 18th position among 166 countries of the world in the world ranking of achieving 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 50th position in the ranking of 189 countries in terms of the human development index. Such progress has become largely possible through the formation of an effective system of social institutions that accompany the processes of SD at the national and local levels.

In February 2020, a new and, to date, the last NSSD for the period up to 2035 was approved. Demographic problems came to the foreground and became a key internal challenge for SD at that time. In the economy, simultaneously with the achievement of macroeconomic balance, the entry into the path of the average European GDP growth rates and the decrease in the technogenic

load, there was still low labor productivity. The focus of external challenges has shifted to increased geopolitical uncertainty and regional instability, increased risks associated with the adverse impact of the coronavirus pandemic, growing imbalances in the labor market and rising social inequality. In the NSSD-2035, the strategic goal of SD is formulated as follows - to achieve high standards of living standards of the population based on the qualitative growth of the economy on a new digital technological base, the formation of a full-fledged competitive environment, the creation of comfortable conditions for life and the development of personal potential while preserving natural systems for current and future generations.

The following are noted as SD priorities in the NSSD-2035:

- Sustainable development of the family institution and qualitative growth of human potential;
- Productive employment and decent incomes of the population;
- Digital transformation of the economy and large-scale diffusion of innovations;
- Creation of a developed business environment and sustainable infrastructure;
- Ensuring environmental safety, and transition to rational models of production and consumption (circular economy).

THEMATIC PRIORITIES AT THE LOCAL (RAYON) LEVEL

Currently, Belarus has developed about 40 regional SSD and about 10 SSD of micro-regions (village councils and other territories with development specifics, for example, an ecoregion around a biological reserve). Each territory is characterized by its own socioeconomic and natural conditions, which form the thematic context of the SSD, based on existing local challenges and the needs of the local population. **With regard to the thematic focus of local SSD, it can be said that the following ones are most often encountered:**

- Territorially oriented and cluster development;
- "Green" and circular economy;
- Development of business and new forms of entrepreneurship, formation of economic literacy of the population;
- Preservation and development of human capital, in particular education for sustainable development and health;
- Energy efficiency;
- Waste management;
- Sustainable and developed agriculture and forestry;
- Supporting a sustainable tourism industry;
- Ensuring the ecological integrity and safety of the natural environment;
- Preservation of cultural values;
- Promoting neighborhood economic resources and making services accessible to all;
- Promoting a culture of sustainability and adopting responsible behavior;
- Smart ("green") city;
- Development of local infrastructure and support for communities and groups across the district (involved management);
- Development of cooperation at the local level and with external national and international partners.

Most of the local SSD, especially those developed before 2016, are not integrated with the 17 SDGs of the 2030 Agenda. Only the SSD developed in the last 5 years refers to the importance of taking into account the SDGs and correlating the goals and indicators with the global SDGs.

It should also be emphasized that there is a tendency to focus on achieving those SDGs that are closest to the district communities while forgetting the principle of the integrity of the SDGs. SDG 14 is most often overlooked, and SDG 4, SDG 10, 16, etc. are incorrectly interpreted.

To avoid such situations, in Belarus the expert community offers several tools that allow to focus the attention of local communities on emerging disagreements about the importance of certain SDGs, as well as increasing their competence in new areas.

Frequent global processes are also not reflected in local SSD. For example, political instability, land degradation and global population growth. The issues of climate change and resource scarcity are only partly addressed in the thematic block of energy efficiency, recycling and the circular economy. This contextuality creates conditions for weak vertical integration and inconsistency between the thematic focus of local SSDs and the 2030 Agenda in relation to global challenges.

The end-to-end use of the first two accelerators of SD ("Green" transition and focus on future generations), defined in the Roadmap for the implementation of the SDGs in the Republic of Belarus, can be traced quite clearly, often forming entire thematic blocks within the regional SDGs, since the industrial sector and the education system in Belarus fairly well developed. Digitalization and gender equality are less represented in local SSD.

Digitalization of the sphere of life concerns such topics as the transition to a digital economy, remote forms of employment, and the digitalization of education and healthcare. The introduction of digital technologies and the development of digital business is impeded by the insufficient level of digital literacy of the local population, the poor development of digital technologies in the regions and the lack of necessary equipment and infrastructure.

