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Deutsches Institut für Urbanistik

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Voluntary Local Government Review 2025

Local government contribution to the 3rd Voluntary National Review of the German Federal Government on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Deutscher Städtetag

DEUTSCHER LANDKREISTAG

DStGB
Deutscher Städte- und Gemeindebund

UCLG
United Cities and Local Governments

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1. Introduction

In 2015, the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda, a comprehensive global roadmap for sustainable development comprising 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It has long been evident that sustainable transformation is also be significantly shaped at the local level. In many German municipalities this is already a reality, as evidenced by the growing number of sustainability strategies and reviews, as well as the increasing number of voluntary commitments, such as the 2030 Agenda model resolution. However, municipalities face specific challenges, including limited financial and human resources, growing legal requirements and the need to integrate sustainable development goals systematically into departmental strategies, budgets and planning processes (see Butzer-Strothmann & Ahlers, 2024; Peters et al., 2023; German Council for Sustainable Development (Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung, RNE), 2024).

Various initiatives in recent years demonstrate that the United Nations has also continued to emphasise the importance of the local level for successfully implementing global sustainability. The Local and Regional Governments Days provide a platform for presenting local sustainability activities and promoting inter-municipal exchange. Additionally, Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) have been recognised as a valuable addition to Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), resulting in a growing number of VLRs worldwide (see, for instance, Ortiz-Moya & Kataoka, 2024). The Our Common Agenda initiative, adopted by UN Secretary-General António Guterres in 2021, calls for greater consideration of local and regional governments in multilateral processes (see United Nations, 2021). In recent years, the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) has become more involved with regional and local authorities in its reporting. Partnerships have also been strengthened between UN organisations and local government networks, such as ICLEI and the "Club der Agenda 2030 Kommunen" (Club of 2030 Agenda Municipalities), to promote knowledge transfer within the multi-level system and improve collaboration.

In 2025, the German federal government will report again on the nationwide progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda as part of its third Voluntary National Review (VNR). For the first time, substantial consideration will be given to the local government level: Two of the 30 pages of the report are explicitly dedicated to developments and challenges in cities, counties and towns.

The cities of Bonn, Hamburg, Mannheim and Stuttgart have initiated the creation of a Voluntary Local Government Review (VLGR) in order to actively support this process and make the perspectives of the municipalities visible. The aim of this accompanying report is to comprehensively present the diverse range of sustainability activities in German municipalities and at the same time to provide a basis for the two-page summary in the VNR in order to ensure that the local level has a strong, coordinated voice in the national sustainability discourse.

The VLGR is compiled by the German Institute of Urban Affairs (Difu) in cooperation with the municipal umbrella organizations. At the heart of the report are contributions from fifteen German municipalities that have already published their own Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs). These profiles offer a concise summary of the progress, challenges and innovative strategies adopted in these cities and counties. However, the VLGR also addresses the risks faced by cities, counties and towns. In order to establish impact-ori-

ented sustainability management on a large scale, there is still a lack of financial, personnel and conceptual support from municipal stakeholders, which is all the more important in times of uncertain political and social conditions. Such challenges can only be overcome through closer collaboration between the federal government, the federal states and the municipalities. Against this background, this VLGR aims to strengthen the local government perspective and serve as a basis for discourse on municipal transformation needs and opportunities.

This Voluntary Local Government Review (VLGR) is part of a global movement of Voluntary Subnational Reviews (VSRs), through which committed local and regional governments and their associations demonstrate their vital role in advancing the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from the bottom up. To date, local government associations (LGAs) from 38 countries have produced 45 VSRs, highlighting the collective efforts of the local level to monitor progress, share innovations, and influence national and global policymaking. United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) has been at the forefront of this movement, promoting the recognition of local and regional governments as essential actors in the implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda.

2. New old frameworks for the decade of action

Implementing the 2030 Agenda at the local level is greatly influenced by the frameworks established by higher levels of government. In Germany, cities, counties and towns are constitutionally part of the 16 federal states. Nevertheless, they also constitute a distinct administrative tier due to their pivotal role in implementing federal and state legislation. In accordance with Article 28 of the German Basic Law (Grundgesetz), German cities, counties and towns are granted municipal autonomy, i.e. are self-governing, and are guaranteed the right to regulate all local matters within the limits set by law. Alongside their mandatory duties, municipalities can independently decide on so-called "voluntary tasks". These include all tasks related to sustainable development, provided they do not fall within the scope of mandatory public services. Article 20a of the Basic Law states that the state is responsible for protecting "the natural foundations of life and animals within the framework of the constitutional order through legislation and, in accordance with the law and the provisions of the law, through the executive power and the judiciary, also taking into account the interests of future generations".

The annual survey of mayors of German cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants, conducted by the German Institute of Urban Affairs ("OB Barometer", see Fig. 1), identifies urban development tasks and issues currently considered particularly important.

Fig. 1:
Most important municipal tasks over time since 2015 according to the OB Barometer (top 6 tasks)

What are the most important tasks in your city right now?
(Annual survey among mayors in German cities with at least 50,000 residents, n = 113 - 144)

Legend:
Energy policy, Climate action, Sustainability • • • Finance
Housing • • • Mobility
Accommodating / Integrating refugees • • • Covid-19 measures
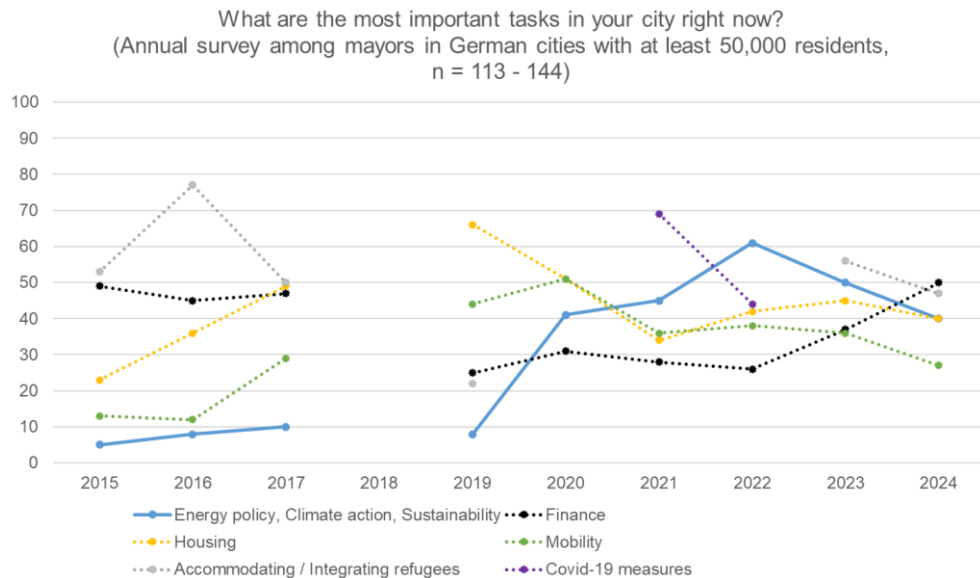
Source: Kühl & Hollbach-Grömig 2024

The last decade has shown the importance that local politics attaches to the topic of "energy policy, climate protection and sustainability" influenced by current events and public debates and which topics may overshadow it (see Fig. 1). The sharpest rise in importance occurred between 2019 and 2020, and is probably mostly due to the Fridays for Future movement, the increasing number of municipalities declaring a climate emergency, and the public discourse as a whole. This high level has not fallen since then, rising to 61 % of responses in 2022 in connection with the energy crisis following Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. This year marked the first time that "energy policy, climate action and sustainability" were perceived as the most im-

portant tasks by city leaders. Eclipsed since then by migration and, more recently, the fraught financial situation in municipalities, the overall situation is now similar to 2017 – with the difference that the issue of sustainability has lost little of its relevance and now ranks third alongside housing as the most important task for 2024.

