

A SYNERGY TOWARD THE FULFILLMENT OF THE SDGs



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Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030 contain related obligations that require the commitment of all institutional levels as well as many spheres of society. Consequently, "it is critical that for the fulfillment of the SDGs there is active contribution and ownership of local and regional governments, together with the national government, the private sector and civil society".¹

In particular, the greater commitment of the municipal level is essential considering that "about 60% of the implementation of the SDGs falls on the burden of the local government, and from 169 Goals (Targets) defined, 99 of them are relevant for the municipalities of Kosovo".² Until now, there has been no significant commitment of the municipalities, except for the activities supported by international and local organizations.

On the other hand, the Council for Sustainable Development (Council) as a national organ for coordinating the fulfillment of the SDGs in Kosovo was established in 2019 within the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, but as a result of political developments, in particular the frequent parliamentary elections, as well as the period of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Council hadn't performed at the appropriate level until the second part of 2021, when the Council was consolidated with the new composition, and since then it has been quite active. Another positive development is that the Government of the Republic of Kosovo has now included the SDGs within the National Development Strategy 2030.

Within these positive developments towards the fulfillment of the SDGs, there is a lack of genuine coordination and cooperation between the central and local levels. Although, the Association of Kosovo Municipalities is represented in the Council, this seems to be insufficient to exploit the great potential that municipalities have towards fulfilling the SDGs.

This paper makes an assessment of the current mechanisms at the central and local level in order to recommend optimal solutions for the advancement of cooperation and utilization of the position, work and data from the municipalities for the fulfillment of the SDGs. The paper will first make a description of the mechanisms and processes of the institutional parties with the potential of involvement in the fulfillment of the SDGs. Then it will make an analysis of the shortcomings and opportunities within these mechanisms and proposes options for better cooperation and effective use of available resources for the fulfillment of the SDGs.

¹ See at : <https://www.vng-international.nl/sites/default/files/DEFINITIEF-E-2021GGBrochure-web.pdf>

² See at : <https://indep.info/en/sdgs-within-the-scope-and-mission-of-kosovo-municipalities/>

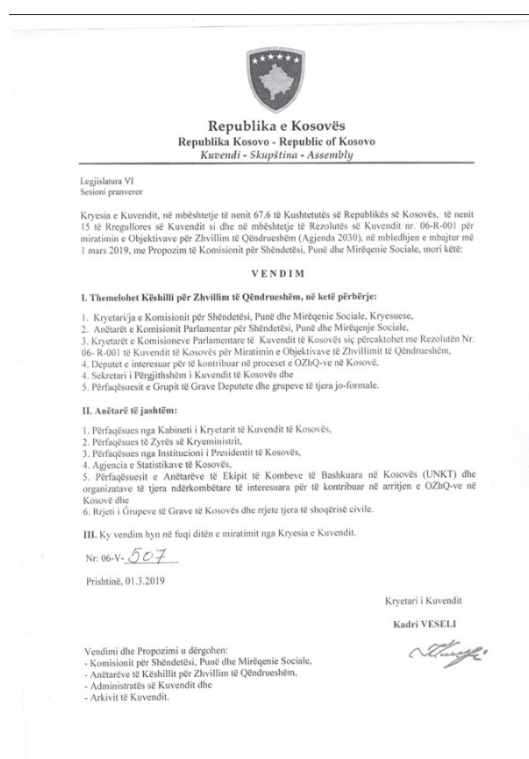
Mechanisms of the central level

After the end of the mandate of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015, the United Nations initiated the process of drafting the SDGs. In this process, the Kosovar society was also involved through a number of activities supported by the United Nations Team in Kosovo (UNKT) and its agencies.

Consequently, in January 2018, the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo approved a resolution through which it pledges to implement the SDGs and the Agenda 2030 in Kosovo. This resolution requires concrete commitment from seven (7) parliamentary committees, which cover most of the SDGs. Also, the Resolution requires the Government to report on the implementation of the National Development Strategy 2016 - 2021.

Further, in March 2019, the Assembly approves the decision for the establishment of the Council for Sustainable Development, composed of seven parliamentary committees, as well as representatives from the Office of the Presidency, the Office of the Prime Minister, the Statistical Agency of Kosovo, the United Nations Team in Kosovo, the Kosovo Women's Network and other civil society networks.

The decision in question does not include the participation of the representatives of the municipalities of Kosovo nor of the Association of Kosovo Municipalities (AKM) explicitly. In addition, the parliamentary committee that covers local government, which would have ensured a connection with the local level of government, is not included.



Despite the decision, the Council has regularly invited the representative of AKM as well as the Parliamentary Committee for Public Administration, Local Government, Media and Regional Development to meetings and events. In last two years, the Council has developed a number of activities and events, in some of them with the participation of AKM representatives, but not with a focus on cooperation with municipalities in order to fulfill the SDGs.

