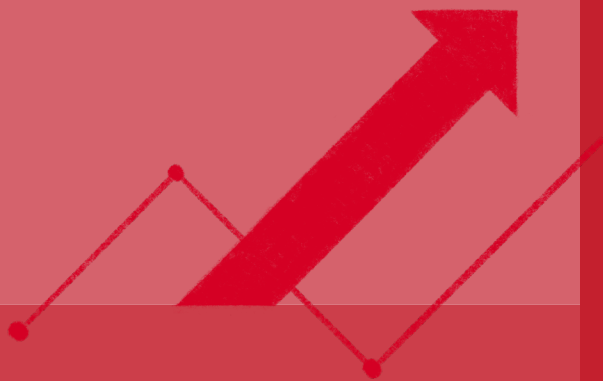


REPORT ON THE SDG FORUM 2023: COORDINATION BETWEEN THE LOCAL AND CENTRAL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA



Author: INDEP

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Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an action plan for people, planet and prosperity. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 indicators of this agenda address the biggest global challenges we face in the last millennium, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. The adaptation of this agenda in state policies is on a voluntary basis, but it is expected that countries undertake measures for its implementation, including the construction of mechanisms for reporting and tracking progress and including the SDGs in the framework of the policies of central and local level. In 2018, the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo approved the Resolution for Sustainable Development within which the Council for Sustainable Development was established as one of the main bodies towards the promotion and advancement of this agenda. One of the essential challenges in the way of adapting the 2030 Agenda to state policies is the establishment of national targets. Setting targets requires basic data for certain indicators in order to plan concrete steps to fulfill those targets.

In order to achieve faster progress towards a sustainable future, comprehensive and proactive engagement is required from important actors such as central and local institutions as well as other actors from civil society, the private sector and academia. All this inclusive approach of the society which is applied globally guarantees the proper implementation and monitoring of the agenda. The involvement of such important actors in the advancement of the 2030 Agenda will fill the gaps clearly observed at the country level for the implementation of the Agenda, as well as reveal the next steps that need to be taken urgently. The comprehensive approach of society means, among other things, the creation of a cooperative bridge between different stakeholders to enable a productive partnership and concrete steps towards advancing the 2030 Agenda and fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Since 2018, the INDEP works consistently to address the challenges and problems of municipalities, central level institutions, independent agencies and other relevant actors for the proper implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. As part of the annual activities, INDEP organizes forums with senior political representatives of SDGs in order to promote the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and address the annual challenges of the institutions. The SDG Forum held this year addressed two important topics, and this report summarizes the discussions and recommendations held within this Forum, which was held as part of the project 'SDG Bridge - Bridge of coordination between the local and central level for sustainable development in Kosovo'. The report discloses the purpose and objectives of the event that are related to those of the project, as well as the recommendations made by the roundtables will

serve as a guide in the development of further measures and activities at the central and local level to undertake concrete actions as well as steps to establish of coordination between local and central level institutions.

For the Project

To advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, there must be consistent and systematic communication and coordination between the local and central level institutions. The unprecedented circumstances with COVID-19 represent a momentum that can be used to further advance the SDGs and the inclusion of all community actors who have been sidelined for a long time. The main objective of this project is to include SDGs in the framework of recovery policies from COVID-19 by promoting mechanisms of localization, implementation and monitoring at the local level as well as creating a bridge of communication and support between central level policies and local initiatives. While aiming for this, the specific objectives of the project aim, first, to provide insights and concrete recommendations on any identified gaps of the legislative agenda and the recovery package from COVID-19 and to advocate for the integration of the sustainable development framework within such normative documents. Then, the project specifically aims to encourage political dialogue between central and local level stakeholders for the advancement of the agenda for sustainable development. Also, the further expansion of the capacities for SDGs, of the already established network of municipal officials trained for the localization of SDGs from the previous INDEP project. The specific aim of the project is to increase public awareness of the sustainable development framework through the creation of podcasts broadcast in 7 main regions of Kosovo and the social media campaign. Finally, the project aims to maintain and enrich with additional data and news the first platform for measuring the indicators of SDGs for the Municipality of Drenas.