When asked about the most important future tasks, city leaders have consistently cited energy policy, climate action and sustainability as the most important issues since 2020, with a clear lead over the other issues surveyed in the OB Barometer. Furthermore, many mayors cite the financial situation and issues of budget consolidation as an important topic for the future. Issues relating to the distribution of finances between different levels of government, rising expenditure and falling revenues present significant challenges today and are likely to continue to do so in the short to medium term. Municipal debt has recently risen sharply as a result of investment loans, despite — or perhaps because of — the fact that the perceived investment backlog of municipalities has reached a new record high of 186 billion euros, according to the KfW Municipal Panel (see Fig. 2). This trend is mainly due to rising construction costs, particularly in areas with the highest backlogs such as transport infrastructure, school buildings, as well as fire and disaster control infrastructure. A panel study conducted by Difu also shows that nine out of ten municipal finance departments are currently concerned about their future finances.

Fig. 2:
Current financial situation of municipalities and perceived investment backlog (IB)
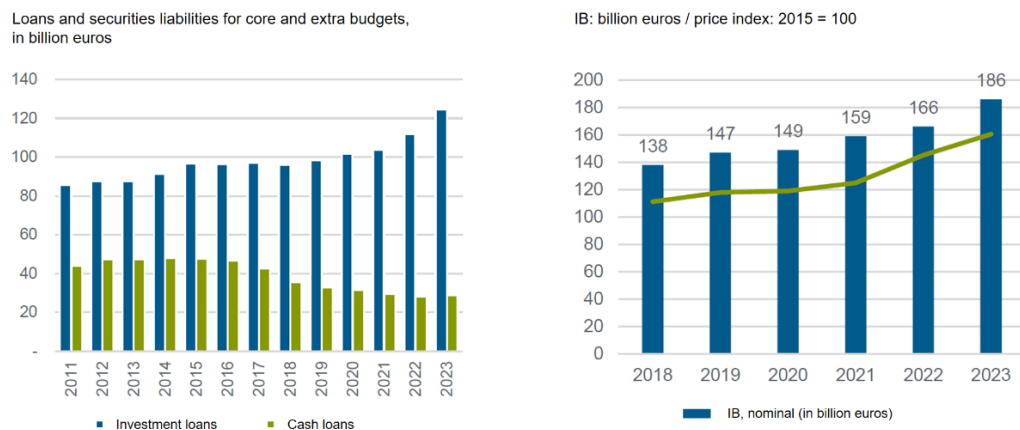
Source: Raffer & Scheller 2024

Last but not least, the indirect drivers of sustainable development must be identified. These drivers influence the resources and political support available to municipalities, albeit with a delayed effect. In this context, particular mention should be made of the remaining lifespan of the 2030 Agenda and the diffuse global political landscape, which makes predicting the outcome of negotiations on a post-2030 agenda difficult. The coming years are likely to be characterised by further transgression of the Earth's planetary boundaries, accompanied by a loss of trust in democracy, politics and science. When the existing agendas were adopted in 2015, there were also uncertainties and crises, albeit not as dramatic as those we face today. The municipal level, as the central point for political participation and tangible (environmental) change, has gained greatly in importance since then. Shared governance, integrated finance and cohesive transition are essential frameworks for local authorities as set out in the recently adopted Aalborg Conditions (see ICLEI – European Secretariat, 2024). These conditions will be crucial in shaping the years leading up to and beyond 2030 in a sustainable manner.

3. State of sustainable development in German municipalities

Examining the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the local level reveals that, despite challenging framework conditions, municipalities have made significant progress in achieving individual Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in recent years. The importance of sustainable development in administrative action is widely recognised, with cities, counties and towns in Germany paying particular attention to this issue. This is evident from the significant momentum behind local government voluntary commitments relating to sustainability (see Fig. 3). However, this momentum is accompanied by two further observations: firstly, the number of new signatories, memberships and awards has slowed recently, as illustrated by the flattening of the curves since the beginning of the geopolitical crises in 2022; secondly, it should be noted that the overall momentum is still at a low level. This means that, of the total number of approx. 11,000 municipalities in Germany, fewer than 10 % are committed to ambitious targets and measures in their respective areas. Nevertheless, as these are often larger municipalities with a greater scope for action, the proportion of the population living in these municipalities is higher.

Fig. 3:
Development of local government commitments to sustainability since the introduction of the 2030 Agenda
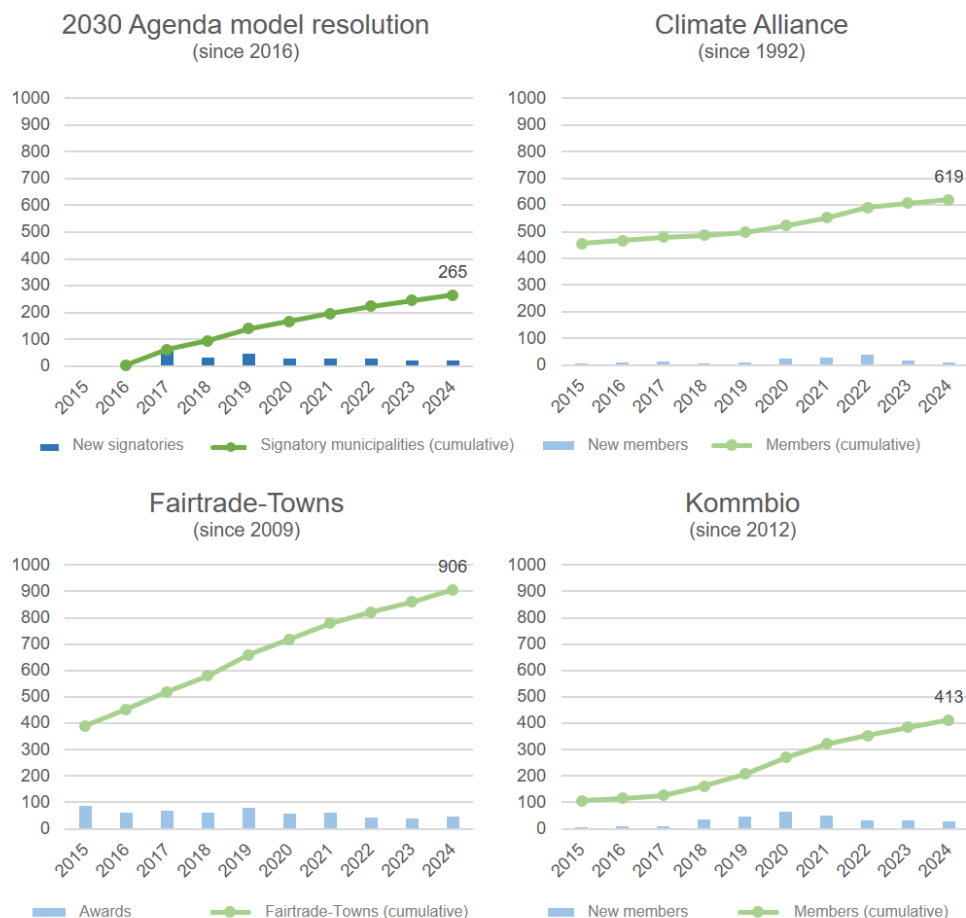
Source: Own depiction based on SKEW 2025, Klima-Bündnis 2025, Fairtrade Deutschland 2025 & Kommunen für Biologische Vielfalt 2025

Due to a lack of suitable data for German municipalities, the implementation of these voluntary commitments at the local government level can only be estimated. For example, the implementation status of various municipal sustainability management instruments was documented by the German Institute for Urban Affairs on behalf of the Bertelsmann Stiftung in a non-representative survey in 2022, as part of the mid-term review of the 2030 Agenda (see Peters et al., 2023). The results showed that only around a quarter of the 175 participating municipalities had carried out sustainability assessments and drawn up sustainability strategies. Another quarter had planned to introduce these instruments by that point in time. Significantly less reporting was done on sustainable development activities and their effects. Even less common is linking sustainable development goals, measures and indicators to the budget plans (so-called sustainability budget).