Gender equality rarely becomes the focus of consideration of local SSDs, since historically Belarusian society respects the role and place of women in modern society. The vast majority of jobs in the system of social protection, culture, education and health care are occupied by women. In rural areas, the proportion of the active female population is quite high, including women who are actively involved in entrepreneurial activities and take leadership positions. However, the topic of developing women's leadership and, in particular, entrepreneurship is presented only in some local SSDs. Rather, it is a response to requests from donors who allocate funds for these topics.

A more detailed examination of the indicators used in the local SDGs shows that planned indicators of socio-economic development are widely used. This duplicates the themes and directions of development defined in the Programs for socio-economic development at the country level.

The basis for the conceptual development of strategies is quite often put on a territorial-planning and sectoral approach. Horizontal integration of both the thematic areas themselves and the management framework (intersectoral and interdepartmental cooperation) is rather weak, violating one of the basic principles of ESDN. This thematic focus is more reminiscent of the Millennium Development Goals. This is due to the specifics of the system of territorial indicative planning in Belarus as a whole and a strong degree of centralized control and reporting.

At the same time, in the local SSD, one can often find indicators that are not found either at the regional or national levels, but which are necessary to reflect local challenges.

Area-based development emphasizes making rural areas of Belarus more attractive for living and working. The presence of such topics on the agenda is a response to the existing trend of migration of the young population from rural to urban areas, and from there to large cities. Territorial development is often based on cluster development and the association of several business entities around a single center, usually in the form of a state structure or enterprise. The issues of creating and building the structure of such clusters, their marketing strategy and promotion are considered. Efficient employment is provided by creating new forms of employment, diversifying business lines and strengthening existing ones, often with an emphasis on supporting small and medium-sized businesses and export-oriented policies. As a new vector for the development of the labor market, inclusive employment is aimed at integrating socially vulnerable categories of citizens into the sphere of social and labor relations, including through the creation of specialized and affordable jobs for them. One of the important thematic aspects of creating favorable conditions for life is the development of the infrastructure of districts and settlements. However, the issues of creating a barrier-free environment are rather weakly reflected or are not reflected at all in the local SSD.

Sustainable growth of human potential is designed to provide good-quality education. Often, resource centers are formed on the basis of secondary educational institutions, which serve as significant support for the SDG localization process. Many areas of education directly related to SD are implemented through various forms of additional education, extracurricular activities and the use of innovative technologies. The transformation of the labor market and the increase in the average age of the rural population leads to the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for citizens. In the digitalization of the education system, the main focus is made on increasing the level of digital literacy of children, youth and adults, including people with disabilities and pensioners, through the introduction of learning practices using digital technologies in the system of basic and additional education. A particularly urgent need to create distance education systems began to be felt in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The healthcare system is focused on solving such problems as the availability of medical care, early diagnosis and prevention of diseases, child mortality, treatment of cardiovascular diseases, improving the quality of healthcare

services, as well as work to involve the population in physical education, fitness and tourism.

In terms of environmental conservation, the focus is on four thematic areas:

1. Use of energy efficient and saving technologies using local types of raw materials (diversification of energy sources used);

2. Creation of an efficient waste disposal system;

3. Reducing pollution of surface and ground waters, providing the population with clean drinking water and reducing water consumption;

4. Development of a "green" economy, such as organic farming and eco-tourism.

The topic of conservation of landscape and biological diversity of areas is presented mainly when it is necessary for economic development, for example, in the context of building capacity for tourism activities or forestry, i.e. considered within the framework of providing (supplying) ecosystem services, ignoring their cultural or functional context. The trade-off between financial benefits and a clean environment is usually decided in the direction of economic development since the current economic conditions do not allow the transition to a "strong sustainability" model. Only one local SSD (SSD of the Vygonoshchany village council) describes in detail the significance of the local forest-bog complex (Vygonoshchanskoye swamp) for the formation of traditions and cultural heritage of the ecoregion. In this aspect, it is important to understand that various conceptualizations of nature, in addition to reflecting the rich diversity of human relations with nature, being one of the fundamental aspects of the human collective knowledge of the world, influence behavior and actions at the individual, institutional and societal levels (Coscieme et al., 2020). Understanding how people perceive nature opens up a space for discussion and participatory participation, as well as offers new options and tools for cooperation in the field of solving environmental problems.