In the framework of the project, the Institute for Development Policy - INDEP has implemented several activities. The primary focus has been intensive research work as well as advocacy. INDEP through regular meetings and interviews with the relevant main actors at the central and local level has aimed to inform them properly about the challenges, needs and limitations in their daily work. All this has contributed to the general research work, where based on them, the drafting of 8 relevant research reports will be achieved. All these reports will recommend and advocate for the inclusion of sustainability components in central and local plans and strategies. Thus, INDEP will identify topics during the meetings, which will portray the current topic of Kosovo's institutions in relation to the 2030 Agenda.

As part of the project, it is also important to raise the capacities of municipal officials for SDGs. Based on previous research and contacts with municipal officials throughout Kosovo, INDEP has identified that there is a small number of trainings offered in relation to the 2030 Agenda. Therefore, based on several factors, INDEP has identified 4 municipalities that will engage in this activity, which are: Drenasi, Fushë Kosova, Vushtrri and Obliqi. Through the organization of roundtables, the most eminent issues that the municipalities are facing regarding sustainable development have been identified, so that the priorities related to SDGs have been identified. Aiming to establish and strengthen cooperation between central and local level institutions in relation to SDGs, INDEP has also organized joint workshops between the National Council of SDGs and the Association of Municipalities of Kosovo. Considering the impact of social networks in the dissemination of information to the general public, the project has foreseen an awareness campaign tailored to citizens, to inform citizens from different municipalities about the importance of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. INDEP has published video materials which have been distributed on social media channels and the organization's official website, as well as broadcasting podcasts on several radio stations.

Opening event and introductory remarks of high-level political representatives

The Political Forum started with the opening event, which was held on November 30, and included official representatives of international and local institutions and organizations. Speakers as guests of the opening event were: Mr. Arbër Vokri, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Local Government Administration, Ms. Fatmire Mulhaxha Kollçaku, Chairwoman of the National Council for Sustainable Development, Mr. Margus

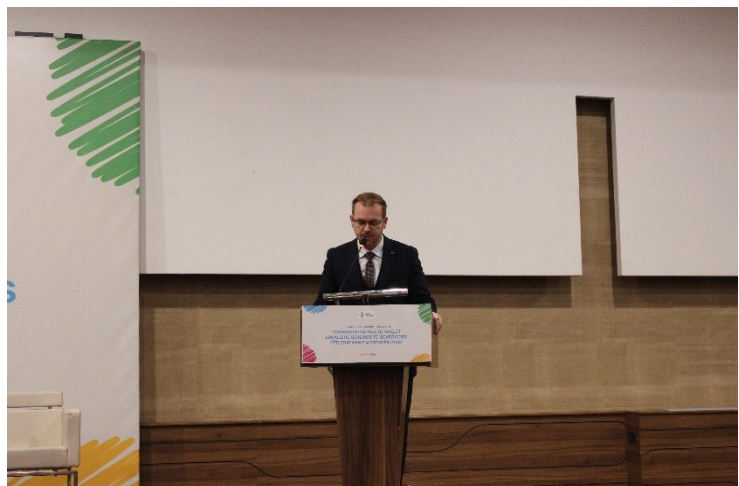


Image 1. Introductory speech of the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Administration and Local Government, Arbër Vokri

Sarapuu, Team Leader at Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, GIZ Kosova as well as Mr. Burim Ejuqi, Executive Director of the Institute for Development Policy - INDEP, who welcomed the initiative and expressed their willingness to support their institutions for the advancement of Agenda 2030 and SDGs in the country. These high-level speakers representing various institutions and

organizations showed their willingness and desire to cooperate towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The first speech of the opening event was delivered by Mr. Arbër Vokrri, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Local Government Administration. Mr. Vokrri showed the commitment and will of the Ministry of Local Government Administration, especially in recent years, to improve the