On the other hand, the Government of the Republic of Kosovo in March 2023 approved the National Development Strategy and Plan 2030.³ This document expresses “commitment to the implementation and integration of the Sustainable Development Goals”. All sections of this document refer to the relevant SDGs which are intended to be fulfilled by the measures foreseen in the document.

Mechanisms at the local level

The Ministry of Local Government applies the Municipal Performance Management System (MPMS) in accordance with the municipal powers arising from the Law on Local Self-Government. As a result, “the entire focus of the MPMS is to evaluate the work of the municipalities of the Republic of Kosovo in fulfilling the main competencies based on the Law on Local Self-Government”.⁴ Few data can currently be extracted from the SMMP that can be used to have a clearer picture of the fulfillment of the SDGs by the municipalities.

The Association of Kosovo Municipalities (AKM) as a non-profit organization, represents the interests of the municipalities of the Republic of Kosovo. In addition to the management structure, AKM also consists of 19 collegiums which cover certain thematic areas within the competences of the municipalities. The collegiums composed of the directors of the respective directorates of the municipalities are an unused forum for coordination and collection of data for the central level as well as for the fulfillment of the SDGs.

And self-evident local level structures are the municipalities which are the basic unit of local self-government. Municipalities, as emphasized above, are responsible for the implementation of about 60% of the SDGs, but a very small number pay due attention to the SDGs. It is worth mentioning the Municipality of Vushtria, which is the only one that has carried out a Local Voluntary Report to assess the level of fulfillment of the ODGs by this municipality. This initiative of the Municipality of Vushtria has been made possible with the support of international and local organizations.

It should be emphasized that INDEP has made a number of publications about the SDGs, including the Plans for the Localization of the SDGs for some municipalities . These Plans are essential to orient the work of the municipalities towards the fulfillment of the SDGs that fall under their competence.

³ See at : <https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/06032023-Strategjia-dhe-Plani-Kombetare-per-Zhvillim-2030.pdf>

⁴ See at : <https://indep.info/en/read-here-3/>

Advancement of cooperation between the central and local level

All the above data starting from the coverage of about 60% of the SDG from the municipal level, the existence of the MPMS as well as the collegiums of the AKM are indicators of the scope, extent and local level mechanisms for greater engagement great towards the fulfillment of the SDGs. These represent an unused asset from the central level both for the implementation of the SDGs and for reporting their fulfillment.

Based on their competences, the Municipalities of the Republic of Kosovo cover 99 out of 169 Goals (Targets) of the SDGs. A number of these goals are included in the work plans of the municipalities, but their connection with the SDGs is not made. Consequently, since there is no connection with the relevant SDGs, there can be no adequate reporting either.⁵

Similarly, MPMS covers all areas of activity of municipalities according to the legislation in force. The data collected by MPMS indirectly cover only a part of the SDGs. However, with a review of the current MPMS indicators and the introduction of SDG indicators that are relevant for municipalities, the MPMS can collect a large number of data about the fulfillment of the SDGs that can be used by the central level for to have a clearer picture of this process.⁶

Therefore, the Council and the relevant government bodies should advance the cooperation with the municipal bodies to use the municipalities as assets for the fulfillment and reporting of the SDGs at the country level. In particular, the Council as a national coordinating body for the fulfillment of the SDGs should look at the possibilities of increasing cooperation with local level structures in this direction.

The Council could create a forum with some of the collegiums covering a large number of SDGs. These collegiums can be invited to the meetings of the Council or a new forum can be created for the fulfillment of the SDGs at the local level. Some of these colleges are:

- The Collegium for Health and Social Welfare
- The Collegium for Local Economic Development
- The Collegium for Spatial Planning
- The Collegium for Education
- The Collegium of Energy Efficiency
- College for waste management

Considering the fact that these collegiums are composed of directors or responsible officials of these fields, they are an exceptional mechanism to coordinate the fulfillment of the SDGs. At the same time, the same mechanism has continuous access to

⁵ See at: <https://indep.info/en/sdgs-within-the-scope-and-mission-of-kosovo-municipalities/>

⁶ See at: <https://indep.info/en/read-here-3/>

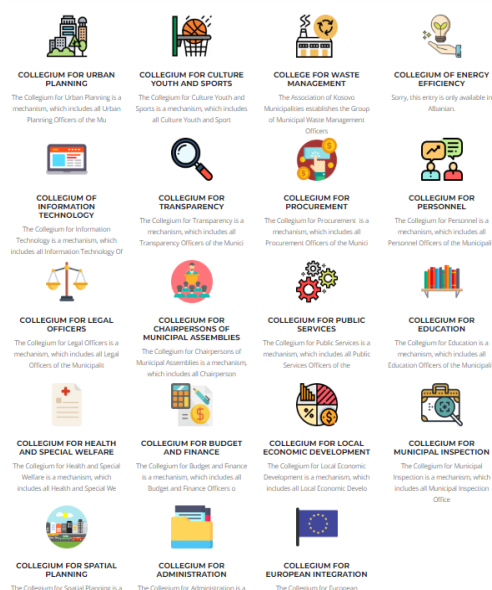
information and the situation on the ground in the respective municipalities, therefore they can make a clear and complete report on the fulfillment of the Goals of the SDGs. Also, through this forum, the directors and officials of the collegiums as well as their staff in the municipalities would be made aware. However, such a forum should be preceded by information sessions and trainings about the SDGs for collegium members.