Most municipalities are still implementing measures to achieve the 2030 Agenda individually, i.e. without integrating them strategically into municipal sustainability management, or are taking measures within the framework of sectoral strategies without incorporating them into the SDGs. In view of this, a rather mixed picture is painted by the so-called "SDG-Indikatoren für Kommunen" (SDG indicators for municipalities), which enable an assessment of the overall municipal impact of administrative action. These "SDG indicators for municipalities" are key figures established in Germany for reviewing municipal sustainability developments in line with the SDGs. Developed and refined since 2016 by a broad consortium of partners, they can be used as a modular system for SDG stocktaking and progress measurement (see Bertelsmann Stiftung et al., 2022).

The evaluation of the "SDG indicators for municipalities" shows that slightly more than half of the indicators for which data is available nationwide have developed positively since the introduction of the 2030 Agenda. However, this positive trend does not permit any conclusions to be drawn regarding the achievement of the SDGs, or the sometimes more ambitious goals set out in the sustainability strategies of individual municipalities. Evidence of inherently conflicting targets at the local government level can be seen in SDG 11. While there are positive developments in the housing sector in terms of local recreation areas and renewable heating energy, there are also continuing increases in rents, living space and overall land consumption, which paint a negative picture of the sector. The stagnation of the Land Use Intensity indicator, which combines many aspects of sustainability by comparing the land used for settlements and transport with the number of inhabitants, confirms this ambivalence. A similar situation exists in the mobility sector. Although car density in Germany is at a record high and is counteracting efforts to achieve a sustainable modal split, the number of traffic accidents has recently fallen.

SDGs 7 and 8 consistently show positive signs, indicating significant progress in renewable energies, infrastructure, the economy and employment. Conversely, there are no SDGs whose indicators show exclusively negative trends. On average, the indicators in the areas of poverty (SDG 1), health (SDG 3), inequalities (SDG 10), consumption and production (SDG 12), and life on land (SDG 15) are the weakest.

There are clear differences between different types of municipalities, for example in SDG 16: large cities generally have better financial resources, which significantly influences the scope for sustainability activities. However, they lag significantly behind in terms of start-ups (SDG 9), which raises concerns about the innovative strength of urban areas. They also show negative trends in gender equality (SDG 5), an area in which municipalities in more rural areas have recently made more progress. Small municipalities have made more

progress in education (SDG 4), but are showing negative trends in environmental areas such as soil sealing and degradation. Medium-sized towns and urban counties outside major cities demonstrate the weakest performance across all SDGs. Growing municipalities performed comparatively poorly in terms of reducing poverty (SDG 1).

This analysis is based on 47 "SDG indicators for municipalities", for which data availability and quality could be ensured. However, given that two-thirds of the 169 targets for achieving the SDGs require a significant contribution from municipalities, the available data is insufficient to identify trends across the entire spectrum of sustainability issues. In particular, there is still a lack of available, up-to-date data in the important transformational areas of climate action and biodiversity protection (SDGs 13, 14 and 15), circular economy (SDG 12) and partnerships (SDG 17). These data gaps result in significant shortcomings when stocktaking and assessing progress, both in reports such as this one for the overall local level and, in particular, for impact-oriented management in the respective municipalities.

Fig. 4:
Development trends of the "SDG indicators for municipalities", for selected types of municipalities from 2015 to 2022

SDG	Indicator	Total	County-free cities	Urban counties	Rural counties showing signs of urbanisation	Sparsely populated rural counties	Growing municipalities	Shrinking municipalities
1	SGB II / SGB XII rate	→	→	→	→	↘	→	↘
1	Poverty - Child poverty	→	↘	→	→	→	→	↘
1	Poverty - Youth poverty	↗	→	↗	↗	↗	↗	→
1	Poverty - Old-age poverty	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
2	Nitrogen surplus in agriculture	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘
3	Premature mortality	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
3	Staff in nursing homes	↗	↗	→	↗	↗	↗	↗
3	Staff in nursing services	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘
3	Nursing home places	→	→	→	→	→	→	↗
3	Air pollution	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘
4	Early school leavers	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
4	Childcare (under 3 years old)	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
4	Inclusive childcare facilities	↗	↗	↗	↗	→	↗	→
5	Gender employment ratio	→	↘	↗	↗	↗	→	→
5	Gender pay ratio	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
6	Wastewater treatment	↗	→	↗	↗	→	↗	↗
7	Electricity from renewable sources	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
7	Charging station infrastructure	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
8	Gross domestic product	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
8	Long-term unemployment rate	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘
8	Employment rate - 15 to 64-year-olds	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
8	Employment rate - 55 to 64-year-olds	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
8	Social welfare recipients in employment	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘
9	Start-ups	→	↘	→	↗	↗	→	→
9	Highly qualified personnel	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
10	Employment rate - foreigners	↗	↗	→	↗	↗	↗	↗
10	Early school leavers - foreigners	↗	↗	↗	↗	→	↗	→
10	Naturalisations	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
11	Rental prices	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
11	Living space	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
11	Car density	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
11	Victims of traffic accidents	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘
11	Land use	↗	→	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
11	Land use intensity	→	→	→	→	↗	→	↗
11	Local recreation areas	→	→	→	→	↗	→	↗
11	Completed residential buildings with renewable heating energy	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
12	Drinking water consumption - private households	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
12	Waste generation	→	↘	→	→	→	→	→
13	Settlement density in floodplains	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
14	Ecological status of rivers	↗	→	↗	→	→	↗	→
15	Nature conservation areas	↗	↗	→	→	→	↗	→
15	Landscape quality	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘
16	Crime	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘
16	Financial balance	→	↗	→	→	→	→	→
16	Tax revenue	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗
16	Liquidity loans	→	→	→	↘	→	↗	→
	Percentage of indicators with a positive trend	52	52	46	54	52	50	52

The arrows show the development of each indicator, with areas coloured blue indicating positive development and areas coloured orange indicating negative development in terms of sustainability. Stagnation is assumed when an indicator's development is below the standard deviation. This data was evaluated by the German Institute for Urban Affairs as part of the "SDG Measures for Municipalities" project, commissioned by the Bertelsmann Stiftung.

Source: Own depiction based on calculations by Liedloff et al. 2025

4. Implementation practices from pioneering municipalities

The following section presents the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in cities, counties and towns that have already published a Voluntary Local Review. By reporting on their sustainability efforts to the United Nations in this way, municipalities are considered the pioneers in Germany when it comes to actively shaping sustainable development.