Image 2. The introductory speech of Mrs. Fatmire Mulhaxha - Kollçaku

implementation of Agenda 2030 and SDGs, at the local level. Mr. Vokrri emphasized that MLGA will concentrate all efforts to engage even further in improving the conditions for the implementation of Agenda 2030 and SDGs, especially in raising the capacities of municipal officials, as well as providing the necessary training in order for municipal officials to integrate SDGs in their daily work. In this opening event, the second speaker was Ms. Fatmire Mulhaxha Kollçaku, Chairwoman of the National Council for Sustainable Development, who in her speech showed the history of the formation and consolidation of NCSD as well as the challenges that NCSD has had as a coordinating body for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda since its establishment in 2018. Then Ms. Mulhaxha - Kollçaku, mentioned the work plan for the implementation of this Council, as well as its focus, which is based on several main pillars, such as the drafting of laws, budgeting, then supervision and representation, as well as the cooperative relations it has with other international and local institutions and organizations. Ms. Mulhaxha - Kollçaku further added that the National Council for Sustainable Development is now collaborating with the Statistics Agency of Kosovo in order to form a statistical center within the Council so that it would enable the deputies to have easier access to these data, where in addition to general implementation, Ms. Mulhaxha - Kollçaku also emphasize that this Council will work with certain experts on specific indicators, in order to achieve the most literal implementation and advancement of the 2030 Agenda.

The representative of GIZ, Mr. Margus Sarapuu, Team Leader at Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, GIZ Kosovo in his opening speech also mentioned the importance of implementing Agenda 2030 in Kosovo and talked about the support that GIZ provides in this global process to help its implementation. Mr. Sarapuu also mentioned that the work with the INDEP Institute for the implementation of this agenda

in recent years has started precisely at the local level, and quite significant steps have been taken in this direction despite the fact that Kosovo is not obliged to implement this process. Among other things Mr. Sarapuu emphasized that the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs are a framework that must be integrated into strategic plans and Kosovo must prioritize the specific national objectives on which it must concentrate its work.



Image 3. Introductory speech of the executive director of the INDEP Institute

Executive Director of the Institute for Development Policy - INDEP Mr. Burim Ejupi was the last speaker and also one of the organizing collaborators of the 2030 Agenda Political Forum. Mr. Ejupi emphasized that in cooperation with the Association of Municipalities of Kosovo and the National Council for Sustainable Development they are working to raise awareness and human capacity at the local level for the proper localization of SDGs.

Thus, at the end of the speech, Mr. Ejupi indicated that the INDEP Institute has been working continuously since 2018 for the implementation of this Agenda, and will continue the work by providing contribution and assistance to local and central level institutions, until concrete progress is achieved in the advancement of this Agenda.

Panel Discussion "Technical support, monitoring and reporting for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at the national level"

For the discussion panel entitled 'Technical support, monitoring and reporting for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at the national level', representatives of the central level, foreign international organizations and representatives from the private sector were invited. Thus, to attempt the involvement of all relevant actors for a genuine implementation of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda in the country. Since Kosovo still lags far behind in terms of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in general, the participants in the



Image 4. View during the roundtable "Technical support, monitoring and reporting for the implementation of SDGs at the national level"

discussion represented different sectors. This is because of the need for inclusivity and the opportunity to highlight the challenges that all sectors face in implementing the 2030 Agenda. Vedat Sogojeva from the Office for Strategic Planning, discussed the importance of a clear and comprehensive plan for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the national level. Participants emphasized the need for technical support to achieve and meet the SDGs effectively. Ilir Berisha from the Statistics Agency, spoke about the importance of monitoring and reporting progress towards the SDGs. He noted the need for the collection and analysis of reliable data to track progress towards the SDGs and for the effective communication of this information to stakeholders. The third participant was from the private sector, Mr. Adnan Vila, who discussed the role of the private sector in contributing to achieve the SDGs. He emphasized the need for collaboration between the private sector and other stakeholders to address the challenges of sustainability and social responsibility. Ms. Cornelia Schneider, from the UN, discussed the global context of the SDGs and the importance of implementation at the national level to achieve the global goals. She emphasized the need for international cooperation and support for efforts at the

national level towards the SDGs. Overall, the discussion provided valuable perspectives on the challenges and opportunities for implementing the SDGs at the national level. Participants highlighted the need for technical support, monitoring and reporting, as well as collaboration between stakeholders from different sectors.