Let us give examples of the goal-setting structure of several local SSD, confirming the trends and facts mentioned above. Figure 18 shows the goal-setting structure of the Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Bereza District (Brest Region), the year of approval is 2023, Figure 19 – The Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Klichev District (Mogilev Region) for the period up to 2035, the year of approval is 2023, and Figure 20 – Strategies for sustainable development of the Krivoe Selo village council of the Vileika district (Minsk region), the date of approval 2016.

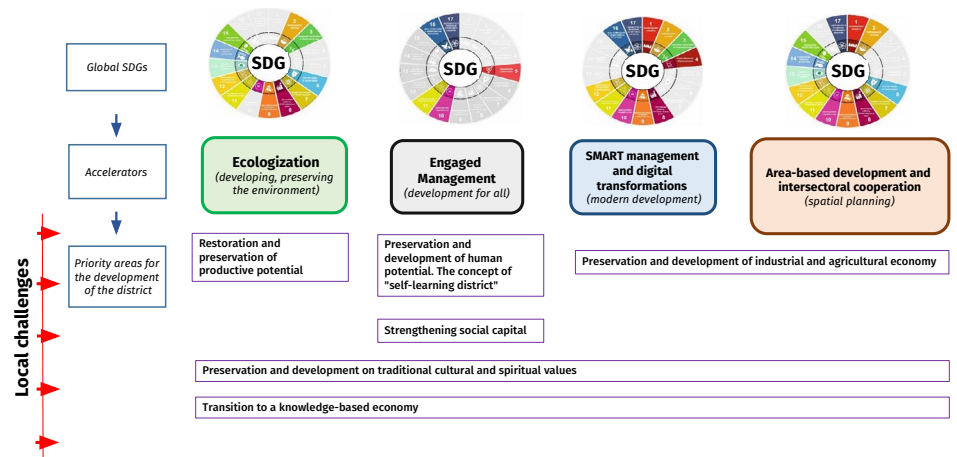*Figure 18 - Model of the development of the Bereza district until 2035 (SSD of the Bereza district until 2035)*

Global SDGs

Accelerators

Local challenges

Priority areas for the development of the district

Ecologization
(developing, preserving the environment)

Engaged Management
(development for all)

SMART management and digital transformations
(modern development)

Area-based development and intersectoral cooperation
(spatial planning)

Restoration and preservation of productive potential

Preservation and development of human potential. The concept of "self-learning district"

Preservation and development of industrial and agricultural economy

Strengthening social capital

Preservation and development on traditional cultural and spiritual values

Transition to a knowledge-based economy

Figure 19 - Model of development of the Klichev district until 2035 (SSD of the Klichev district until 2035)

Global SDGs

Regional Accelerators

Local challenges

Priority areas for the development of the district

Ecologization
(developing, preserving the environment)

SMART management and digital transformations
(modern development)

Area-based development and intersectoral cooperation
(spatial planning)

Engaged Management
(development for all)

1. Favorable environment and ecologization of economic activity

3. Increasing the standard of living of the population, social well-being and inclusive development

2. Development of the region's economy based on the development of small and medium-sized businesses in the service sector, tourism, organic agriculture; increasing the efficiency of the real sector of the economy in order to systematically increase the income of the population through the formation of a successful public-private partnership, digitalization of the economy, and the formation of a cluster economic system