Seen as a whole, it is clear that municipalities are pursuing very different approaches, priorities and methods for sustainable development in order to meet individual (structural) requirements at the local level and develop their own distinctive profiles. In this regard, a wide range of sustainable development issues within municipalities' spheres of influence can serve as a catalyst for a sustainable society, including measures ranging from social participation and sustainable management to recycling and marine protection. To manage this complexity, larger towns and cities are increasingly using digital reporting tools, such as interactive dashboards, to showcase their commitment at major sustainability events. Smaller municipalities, on the other hand, often try to implement direct citizen participation and local projects. Nevertheless, despite the wide variety of implementation concepts and measures, there are also some common features. For instance, all municipalities have adopted a formal resolution confirming their commitment to sustainability, managing it strategically through sustainability strategies and/or reports. Thematically, most municipalities share a common focus on climate action, with ambitious climate neutrality targets and corresponding implementation measures. These include the use of renewable energies, sustainable mobility and energy-efficient construction, all of which contribute to sustainable development in many areas. The principle of "thinking globally, acting locally" is also evident in fair trade and global partnerships. Many cities, counties and towns are committed to fair procurement and maintain decentralized development cooperation. All these measures rely on broad participation processes coordinated by sustainability councils or steering groups in the administrations.

4.1   Town of Bad Köstritz

Source: andreashartmann.photography

Town of Bad Köstritz

Federal state: Thuringia

Population: 3,674 (as of 30 June 2023)

Area: 20.34 km^2

Population density: 181 inhabitants/km^2

Website/Social media:

https://www.stadtbadkoestritz.de

https://www.facebook.com/stadtbadkoestritz/

4.1.1   Brief profile

Bad Köstritz is known as both the "Pearl of the Elster Valley" and the "Town of the Big B's". Amongst others these "B's" stand for baths, beer, Baroque music, buildings and "being very sustainable", in a town also known for its flowers (Blumen) and recreational activities (Bewegung). Situated north of the County of Greiz in eastern Thuringia, Bad Köstritz lies between the towns of Gera and Jena and boasts an excellent infrastructure. Several industrial estates are home to mainly medium-sized companies, including the "Köstritzer Schwarzbierbrauerei" (Black Beer Brewery) and the Bad Köstritz chemical plant. The town is characterised by traditional crafts and trades, mostly family businesses spanning several generations, as well as horticulture and agriculture. Bad Köstritz is a popular tourist destination, offering a well-developed network of cycling and hiking trails along with numerous leisure facilities, parks, stadiums as well a leisure and recreation pool. The town's vibrant cultural life, with its high-quality concerts, exhibitions, sporting events, activities for senior citizens, kids' festivals and traditional festivals, makes it a great place to live.

4.1.2 Sustainability concepts

The town of Bad Köstritz has been a "Global Sustainable Municipality" since 2019. The town council is committed to addressing the issues raised by the 2030 Agenda and has adopted an action plan to implement the sustainability strategy set out in the Agenda. Particular focus is given to implementing the 2030 Agenda and promoting fair trade and procurement, as well as developing a city partnership with Huamantla in Mexico. Since 2020, the Coordinator for Municipal Development Policy has been involved in implementing these ambitious goals. Together with a broad network established by the "Partnership with the Global South" and "Fairtrade Town Steering Group" working groups, numerous projects related to the 17 goals have been successfully implemented.

Bad Köstritz is certified as a "Global Sustainable Municipality" and is also one of the signatory municipalities to the model resolution "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Shaping Sustainability at the Local Level". The town is an active member of the "Club der Agenda 2030-Kommunen" (Club of the 2030 Agenda Municipalities) and is considered a pioneer in sustainability concepts. In 2021, Bad Köstritz signed a partnership agreement on the 2030 Agenda with Huamantla, Mexico, as part of its municipal sustainability partnerships. In 2023, the town was awarded the title of "Fairtrade Town" at the traditional Dahlia Festival. In 2024, Bad Köstritz presented its Voluntary Local Review at the High-Level Political Forum at the UN in New York. In October, it won first place in the "Kommune bewegt Welt" (Municipalities Move the World) competition in the "Small Municipalities" category. The prize money will be used to fund future development policy projects for implementing the 2030 Agenda.

4.1.3 Delivering sustainable development at the local level

The town of Bad Köstritz's main priorities are communicating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and fair trade, as well as developing and establishing a city partnership with Huamantla in Mexico. Bad Köstritz's sustainability strategy for the 2030 Agenda was implemented with the involvement of the entire civil society. Thanks to the Coordinator for Municipal Development Policy's commitment, networks have been created to promote these issues in the town. The local population is kept fully informed in a comprehensible manner, particularly through active public relations work across all media channels. According to a survey, almost 80 % of Bad Köstritz residents consider the implementation of the 2030 Agenda sustainability strategy to be very or fairly important, which is particularly gratifying. This provides a solid foundation for further developing diverse projects in partnership with the Global South, promoting fair trade and advancing 2030 Agenda initiatives. Experience shows that this can only be achieved with a large network and a broad-based communication policy on the part of the town administration. The town has a strong spirit of collaboration with many stakeholders, including schools, children's facilities, churches, administration, tourism, associations and diverse companies. Current issues are discussed regularly, and projects relating to the 2030 Agenda are launched, particularly within the "Partnership with the Global South" and "Fairtrade Town Steering Group" working groups. All of this is communicated to the public via the media. Nationwide expert exchanges at various SKEW network meetings, GNK municipality meetings, HLPF conferences, Climate Network meetings, One World Network meetings and regional events often offer new ways of considering and implementing development policy issues.

All this enriches the work of those involved and also has the positive side effect of raising Bad Köstritz's public profile. Thanks to the commitment of the many stakeholders on both sides, the municipal sustainability partnership with the Mexican town of Huamantla has also developed excellently. This cordial collaboration provides a solid foundation for future collaborative projects in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

4.2   City of Bonn

Source: Giacomo Zucca/Federal City of Bonn

Federal City of Bonn

Federal state: North Rhine-Westphalia

Population: 338,224 inhabitants (as of 31 December 2023)

Total area: 141.1 km^2

Population density: 3,179 inhabitants/km^2

Website:

www.bonn.de

4.2.1   Brief profile: Bonn – International centre for key issues of the future

In recent decades, Bonn, Germany's former federal capital, has established itself as a German base for the United Nations and a globally recognised centre for sustainable development and development policy dialogue. Under the joint motto "Shaping Sustainability", 26 UN organisations are based in Bonn and work to implement the 2030 Agenda worldwide. Additionally, more than 150 organisations and scientific institutions are based in Bonn, working on global issues of the future. Together, they form a unique cluster in Bonn with expertise on global sustainability issues.

The City of Bonn is also particularly committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda as a municipality. It has systematically developed sustainability as a cross-cutting issue in municipal action, and it is committed to strengthening the role of towns and cities in sustainability processes at local, national and international levels.

4.2.2   Commitment to sustainability in Bonn

In February 2016, Bonn became one of the first German cities to adopt the German Association of Cities' 2030 Agenda model resolution, developing its own sustainability strategy through a council resolution.

With the adoption of this strategy in February 2019, the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals was systematically anchored in municipal action. Bonn aims to further advance the goals of its sustainability strategy, particularly within the four priority areas of climate neutrality, mobility transition, social justice, and digital transformation. The city aims to become climate neutral by 2035. To this end, the city has developed an ambitious roadmap in its Climate Plan 2035, incorporating the outcomes of the extensive "Bonn4Future – Wir fürs Klima" (Bonn4Future – We for the Climate) participatory process.

Bonn is also a pioneer in sustainability reporting. It has been publishing a sustainability report every three years since 2005. In 2020, it presented its first Voluntary Local Review (VLR) to the United Nations, becoming one of the first 40 cities worldwide to do so. In 2022, Bonn updated its international reporting on the 2030 Agenda with a second VLR. As part of the 2025/2026 draft budget, Bonn is converting its entire municipal budget to an impact-oriented sustainability budget for the first time, thereby integrating sustainability indicators comprehensively into the municipal budget.