Panel Discussion "The importance and commitment of local government for the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs"

The panel discussion "The importance and commitment of local government for the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs" dealt with the challenges surrounding the commitment of local government regarding the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. During the discussion, the experiences of several municipalities were revealed and the opportunities to improve their implementation and capacity building by cooperating with the central level were highlighted.

The roundtable was moderated by Ms. Donikë Beqiri, Junior Researcher at the INDEP Institute and Project Coordinator, whereas invited to talk at the panel discussion were:

Ms. Voltana Ademi, former Mayor of the Municipality of Shkodra, Mr. Sokol Haliti, Mayor the Municipality of Vitia, Mr. Ferit Idrizi, Mayor of the Municipality of Vushtrri as well as Mr. Fitim Mulolli, Independent Expert. In this discussion, the needs and practices applied in local governance both in our country and in neighboring countries were emphasized to



Image 5 View from the roundtable discussion "The importance and commitment of local government for the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs"

achieve the most satisfactory results of the fulfillment and implementation of the SDGs at this level. Ms. Ademi, the former Mayor of Shkodra Municipality, addressed the challenges and interactive relationships that exist between the central and local levels. Due to reforms, this report often lacks reliable data, making it difficult to measure progress. These challenges make it difficult to implement SDGs at the local level, and a comprehensive system that accurately monitors data in real-time is needed. This will increase credibility among citizens and improvements will be evident from year to year.

Taking into account that in Albania the report on the implementation of the SDGs is done only at the national level, the commitment and framing of all municipalities is required to achieve an improvement, a reinforcement on the professional side and an increase in reporting capacities in order to mark progress in local level and to achieve more efficient cooperation in drafting the report at the central level.

The municipality of Viti is one of the municipalities that has implemented projects in compliance with the 2030 Agenda and, especially in the last year, it has marked an increase in the support of the social aspect, especially for persons with disabilities, respectfully respecting the principle "Leave no one behind". Thus, Mr. Haliti, Mayor of the Municipality of Viti, seeing the importance and challenges in the implementation of projects towards the fulfillment of the SDGs, emphasized and suggested that before working at the central level, commitment and engagement at the local level should be increased and improved for the best possible results.

In addition, Mr. Mulolli, in his capacity as an Independent Expert, emphasized that the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda serve the purpose of European integration. The report compiled by Mr. Mulolli is aligned with the European Green Agenda, and the SDGs are fully in line with municipal competencies that emerge from the Law on Local Self-Government. This report can serve as a useful guide for the future. Furthermore, it was shown that there are many challenges in reporting, and that reporting requirements should be regulated in such a way that commitments and engagement increase in municipalities with greater workloads compared to those with less work. This will make it easier to draft reports. In order to integrate the objectives of the 2030 Agenda in the best way possible in the community, institutions and municipalities must be initiators and serve as an example of success in how they should be implemented.

The importance of data collected at the local level was also discussed at this table. The 2030 Agenda has many objectives that require a large number of people who will contribute to the improvement of the situation in the community by working with concrete plans for the comprehensive realization of these objectives. That's why we need the willpower to implement even those SDGs that require more time to realize due to their specific nature. Most of the objectives require greater initiatives and support to be included in the implementation processes of the municipalities, especially the objectives related to persons with disabilities, which are more sensitive objectives. Greater inclusion and support are necessary for all actions and solutions to meet the criteria for this category of integration in all areas. Everyone should be included for their dignified participation, and representatives from the municipalities of Viti and Vushtrri were present in meetings with people who aim to provide concrete support for their

participation in all processes and workplaces. The goal is to build capacity in their municipalities and make their inclusion easier.