6. Strengthening the role of public participation for sustainable development

4. Green urban planning and sustainable development of the city of Klichev

5. Education focused on the sustainable development of future generations

7. Integration of the model of sustainable development of the territory in the field of health to the SSD of the area
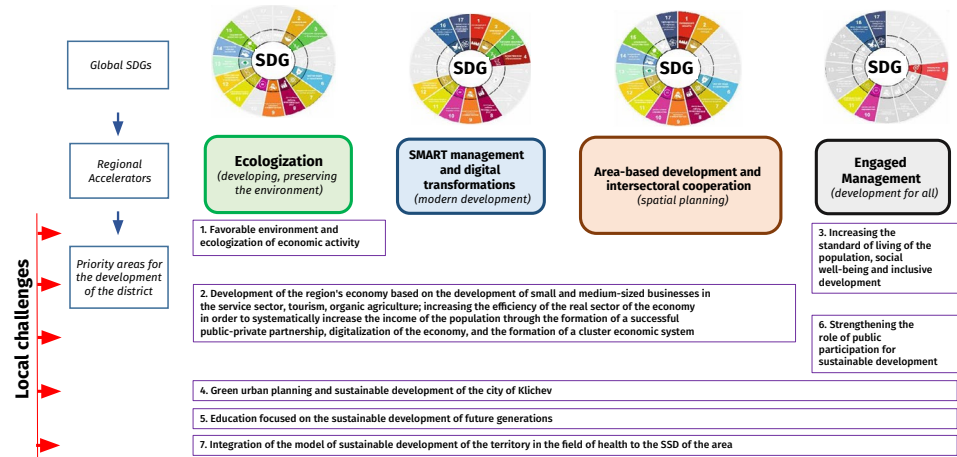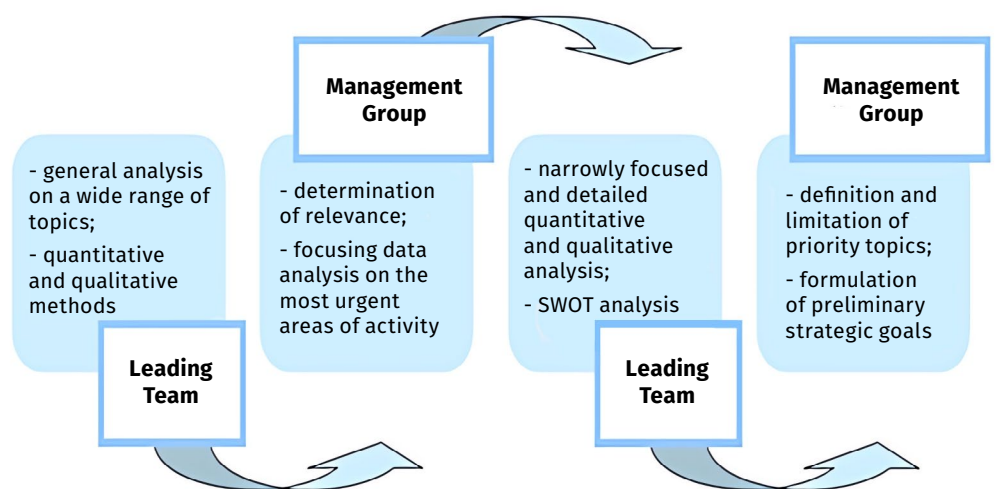

Figure 20 - Model of development of the Krivoe Selo village council of the Vileika district until 2035 (SSD of the Krivoe Selo village council of the Vileika district until 2035)

Management Group

Management Group

- general analysis on a wide range of topics;
- quantitative and qualitative methods

- determination of relevance;
- focusing data analysis on the most urgent areas of activity

- narrowly focused and detailed quantitative and qualitative analysis;
- SWOT analysis

- definition and limitation of priority topics;
- formulation of preliminary strategic goals

Leading Team

Leading Team

CONCLUSIONS

The review identifies several key points and challenges regarding the localization of the SDGs.

Belarus experience findings:

⚑ The transition to sustainable development both at the national and local levels in Belarus is carried out in parallel with the adopted concept of sustainable development at the global level. The most active efforts in this direction have been taken since 1997 with the adoption of local agendas for 21 (LA-21), which were later transformed into sustainable development strategies at the national and local levels.

⚑ Achieving all 17 SDGs is a common benchmark that facilitates the development of sustainable development strategies at all levels.

⚑ The national system of development of regulatory legal acts requires the development of SSD at the national level only which should be updated every 5 years. Development of the SSD at the regional and district levels is not regulated and remains a voluntary affair of the leadership of the region and district.

⚑ The development of SSDs as a tool for SDGs localization was most widely developed at the local level - more than 40 district authorities and about 30 village authorities developed the SDGs (*expert assessment)*. Four versions of NSSD were developed and approved. SSDs were developed for all six regions, but it was only approved by Mogilev regional authority in the second edition.