Since 2018, the city has created a permanent format for action with its annual Bonn SDG Days through which the municipality and numerous civil society partners collaborate in various events to raise awareness about implementing the SDGs and to encourage involvement in Bonn. Furthermore, Bonn is committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda and strengthening the role of cities internationally through its international networks and memberships, such as in ICLEI and Eurocities.

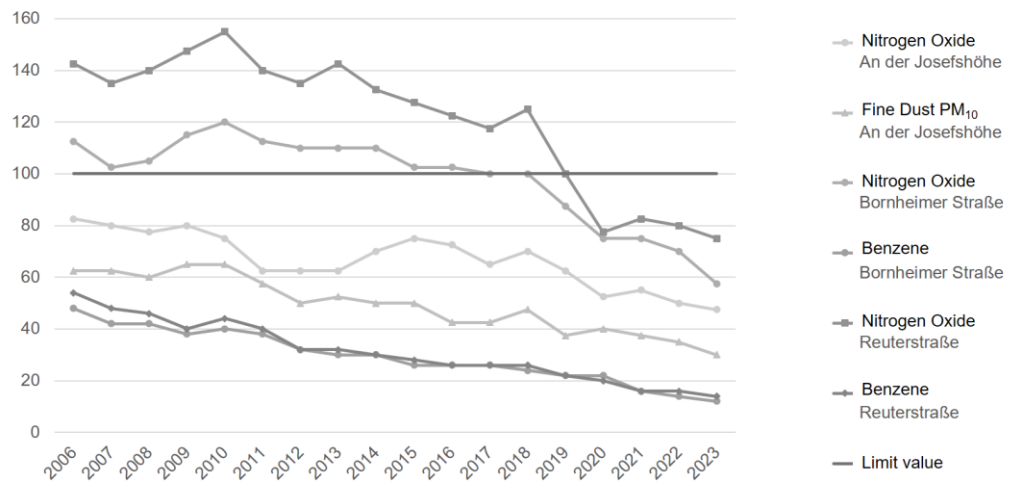### 4.2.3   Areas of action for sustainability in Bonn

Through the active participation of its citizens, the City of Bonn is working to create a liveable, sustainable and fair city for all, while ensuring transparency in its developments. For instance, the Bonn Climate Compass uses data to show where the city stands on its path to achieving climate neutrality by 2035.

In line with this year's focus on the SDGs, further selected aspects of Bonn's commitment to sustainability are presented below.

SDG 3: Good health and well-being

Air quality, a key factor in good health and well-being, has steadily improved in Bonn in recent years, consistently remaining below EU thresholds. Numerous projects promoting sustainable mobility, such as encouraging cycling, expanding public transport and setting up mobility stations, have enabled Bonn to reduce traffic-related air pollutants.

Fig. 7:
Air quality of selected
pollutants and
measuring stations in
the City of Bonn

Legend:
- Nitrogen Oxide — An der Josefshöhe
- Fine Dust PM$_{10}$ — An der Josefshöhe
- Nitrogen Oxide — Bornheimer Straße
- Benzene — Bornheimer Straße
- Nitrogen Oxide — Reuterstraße
- Benzene — Reuterstraße
- Limit value

Source: Federal City of Bonn

SDG 5: Gender equality

Bonn ranks twelfth among Germany's major cities with a 40.3 % female representation on the City Council. Through its equality plan "Besser gleich, Bonn!" (Better Equal, Bonn!), the city is promoting equality within its administration. Measures include service agreements on mobile and flexible working, as well as the establishment of contact points for men and fathers and care issues. The city has received the "berufundfamilie" (Job&Family) certificate multiple times in recognition of its ongoing efforts to promote work-life balance. The proportion of women in leadership positions within the administration has steadily increased (2024: 47 %). The municipality supports companies in further developing work-life balance and care through the Competence Centre for Women & Work Bonn/Rhein-Sieg. Bonn promotes equal opportunities and combats discrimination and violence by running collaborative projects and campaigns, and by engaging in international networking.

Fig. 8:
Proportion of women
among elected local
government officials
in the City of Bonn, in %
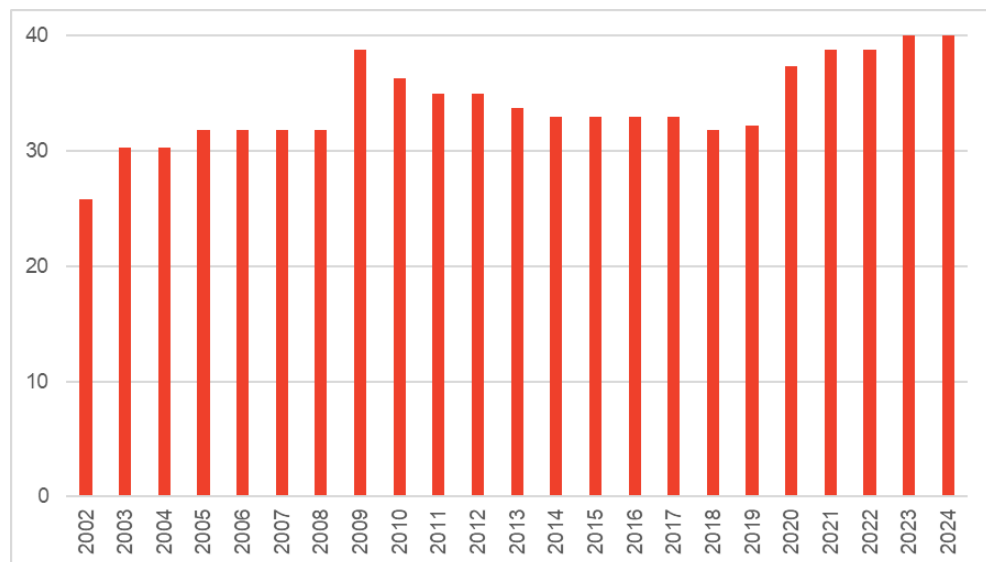
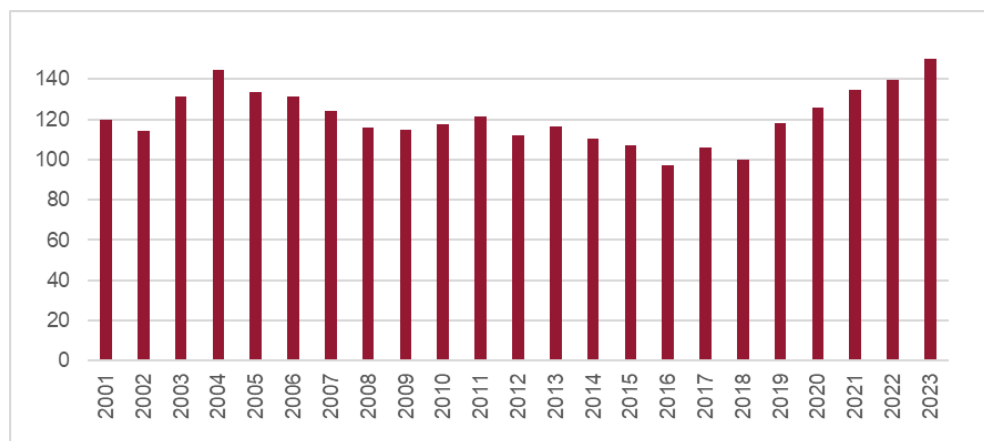Source: Federal City of Bonn

SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth

The number of people employed in jobs subject to social insurance contributions in Bonn reached a new high of 192,823 in June 2023 (see the Annual

Economic Report, as of 30 June 2023). Compared with June 2022, the number of employees increased significantly by 2.1 %, equating to an additional 3,893 employees. This puts the federal city well above the North Rhine-Westphalia state average of 0.7 %.

