

## Global Sustainable Municipality in North Rhine-Westphalia Executive summary of the project documentation

15 municipalities representing 2,5 million people in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), Germany, developed individual integrated municipal sustainability strategies (IMSS) in the context of the Agenda 2030 with assistance of the Service Agency Communities in One World (SKEW) of Engagement Global and the Sustainability Network North Rhine-Westphalia (LAG 21 NRW). The project was funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).



*Municipal representatives at the project's kick-off in January 2016 (left) and the closing event in March 2018 (right)*

### Introduction and project background

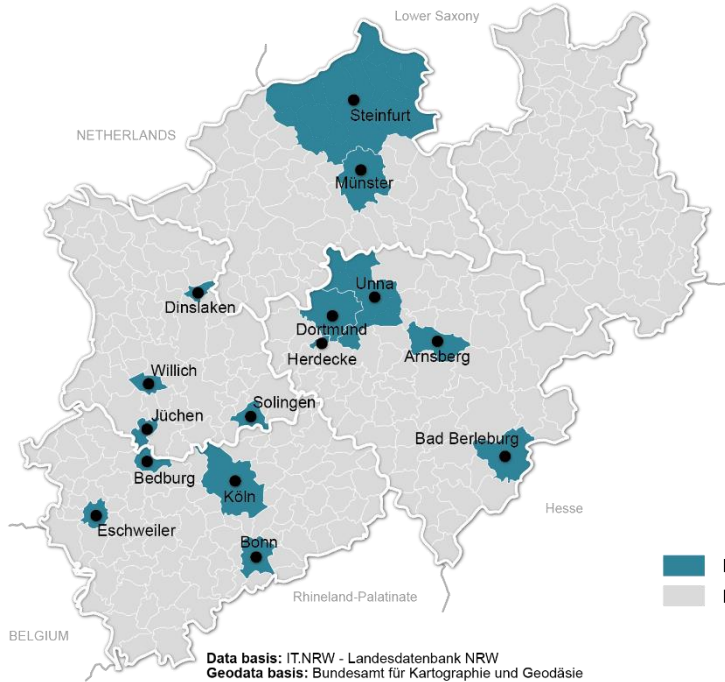
When the UN General Assembly approved the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in New York in September 2015, it was the first time the international community had adopted a universally valid set of goals for a viable future – the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 17 SDGs (see Figure below) form a joint frame of reference for all countries –including both the North and the South. Therefore, the SDGs are also a guiding framework for action in Germany at the federal, regional and local levels. They served as the key foundation for the update of Germany's National Sustainable Development Strategy in 2016 and played a pivotal role in the Regional Sustainable Development Strategy of the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW).



*The 17 Sustainable Development Goals*

Starting in early 2016, 12 municipalities in NRW developed IMSS in the context of the 2030 Agenda as part of the project 'Global Sustainable Municipality in North Rhine-Westphalia' (GNK NRW). In a participatory process the municipalities transferred the SDGs to the local level by designing IMSS with specific local targets. These strategies highlight the international effects of local action and underline the importance of global responsibility at the local level. In addition to the 12 IMSS, 3 municipalities developed analytical documents for sustainability reporting and updates of existing IMSS. Following the principles "within the municipality for the municipality" and "within the municipality for the world", the 2,5-year process of IMSS development had two overall objectives:

- 1) Considering local challenges and an urban development that links ecological, social and economic concerns regarding the global boundaries.
- 2) Promoting the One World perspective and the associated responsibility towards people in other parts of the world, especially those in the Global South.



**Model municipalities  
GNK NRW**

- 2 districts | 13 cities
- Population of model municipalities approx. 19.000 to 1 Mio. people
- Municipalities from 4 of 5 North Rhine-Westphalian government districts
- Different demographic and economic initial situations

The project was implemented in NRW, which is the most populous federal state in Germany with approximately 17.7 million inhabitants. Even though this state is characterized by its high population density of 524 people per km<sup>2</sup>, it has very heterogeneous settlement structures. While urban structures like the Rhine Ruhr metropolitan region are very condensed, there are several rural regions in NRW. Hence, the model municipalities were faced with different demographic, economic and structural initial situations that had to be considered by ways of individual analysis and adapted process support.