⚑ Local SSDs developed before 2016 are not integrated with the SDGs. Only the SDGs developed in the last 5 years refer to the importance of considering the SDGs and aligning their targets and indicators. SDG 14 is most often overlooked, and SDG 4, 10, 16, etc. are not always correctly interpreted.

⊠ Adhering to all seven ESDN principles is the basis for developing successful sustainability strategies. In Belarus, special attention is paid to the participatory approach, i.e. the involvement of all local actors in the process of the development and implementation of the SSD.

⊠ In practice, the concept of the proclaimed "strong" sustainability is not maintained in local SSD, which indicates insufficiently developed competencies and ongoing attempts to unilaterally consider development processes. For example, in terms of economics or ecology.

⊠ Belarus does not have a unified methodology for developing SSD. The quality of the developed SSD is generally determined by the competence of the accompanying expert (s) and the acceptance of the SSD context by the authority approving the strategy for execution if such a decision is made.

⊠ The localization of the SDGs should be context-driven to take into account the characteristics and priorities of local development and address unique local problems, as well as to contribute to the full realization of the opportunities of each area.

⊠ The localization of the SDGs requires the creation of innovative development tools, primarily based on participatory and intersectoral approaches.

⊠ A participatory architecture for managing the achievement of the SDGs by Belarus from the national level to the regional level, integrated with the current system of public administration, has been created. The decisions of the structures included in this architecture are advisory and recommendatory for the government.

But this architecture does not regulate the management of the achievement of the SDGs at the local level (district, village council). The localization of the SDGs at the local level is associated with the need for arbitrary building of the architecture, which is carried out by the authorities together with the community. In practice, this is implemented through the creation of public councils (initiative groups) on SD to manage the SDG localization process, as well as the creation of resource centers on the basis of existing local organizations. They provide expert and resource support, save institutional memory, and construct vertical and horizontal integration.

⊠ The thematic focus of local SSD is not balanced, and it often duplicates local socio-economic development plans based on "top-bottom" territorial planning.

⊠ A serious challenge for SSD implementation at all levels is the implementation of intersectoral priorities due to the difficulty of correlating responsibility for their implementation with the current management system.

For example, in Belarus, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection is responsible for summarizing information on the progress in implementing the activities of the National Action Plan for the Development of the Green Economy in the Republic of Belarus for 2021-2025, making proposals for its clarification, if necessary. At the local level, there is no structure that would systematically and purposefully work in this thematic area.

This problem also applies to other areas: social entrepreneurship, public participation in development, green urban planning, gender issues, digitalization, etc.

⚐ The competence of development participants is the next serious challenge for the localization of the SDGs at all levels. Education for sustainable development is being actively implemented in schools and universities. It is more difficult to increase the competencies of adults and, above all, the personnel of government bodies, enterprises, organizations and businesses. The principle of optional evolution of sustainable development strategies at the local level does not contribute to the growth of motivation to learn the basics of sustainable development.

⚐ It is important to teach local experts and stakeholders not only the basics of sustainable development but also the basics and approaches to the development and implementation of new intersectoral topics.

⚐ In Belarus, there is no practice of public reporting on the implementation of the developed local SSD (volunteer reports).

⚐ Monitoring the implementation of sustainable development strategies at the national level is carried out by the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus (Belstat), which also carries out methodological work to bring the country's development indicators in line with the SDG indicators and their objectives.

When localizing the SDGs, especially at the local level, it becomes difficult to monitor and evaluate the developed SSD, since many of the official Belstat indicators are not disaggregated to the district level and there is no such data. In addition, sometimes unique specific indicators are often proposed during the development of local SSD that are well understandable and attractive to developers, but there is no official methodology for their determination and there is no structure that could collect and verify them. All this makes it difficult to fully implement the local SSD monitoring system.

⚐ The implementation of the SSD should be based primarily on its own resources, the local budget, budgets of organizations, enterprises and entrepreneurs, and fundraising by residents of the district. Investments are an integral part of the SD budget, but not the only one. Effective tools for the implementation and search for resources include the development of strategies and programs for territorial development; the development of thematic initiatives and projects that enhance the effectiveness of development programs and strategies; contests of initiatives and projects that provide resources for the implementation of development initiatives and projects; creation of local reinvestment mechanisms.

⚐ The strategy process allows you to activate and make the project activity more targeted, focusing on available and attracted outside resources to achieve agreed priorities.