During this discussion, challenges regarding the changes at the local or central level that focus on reducing the impact of natural disasters were also mentioned, as well as action plans and strategies in case of natural disasters and the consequences caused after floods. Also, the withdrawal of unused budget funds at the local level from the central budget according to the latest administrative instructions has been seen as a matter of special interest and at the same time disturbing. In this discussion, it was shown that there are already strategies and action plans for the areas that are at risk of flooding and improving the situation after the floods, but the main problem does not lie in the disappearance of this phenomenon, since this is impossible, but in the reduction of the consequences caused by flooding at the local level. So, the representatives of the local level emphasized how important planning and implementation are, regardless of the fact that this requires the financing of strategic objectives. It was also requested that the central level engage and focus more on developing capacities so that the municipal budget is carried over from year to year. Instructions should be drawn up to prevent the withdrawal of unused budget from the central level, in order to use it for fulfilling the SDGs and to avoid hindering budget utilization due to bureaucratic procedures that may impede project implementation. At this level, it was assessed that it would be good to support the municipalities and that the budget planned for the municipalities remains with the municipalities since the projects are implemented in the territory of the municipalities, but the deficit is also covered by the municipality.

As a conclusion from this discussion table, it was emphasized that the support of the Government is more than necessary in order to locate the Objectives in fulfillment of the 2030 Agenda, where the contribution from civil societies is more than welcome. Also, the legislation should be intervened so that the reports are not compiled only voluntarily, but the institutions are obliged to compile the report. On the other hand, Mr. Mulolli called on the municipalities to follow the example of the municipalities of Vitia, Drenas, Vushtrri, which have done the localization of the SDG and make a report, an update of the system at the local level through local performance, including the indicators of SDGs.

The main recommendations

From the panel discussions, it was recommended to increase the support of the central level institutions and it was requested that this support be done continuously not only in financial terms but also with the drafting of the legislative frameworks necessary to operationalize the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in a concrete way. Seeing the importance and challenges in the implementation of projects towards the fulfillment of the SDGs, another recommendation was suggested that before working at the central level, commitment at the local level should be increased and improved for the most satisfactory results. Since there are many objectives and for the improvement of the situation in the community, concrete plans for the comprehensive realization of these objectives must be conducted, a greater number of people at the local level who contribute to their fulfillment is necessarily needed. Therefore, willpower is required for the implementation of even those SDGs that require more time in their realization due to their specifics.

It was also recommended that the central level engage and focus more on developing the capacities of municipal officials so that the municipal budget must necessarily be carried over from year to year by drawing up instructions that do not allow the withdrawal of the unused budget from the central level with purpose of its use for the fulfillment of the SDGs. At this level, it was assessed that it would be good to support the municipalities and the planned budget in the municipalities, since the projects are implemented precisely in the municipalities.

The crucial need for technical support, monitoring and reporting, as well as cooperation between relevant actors from the public sector, the private sector, independent agencies and civil society organizations to achieve a genuine and consistent implementation of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda was highlighted.

All the recommendations issued by these panels will be sent to the relevant actors, which will serve as guidance for the development and implementation of relevant coordination activities both at the central and local level in order to undertake concrete implementation actions.

Annex

Forum for the SDGs

Agenda

30th November, Hotel Emerald, Prishtinë

09:45-10:00	Registration of participants
10:00-10:35	Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arbër Vokrri, Deputy Minister of Administration and Local Government • Fatmire Kollçaku, Chair of the Council for Sustainable Development • Margus Sarapuu, Team Leader at Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH • Burim Ejupi, Executive Director, Institute for Development Policy – INDEP
10:35-11:40	Panel Discussion: “Technical support, monitoring, and reporting for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at the national level”. <p>Moderator: Dardan Abazi, INDEP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Vedat Sagonjeva, Director of the Office for Strategic Planning ○ Ilir Berisha, Director of Kosovo Statistics Agency ○ Cornelia Schneider, Head of UN Development Coordinator’s Office, AI. ○ Adnan Vila, CSR Officer, Sharrcem
11:40-11:50	Coffee Break
11:50-12:40	Panel Discussion: “The importance and commitment of the local government for the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs” <p>Moderator: Donikë Beqiri, INDEP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ferit Idrizi, Mayor of Vushtrri ○ Sokol Haliti, Mayor of Vitia ○ Voltana Ademi, Former Mayor of Shkodra ○ Fitim Mulolli, Independent Expert
12:40-13:30	Closing of the Forum and Lunch

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