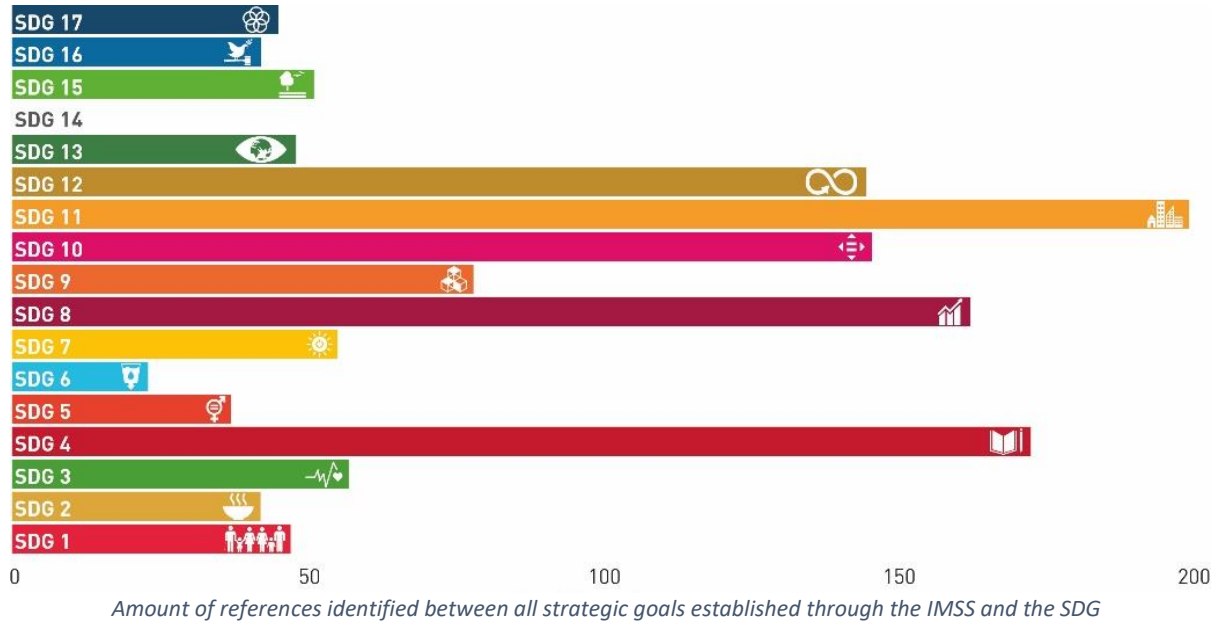
**Sustainability as a strategic approach**

The development and implementation of IMSS is designed as a locally mandated continuous improvement process (CIP). A CIP ensures the effectiveness and success monitoring of a sustainability strategy and aims at constant improvement and further development regarding the formulated content. The figure below summarizes the major milestones within the projects' timeline. It highlights the five steering committee meetings. These committees are participatory organizational structures that have been set up at the beginning of the project in each of the participating municipalities. The steering committees included representatives of the municipal administration and the local civil society as well as local politicians. This ensured local ownership of the IMSS and a strong commitment of all stakeholders from the very start. Every steering committee meeting was preceded by a networking conference. These conferences were specifically addressed to the 15 local coordinators of the project and designed as inter-municipal learning and knowledge-sharing events.



## Outcomes and outlook

The 12 integrated municipal sustainability strategies include strategic and operational objectives as well as measures that contribute to achieving the SDGs of the Agenda 2030. In the strategies' elaboration, the municipalities have set different priorities in their content, especially against the background of the respective starting points and local challenges. The resulting IMSS cover a wide range of the SDGs. The objectives developed contribute not only to the 17 goals, but also directly to the implementation of the 169 targets of the Agenda 2030. The bar chart below visualizes the quantity of references between all municipal strategic objectives of the IMSS and the SDGs. In total 1352 references have been identified.



Moreover, the targets contribute to attaining 96 of the 169 Agenda 2030 targets. While most objectives can be located within the generic fields of action of a municipality, all municipalities similarly deal with objectives and measures that expand the view to the Global South. Although these objectives are implemented by local actors, they have positive effects in other regions of the world. Concrete contributions are made in order to achieve SDG 10 "Reduced Inequalities", SDG 12 "Responsible Consumption and Production" and SDG 17 "Partnerships for the Goals". Twelve municipalities developed specified objectives that address fair procurement or fair consumption, thereby contributing to the achievement of SDG 12. All municipalities address relevant partnerships in their sustainability strategies. Overall, 10 twinnings and at least 14 project partnerships with municipalities and actors from the Global South are planned. Currently, the municipalities are adopting and implementing the IMSS. In a first step objectives and measures are now integrated into municipal budget.

In sum, the project enabled municipalities to make a wide array of activities for development part of their everyday routine and monitor the results of these activities on a regular basis. Moreover, even after the projects' finalization, it continually induces tangible contributions towards implementing the 2030 Agenda at the local level. It enables sustainable and integrated local development that combines social, economic and environmental objectives, advocates an enhanced engagement for sustainable development, and promotes cross-sectoral thinking and action within the municipality. Further outputs, outcomes and impacts of the project are listed in the table on page 4. However, it must be noticed that most of the projects' beneficial outcomes will only materialize during the next few decades, as the model municipalities implement the action-plans of their IMSS.

| Outputs / Outcomes / Impacts - Overview  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| Acceptance and co-operation  | Institutional improvements   | Synergy-effects  |
| Shared identity through co-operative and participatory strategy development                | Establishment of persisting organizational structures (steering committee, core group and coordination)  | Access to funding opportunities through new strategic action-plan for the future   |
| Sensitization of local stakeholders (politics, municipal administration and civil society) | 12 municipal sustainability strategies consisting of ambitious: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• guidelines</li> <li>• strategic and operational targets</li> <li>• action-plans</li> <li>• monitoring &amp; evaluation schemes</li> </ul> | Participation in other projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sustainable municipal budgeting</li> <li>• municipal development policy manager</li> </ul> |
| Enhanced local awareness for global, regional and local sustainability issues              | Dovetailing with other municipal strategy processes  |  |
| Commitment towards global sustainability (model resolution)                                | Creation of new municipal staff positions in the realm of sustainability management  |  |

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