⚐ Authorities, external donors and experts, and leaders of initiative groups make a high contribution to the intensification of the process of developing strategic planning documents based on the principles of sustainable development. But the development of the strategic planning process should be

carried out exclusively on the "bottom-up" initiative, exceptional influence from above can lead to the formalization of the process and the emasculation of the foundations of sustainable development.

As for Georgia, the analysis of Georgia's implementation of the SDGs highlights several key themes and findings.

⌖ The Republic of Georgia has a history of commitment to the Millennium Agenda, which formed the basis of the following SDGs. However, despite efforts to improve institutionalization, localization, and integration of the Millennium Goals into state policies, the steps taken by the country were insufficient to achieve the SDGs. The establishment of the Governmental Commission for Elaboration of the Report on the Realization of the Millennium Development Goals, headed by the State Minister, was an institutional steering effect, but the continuity and sustainability of its operation were not observed when the SDGs were introduced. The lack of an accurate information base was a significant difficulty, and the approaches taken by the Commission aimed to avoid unrealistically ambitious targets and distortions of post-Soviet reality. The report emphasized the need for a systematic review and adjustment of relevant indicators, effective monitoring systems at national and local levels, and integration of the SDGs into the formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of national policies and programs. The document also identified the need for a strategic approach to information, education, and communication, public awareness and advocacy campaigns, and more active public participation in the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs in Georgia.

⌖ Firstly, in general, the methodology of elaboration and implementation of SDG strategies on local levels involves a number of steps, including assessment and analysis of local development needs and priorities, identification of relevant SDGs and targets, setting targets and indicators, development of a local SDG strategy, and implementation and monitoring of the strategy. To be effective, the localization efforts require active participation and engagement of local stakeholders, including government, civil society, private sector, and local communities, as well as coordination and collaboration across different sectors and levels of governance to ensure an integrated and coherent approach to sustainable development.

⌖ The Localization Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals in Georgia aims to manage the process of SDG localization in all 64 municipalities of Georgia by 2025. The plan includes activities to support the localization cycle, such as analyses of the enabling environment, awareness-raising, prioritization, integration, adaptation, and monitoring of SDG implementation. The localization plan has set two major objectives, namely, establishing a system that ensures involvement of local self-government in the implementation process and raising awareness about the SDGs and their importance at the local level. However, there are still gaps in the document that need to be addressed, such as the lack of activities showing how multi-level interaction takes place between the central and local levels and the lack of institutionalized procedures for monitoring and evaluation of SDG implementation locally. The implementation of the plan mostly takes place according to the set timeline, and various development partners and NGOs are involved in the process. The methodology for selecting prioritized municipal targets and indicators is based on checking the rights and authorities that are the prerogative of each

municipality. Overall, the localization plan provides a framework for effective SDG implementation at the local level, and it is hoped that the gaps in the document will be addressed to ensure its successful implementation.

⚐ Secondly, institutionalization of the SDGs is essential for effective implementation. Georgia has nationalized SDG targets in its 36 national strategies in various fields, in addition to the EU Association Agenda. However, the localization of the SDGs was identified as one of the shortcomings in the State Audit Office report. The Georgian government has taken steps to address this issue, such as updating the design of the Coordination Mechanism in 2020 based on the recommendations of the SAOG audit report.

⚐ Thirdly, the National Decentralization Strategy is crucial for the effective execution and implementation of the SDG Agenda 2030 and nationalization documents at the local level. The Georgian government has developed a new decentralization strategy, which aims to establish local self-government that is dependable, transparent, accountable, and focused on achieving results. However, criticisms of the strategy persist, particularly regarding the insufficient comprehension of autonomy and the financial challenges faced by self-governing entities. It is imperative for the government to grant greater freedom and resources to local municipalities to pursue their objectives and exhibit the political resolve to transfer genuine autonomy to these entities.

⚐ Finally, institutional setting on the national level is essential for the successful implementation of the SDGs. The government of Georgia has adopted a resolution with its annexes - SDG national document - which describes the nationalized targets and indicators and sets out the institutional and procedural structure for monitoring their implementation. However, the report by the State Audit Office highlights the need for improvement in the institutional framework for the implementation of the SDGs.