The increasing number of start-ups is evidence of the region's economic resilience and dynamism. In 2023, the number of business registrations increased by 71.1 % compared with the previous year. The City of Bonn supports start-ups through initiatives such as BonnProfits. It also places a special focus on supporting sustainable business models through the newly established Bonn Region Sustainability Hub, as well as providing climate action services for businesses.

Bonn is also committed to ensuring decent work, including beyond its city limits. It has been regularly awarded Fairtrade Town status since 2010. The city organises a large programme of events every year during its "Faire Woche" (Fairtrade Week), as well as educational activities for schools and nurseries.

Fig. 9:
Number of newly registered businesses per 100 closed businesses in the City of Bonn

Source: Federal City of Bonn

SDG 17: Partnerships – Local One World commitment

Through its municipal commitment to the One World initiative, the City of Bonn is taking responsibility for the global impact of trade at the local level. It has therefore been involved in municipal partnerships with cities in the Global South since the 1990s. Through expert exchanges and joint projects, Bonn and its partner cities are working together to develop sustainable municipal approaches. Since February 2023, Bonn has also maintained a solidarity partnership with Kherson in Ukraine.

As a Fairtrade Town, Bonn has been committed to fair trade and equitable global economic relations since 2010. In accordance with a Council resolution from 2015, the city also considers ethical and ecological principles in its municipal financial investments. Through educational initiatives within the framework of the UNESCO Learning City programme and action formats such as the Bonn SDG Days, the city is raising awareness of global issues among its residents and encouraging them to adopt sustainable practices. The city also regularly supports projects in development education and for implementing the 2030 Agenda. Overall, the City of Bonn's commitment to the One World initiative has steadily grown in importance, particularly since the start of the solidarity partnership with Kherson.

Fig. 10:
Annual municipal expenditure on One World activities and fair-trade products in the City of Bonn
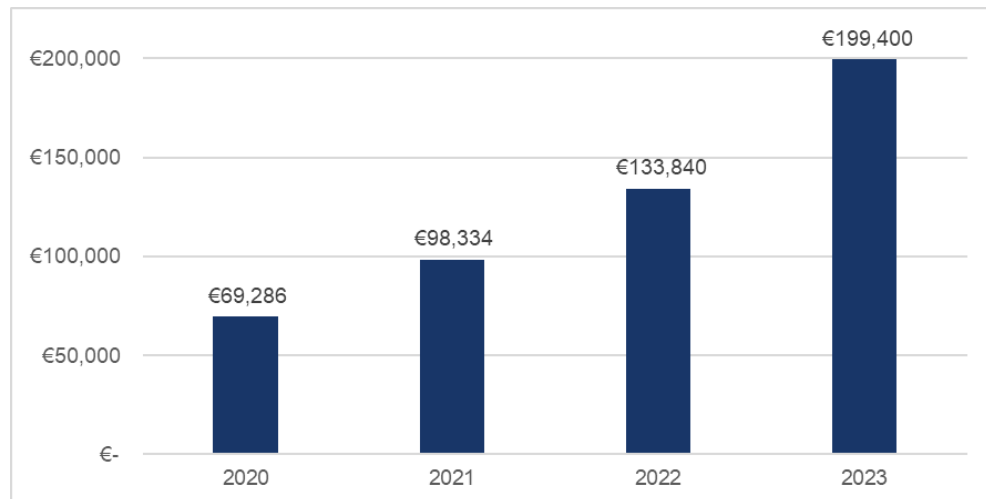
Source: Federal City of Bonn

4.3   State Capital of Düsseldorf

Source: Pixabay/wobogre

State Capital of Düsseldorf

Federal state: North Rhine-Westphalia

Population: 658,574 inhabitants (as of 30 November 2024)

Population density: 3,029.3 inhabitants/km^2

Websites/Social media:

www.duesseldorf.de

https://www.facebook.com/duesseldorf

https://www.instagram.com/duesseldorf/?hl=de

https://www.youtube.com/user/stadtduesseldorf

https://www.duesseldorf.de/nachhaltigkeit

4.3.1   Brief profile: Düsseldorf: Live close Feel free

The capital of North Rhine-Westphalia Düsseldorf is Germany's seventh-largest city, with a high and growing population density.

As an economic centre in the heart of Europe, it attracts international companies thanks to its high quality of life and moderate cost of living. Düsseldorf is a trade fair city as well as the second-largest industrial centre in North Rhine-Westphalia and offers a wide variety of business sectors. Long-established, globally active corporations are located here alongside agile start-ups.

Düsseldorf's population is highly educated, with 32 % of people holding a university degree. The city has 17 universities with around 60,000 students and 208 schools. Düsseldorf's diverse cultural scene is also particularly distinctive.

People from 184 different countries live in the city and more than 40 % of them are immigrants or have at least one immigrant parent.

The city's 50 urban districts, each with their own character, reflect the city's diversity and contribute to its special charm.

4.3.2 Sustainability concepts

Düsseldorf has been a signatory municipality of the 2030 Agenda model resolution since 2016. Back in 1996, the City Council already decided to implement the Aalborg Charter. "Think globally, act locally" has been practised in Düsseldorf for many years.

"Shaping sustainability at the local level" is the state capital's declared goal and concept. Sustainable development is a municipal task that cuts across all areas, as well as being the responsibility of the administration, including its subsidiaries and civil society. The Sustainability Office coordinates the overall process.

The Düsseldorf 2030 Agenda process is directly aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The overarching concept, the "Assessment of the current state of sustainable development in Düsseldorf's city administration" and public relations work are all aligned with the SDGs. Direct links are therefore established between the municipal system and the sustainability goals of North Rhine-Westphalia, the federal government and the UN.

Rather than adopting a conventional sustainability strategy, the City of Düsseldorf has chosen an alternative approach: the twelve Düsseldorf fields of action for municipal sustainability adopted by the City Council in 2022 form the strategic pillars for delivering sustainable development at the local level. By doing so, the city is setting priorities for implementing the 2030 Agenda efficiently and effectively. Regular reports on the implementation are presented to the sustainability committees (Sustainability Advisory Board, consisting of representatives from the City Council, administration and civil society, and the Special Committee for Sustainable Development), as well as to the departmental committees and the City Council.

Fields of action are determined based on an initial assessment of the current situation. This assessment has recorded more than 400 contributions from the city administration, showing where action is needed and where the city is already performing well in terms of sustainability. Examples include the Capital of Fair Trade and Fairtrade Town awards.

4.3.3 Implementation examples

- Prioritising and focusing on sustainability issues

The following twelve fields of action for ensuring sustainability have been identified as priorities:

- Climate protection
- Mobility
- Waste management and urban cleanliness
- Promotion of biodiversity – preservation of species diversity
- Sustainable land management
- Sustainable building
- High-rise master plan as an example of sustainable urban development
- Municipal North-South cooperation
- Lifelong learning and culture for sustainable development

- Sustainable procurement
- Combating the consequences of poverty
- Sustainability budget

The individual fields of action include concepts, specific objectives, projects and measures. For instance, Düsseldorf has set itself the goal of becoming climate neutral by 2035 in the climate protection field. The package of measures for saving energy, improving energy efficiency and using renewable energies is set out in the climate action concept and supplementary policy resolutions. An annual budget of 60 million euros enables the implementation of various measures, including for example a solar energy offensive, heat planning, regular climate action campaigns, the use of 100 % green electricity and (funding) programs for energy-efficient building renovations and renewable energies.