It would be ideal if a new collegium was created consisting of the eight collegiums which cover the largest number of SDGs. In this collegium, the leaders of the eight relevant collegiums would participate. This collegium would have a coordinating role both in relation to municipalities and the Council and other central level bodies.

Therefore, the Council should look at the possibilities of the engagement of AMK collegiums during the work and activities of the Council. This would provide a good channel of cooperation between the Council as the national coordinating body and the local level. Above all, it would serve to guide the work of the municipalities towards the fulfillment of the SDGs, as well as to report progress.

This cooperation should not be seen as any intervention from the central level in the independent local government, but as a synergy, cooperation and coordination with mutual benefit, and above all for the entire Republic of Kosovo.

With political will, the Council, in cooperation with the Commission for Public Administration, Local Government, Media and Regional Development, can ask the Ministry of Local Government to review the MPMS. This revision would be done by aligning the current indicators with the indicators of the SDGs that are relevant for the municipalities. In this way, the work of the municipalities would be oriented towards the fulfillment of the SDGs in parallel with the implementation of the competences arising from the relevant legislation. Likewise, the data collected through the revised indicators would serve the institutions at the central level to evaluate the fulfillment of the SDGs and to report progress.



Conclusions

The paper enumerates a number of existing mechanisms at the central and local level which can create an extraordinary synergy towards the fulfillment of the SDGs at the country level. Of these mechanisms, only the Council is currently dealing with coordination, supervision and awareness raising about the SDGs.

At the local level there is a great untapped asset to orient the work towards the fulfillment of the SDGs and in particular to report on their fulfillment. In particular, the latter is important since work is done by the municipalities on a daily basis that directly or indirectly marks progress towards the fulfillment of the SDGs, but it is not reported against the SDGs.

Therefore, an initiative and political will on the part of the Council to engage the relevant collegiums in the future would have a positive impact on the path of the Republic of Kosovo towards the integration and reporting of the SDGs. At the same time, AKM and the collegiums should respond positively to the Council's invitation for cooperation, as this cooperation would have a positive impact on the performance of the relevant directorates and consequently the municipalities of the Republic of Kosovo. It would also be ideal to create a special collegium for coordinating the integration and reporting of the SDG for other collegiums. This new collegium could serve as a bridge with the Council.

Also, the initiation of the revision of the indicators of the MPMS to include indicators of the SDGs would be very beneficial for the whole country. The Council would have a good overview of the fulfillment of the SDGs from the local level, and the Government of the Republic of Kosovo can use the MPMS to collect data about the progress in the implementation of the National Development Plan and Strategy 2030.

Both of these initiatives, the engagement of collegiums and the revision of the MPMS, would automatically activate all municipal structures towards a better integration of the SDGs in the work of all municipal directorates. This would then enable a focused reporting against the SDGs.

Recommendation

In accordance with the above conclusions, the following actions are recommended to implement a new synergy towards the fulfillment of the SDGs:

1. The Council undertakes an initiative to engage the collegiums of AMK in order to coordinate the fulfillment of the SDGs, in particular the eight (8) collegiums that are most relevant to the SDGs;
2. The Council, in cooperation and with the support of international and local organizations, to organize information sessions or trainings for AMK collegiums about the Goals (Targets) that fall under the competences of the respective collegiums
3. The Council should include the relevant collegiums in the events it will organize depending on the topic and the SDG covered by the events.
4. The Government of the Republic of Kosovo, in coordination with the Council and with the support of international and local organizations, initiate the revision of the indicators of the MPMS to include the indicators of the SDGs
5. AMK collegiums to respond positively to the initiative of the Council for cooperation towards the fulfillment of the SDGs
6. AMK collegiums to participate in information sessions or trainings, as well as in events organized by the Council in order to advance the fulfillment of the SDGs;
7. AMK should consider the possibility of creating a special collegium for the SDGs to coordinate the work of other collegiums in fulfilling the SDGs as well as for coordination with the Council.
8. International and local organizations focused on supporting institutions towards the fulfillment of the SDGs should consider the possibilities of supporting the collegiums of AMK in this direction.

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