⚐ Overall, successful implementation and localization of the SDGs in Georgia require a comprehensive approach that involves active participation and engagement of local stakeholders, effective institutionalization, and a strong institutional setting at both national and local levels. The government needs to address the shortcomings identified in the State Audit Office report, particularly regarding the localization of the SDGs and the institutional framework for their implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

COMMON RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GEORGIA AND BELARUS:

1. The SSD should be developed systematically at all levels of territorial administration, which will increase efficiency and accelerate the achievement of the SDGs. The development of the SSD should become part of the rule-making activity.

2. The SSD should be developed based on a unified methodology agreed upon at the country level, which makes it possible to ensure both the quality of the developed document and its integration with other public administration documents, as well as to assess the contribution of SSD at various levels to the achievement of the global SDGs.

3. To monitor and evaluate the developed SSD, it is important to have a system of clear and accessible verified development indicators that will be disaggregated from the national to the local level.

4. It is important to empower SDG governance structures with functions that allow them to influence decisions at all levels of development, from national to local. These functions include consideration and approval of legislative documents, programs and key development projects.

5. It is recommended to introduce public reports on the localization of the SDGs (implementation of sustainable development strategies) at all levels of development to raise public awareness of the actions taken and to involve local actors in sustainable development processes.

6. The establishment system for monitoring the SDGs localization at the local level as well as voluntary local reporting on the achievement of the SDGs will make local development plans and actions SDG-oriented with a deeper vertical and horizontal integration.

7. The development management system at all levels should be adapted taking into account cross-sectoral goals, priorities and objectives, which are reflected in the SSD. This requires both changing or improving the functions of existing development management structures, as well as creating new structures. Practice shows that in the case of creating new structures, pilot (project) testing of such structures is necessary. Sometimes these functions can be performed by other organizations other than development management structures, for example, non-profit organizations.

8. It is necessary to create and, as conditions change and new tasks arise, develop a system of teaching the basics of sustainable development for both the population and specialists for their involvement in the development and implementation of the SSD. Building up our own expert potential will greatly facilitate the transition to sustainable development and increase the efficiency of managing development processes with the participation of all stakeholders, including the implementation of continuous monitoring, evaluation and adjustment of the SSD.

9. National authorities are encouraged to promote the development of strategic planning documents to localize the SDGs at the local level. But the development of this process should be carried out exclusively on the "bottom-up" initiative since the impact from above can lead to the formalization of the process and the emasculation of the foundations of sustainable development.

10. In order to increase the capacity of local municipalities in the SDGs localization process, human resources issues must be sufficiently addressed. Providing training and enhancing the capacity of personnel in city halls and city councils. It also involves augmenting the number of staff members dedicated to SDG-related work in municipalities, commensurate with the size of the municipality, and setting up local bodies to facilitate SDG localization efforts.

11. It suggested analyzing and identifying gaps in data produced locally that create limitations for localization of some of the important SDG targets and indicators, followed by developing recommendations on how to eliminate these gaps.

12. SDG monitoring report and all official documents on the achievement of any specific SDG must be discussed publicly before it is approved and submitted.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GEORGIA:

1. It is suggested that the local municipalities start preparing VLR documents based on European experience picking several successful examples;

2. The SDG Council should elaborate through an inclusive process a monitoring plan for the local municipalities and publish their monitoring reports yearly on their website. (sdgs.gov.ge);

3. The stakeholder involvement mechanism shall be identified on a methodology level and its sustainability must be ensured by training the local actors on SDG implementation and monitoring to reach their meaningful involvement;

4. A clear monitoring strategy/mechanism should be identified for and by municipalities for further reinforced implementation and monitoring processes.

5. It is suggested to create possibilities for municipalities to get to know international best practice examples as the experience and knowledge in this direction in the country is limited;

ADDITIONAL GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GEORGIA:

1. The Government of Georgia shall make yearly SDGs monitoring reports available to the public;

2. The SDGs monitoring report shall be presented to SDG Council and working groups yearly;

3. It is advised to review the nationalization document, update it, make it more relevant to Georgia and make it trackable;

4. The Government shall carry out a meaningful decentralization process, including updating and adopting the Decentralization Strategy optimized to local municipalities' needs, which also increases their independence from the central government.

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