Düsseldorf Alliance for Sustainability

The "Bündnis für Nachhaltigkeit" (Alliance for Sustainability) is a service offered by the city to non-profit organisations. The Alliance provides an opportunity for employees from different fields to exchange ideas about possible sustainability initiatives, share information, develop solutions together and network. The aim is to collaborate, learn from one another and create synergies.

Topics and successes are communicated to the urban community via the Alliance's Instagram channel to encourage further action.

Düsseldorf Sustainability Rally and website

- Making sustainability tangible and bundling knowledge clearly

There are many diverse places of sustainable development. The Düsseldorf online city map clearly shows specific locations, such as second-hand shops, refill stations, bike-sharing stations and social facilities such as "Welcome Points".

The Düsseldorf Sustainability Rally allows participants to explore selected locations in a fun, free and independent way. Both Düsseldorf residents and visitors are invited to answer quiz questions and complete tasks to find out exactly how the city is implementing projects for greater sustainability, which local stakeholders are involved, and how they can get involved in their everyday lives.

The website featuring the places of sustainable development forms part of a comprehensive municipal online offering on sustainability. The website at www.duesseldorf.de/nachhaltigkeit provides comprehensive information on the SDGs, commitment, activities, stakeholders, dates and events, funding opportunities, tips for organising sustainable events and much more.

4.4 Enzkreis (county)

Source: Günter Beck

Enzkreis (county)

Federal state: Baden-Württemberg

Population: 203,409 inhabitants (as of 31 December 2023)

Total area: 573.68 km^2

Population density: 354.6 inhabitants/km^2

Websites/Social media:

https://www.enzkreis.de/agenda2030

https://agenda2030.enzkreis.de/

Enzkreis on Instagram

Enzkreis on Facebook

4.4.1 Brief profile

Since its foundation in 1973, the Enzkreis has brought together the strengths of the people of Baden and Württemberg in its 28 county municipalities, where they have written a joint success story. Innovative medium-sized companies, including quite a few global market leaders, a very low unemployment rate, and a favourable location between the metropolitan areas of Stuttgart and Karlsruhe, ensure the county's excellent structural data. The Cistercian monastery in Maulbronn, which dates back more than 850 years, is the only completely preserved monastery complex from the Middle Ages north of the Alps, and it is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

In order to preserve the unique natural and cultural landscape, the Enzkreis focuses on sustainable development and strengthening regional production. The county is committed to the goals of the 2030 Agenda, is a certified

Fairtrade county and a Bio-Musterregion (organic model region), and relies on renewable energies.

4.4.2   Sustainability concepts

Since 2010, the Enzkreis has been active in climate action under the motto "Enzkreis-Klima-Wendekreis" (Enzkreis Climate Turning Point) and was awarded gold status in the European Energy Award (eea) for the fourth time in 2024. There has been a lively partnership with Masasi Town and District in southern Tanzania since 2011. This partnership has successfully implemented numerous projects and was awarded a top three ranking in the German Sustainability Award in 2019.

Based on its commitment to climate and development policy, the Enzkreis committed itself early on to implementing the 17 goals of the 2030 Agenda, anchoring them in its mission statement. Adopted by the council in 2018, the "Leitbild für den Enzkreis // Agenda 2030" (Mission Statement for the Enzkreis // 2030 Agenda) serves as a guiding framework for action, both now and in the future. It is primarily intended for those responsible in local government and administration, placing action in the Enzkreis in a global context.

The sustainability strategy outlines efforts to promote sustainable development in all sectors. As part of a digital participation process, interested residents were able to submit suggestions for sustainable development. As a dynamic concept, the sustainability strategy contains exemplary measures for a liveable future. In 2022, the council decided to implement the strategy step by step and monitor its progress in indicator reports. The first report was published in 2023 and the second, a Voluntary Local Review (VLR), was published in 2024.

Data on the Enzkreis' SDG indicators can be accessed interactively via the SDG dashboard.

The council and administration aim to develop the Enzkreis and its municipalities into a "future-friendly" place. Four municipalities have committed themselves to implementing the 2030 Agenda. Its first climate conference, entitled "Nachhaltigkeit und Klimaschutz gemeinsam gestalten" (Shaping sustainability and climate action together), was held in July 2024.

4.4.3   Selected contributions to implementation

While all 17 SDGs are important in the Enzkreis, there are certain areas of sustainable development that are strategic priorities, such as gender equality, inclusion, economic development, climate action and climate change adaptation.

In view of the 2024 local elections, the gender equality initiative focused on the "Politik braucht Frauen" (Politics Needs Women) mentoring scheme that supported women in becoming candidates for several month. Nine Enzkreis tandems, each consisting of a mentee and an experienced female politician, developed personal and professional strengths and supported access to networks. The seminar series "Mitmischen – Einmischen – Aufmischen" (Get involved – Get involved – Shake things up) was also open to politically interested women. The proportion of women in the council rose from 10 % to 17 % in 2024.

As part of partnership-based development cooperation, an environmentally friendly education centre equipped with a solar thermal and photovoltaic (PV)

system was completed in Masasi, Tanzania in 2024. This project was funded by the Servicestelle Kommunen in der Einen Welt von Engagement Global (Engagement Global's Service Agency for Communities in One World), which received funding from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The environmental education centre provides the local population with a practice-based introduction to selected topics related to climate change, climate change adaptation and using renewable energy. For example, women can take courses on using efficient stoves, harvesting and utilising rainwater, and using PV and solar thermal energy. School classes learn about climate change, and PV technicians are trained. These and similar projects, such as the construction of photovoltaic systems on hospitals, are reflected in the Enzkreis' expenditure for official development assistance and the funding acquired by the Enzkreis for this purpose.

4.5 City of Freiburg im Breisgau

Source: City of Freiburg

City of Freiburg im Breisgau

Federal state: Baden-Württemberg

Population: 233,803 inhabitants (as of 31 December 2024)

Total area: 153.04 km^2

Population density: 1528 inhabitants/km^2

Websites/Social media:

www.freiburg.de

www.freiburg.de/nachhaltigkeit

www.freiburg.de/bewegt

www.instagram.com/stadt_freiburg/

4.5.1 Brief profile

The City of Freiburg, located in south-western Germany on the edge of the Black Forest and close to the borders with France and Switzerland, is Germany's southernmost city. Thanks to its efficient infrastructure, strong innovative capacity and wide range of research and educational institutions, Freiburg is one of Germany's most dynamic cities. The city's economy is also focused on forward-looking industries, with healthcare, environmental technologies, public services and tourism playing key roles. Since 2008, Freiburg has been recognised as a "Green City" thanks to its commitment to ecological and sustainable practices in many areas. The city's image is shaped by initiatives to promote renewable energies, sustainable mobility and urban development, as well as innovative housing concepts that combine ecological and social aspects.

The challenges facing urban development include securing and creating affordable housing, addressing the effects of climate change and balancing economic growth with ecological responsibility.

4.5.2 Sustainability concepts

Freiburg is considered a pioneer in sustainable urban development. The challenges on the path to becoming a sustainable city were recognised early on. The city has been actively addressing issues of sustainable development since the 1992 Earth Summit on Environment and Development. In 1994, Freiburg signed the Aalborg Charter at the European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns, committing itself to developing a Local Agenda 21. In 2006, this was followed by the establishment of the Freiburg Sustainability Council. Consisting of representatives from civil society, business, science and politics, and chaired by the mayor, the city council has played an important role in the city's sustainability process ever since. By signing the Aalborg Commitments, Freiburg has pledged to develop sustainability goals through participation. Following the introduction of sustainability management in 2011, the topic has been systematically embedded and promoted within the administration.

Freiburg's approach to sustainable development is defined by its "Freiburger Nachhaltigkeitsziele" (Freiburg sustainability goals). These goals serve as overarching guidelines for all policy decisions and the city's overall development. The Freiburg sustainability goals were adopted by the city council in 2009, following a two-year participatory goal-setting process, and were confirmed in updated and further developed versions in 2017 and 2024. This update incorporated the SDGs published in 2015 and addressed current developments at the international and national levels. It also aligned Freiburg's sustainability goals with its city council targets and anchored them in a comprehensive urban sustainability strategy. The multifaceted concept of sustainability was thus translated into a system of locally adapted objectives and given substance through a process involving various stakeholder levels.

In 2016, the City of Freiburg also signed the 2030 Agenda model resolution, which was put forward by the "Deutscher Städtetag" (Association of German Cities) together with the German Section of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (RGRE). Freiburg thus commits itself to contributing to the local implementation of the SDGs by developing a municipal sustainability strategy.

4.5.3 Selected contributions to achieving Freiburg's sustainability goals

Monitoring

In Freiburg, regular monitoring is a key instrument of sustainability management, serving to highlight the status of the city's sustainability goals and thus providing a basis for decision-making. This includes sustainability reporting, comprising the sustainability report for decision-makers, the report for citizens and the Voluntary Local Review (VLR), as well as reporting on municipal participation.

Another important aspect is the linking of Freiburg's sustainability goals to the budget.

Communication and networking

Citizens can find out about the strategies and measures being implemented by the city administration and municipal enterprises on the municipal platform "Freiburg bewegt" (Freiburg on the Move). A link to the areas of action for Freiburg's sustainability goals illustrates the positive impact of these strategies and projects in each area.

All stakeholders in the city are important for achieving Freiburg's sustainability goals. The Freiburg Sustainability Council supports the implementation of measures by advising the city administration and council, regularly issuing statements and recommendations, and acting as a networking hub.

Examples

Freiburg considers the opportunities and challenges associated with issues such as population growth, scarce resources and social developments against the backdrop of the city's sustainability goals and the 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals. Key areas include affordable housing, digitalisation, climate action and sustainable mobility, biodiversity, schools and child day-care centres, social infrastructure and social justice. However, against the backdrop of globalisation and an increasingly interconnected world, the global level also represents a key area for action within this framework.

In Freiburg, this can be seen in the SDG 7, "Affordable and clean energy" area, including the wind power and photovoltaic initiative adopted in 2023 to help the city achieve its climate targets (climate neutrality by 2035). By 2030, the production of wind power is set to increase tenfold, while that of solar energy is set to increase fivefold. This means that 10 % of Freiburg's electricity needs will be met by locally generated wind power, while 20 % will be met by solar energy.

The challenge of creating affordable, accessible housing in line with SDG 11, "Sustainable cities and communities", is exemplified by the planned Dietenbach district, which will comprise almost 7,000 apartments, 50 % of which will be subsidised rental flats. Barrier-free access and inclusion are being considered from the outset in the climate-neutral district, as are sustainable mobility concepts and climate adaptation measures.

Digitalisation affects several SDGs, for example in terms of participation, reducing inequality (SDGs 5 and 10) and (global) cooperation (SDGs 16 and 17). Freiburg is a leader in the federal state in providing digital services for citizens. Citizen participation also plays a key role.

Mobility and sustainable urban development, relating to SDGs 9, 11 and 13, are important issues in Freiburg. For instance, the expansion of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure is being actively encouraged.

4.6 Town of Geestland

Source: Arkadius Rojek

Town of Geestland

Federal state: Lower Saxony

Population: 31,713 inhabitants (as of 31 December 2023)

Total area: 356.56 km^2

Population density: 89 inhabitants/km^2

Website/Social media:

www.geestland.eu

Instagram: @stadtverwaltunggeestland

Facebook: Stadt Geestland

4.6.1 Brief profile

The town of Geestland is a young, dynamic municipality in the county of Cuxhaven, Lower Saxony. It was formed in 2015 by merging the town of Langen with the municipality group of Bederkesa. It comprises 16 villages and has a total population of around 32,000 inhabitants. Spanning 356 km², Geestland is the eleventh largest merged municipality in Germany and the second largest in Lower Saxony. Geestland borders the City of Bremerhaven to the south and the River Weser to the west.

4.6.2 Sustainability concepts

Sustainability is an integral part of Geestland. Accordingly, considerable importance is attached to implementing the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals at the local level. Geestland does not view sustainability as a static state, but rather as an ongoing process of constant change. The town's commitment to sustainability began in 2008 with the adoption of guidelines to ensure the town's ability to act in future, which were incorporated into Geestland's sustainability strategy in 2019. Another milestone was

the decision to adopt the 2030 Agenda model resolution proposed by the German Section of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (RGRE) in support of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda. In 2018, Geestland became one of twelve "Global Nachhaltige Kommunen in Niedersachsen" (Global Sustainable Municipalities in Lower Saxony) and established the "Advisory Council for Sustainability", which supports the town's sustainable development process. Geestland's sustainability strategy is divided into nine thematic areas: finance, education, mobility, climate and energy, demographics, global responsibility and One World, social participation and gender, natural resources and the environment, as well as work and the economy. These areas were developed with the participation of citizens, the administration and politicians. In 2021, the "Ausschuss für nachhaltige kommunale Entwicklung" (Committee for Sustainable Municipal Development) was established as an advisory body. The committee is also responsible for revising the sustainability strategy.

Alongside aligning its sustainability commitment with the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals, Geestland has also formulated four of its own sustainability goals: refugees and migration, fun and enjoyment, art and culture, as well as goals and visions. These are intended to help make Geestland fit for future generations.

Awards

2018: Geestland receives the German Sustainability Award for the first time

2020: Geestland wins the special award "Kommune bewegt Welt" (Municipalities Move the World) 2021: Certification as a "family-friendly municipality"

2021: Geestland becomes one of 48 model municipalities for education for sustainable development

2021: Geestland becomes one of 73 Smart City model municipalities

2022: Geestland receives the German Sustainability Award in the category "Germany's most sustainable medium-sized cities". This makes Geestland the first municipality to win the sustainability award twice.

Fig. 15:
Mobile vaccination container in Geestland's twin town of Tozeur

Source: town of Tozeur

4.6.3   Selected contributions to implementation

As part of the "Globale Verantwortung und Eine Welt" (Global Responsibility and One World) action area of Geestland's sustainability strategy, and in line with the United Nations' 17th Sustainable Development Goal, the town of Geestland is committed to continuing and developing its international municipal partnerships.

Since November 2018, Geestland has maintained a close partnership with Tozeur in Tunisia. This partnership is based on a memorandum of understanding regarding collaboration in the energy efficiency, renewable energies and sustainability fields. Against this background, various measures have been implemented in Tozeur, including a sustainability strategy, citizen participation competitions, tree-planting campaigns and the procurement of a mobile "vaccination container" to help tackle the Coronavirus pandemic.

The exchange between the cities was coordinated through the "Kommunaler Wissenstransfer Maghreb-Deutschland" (Maghreb-Germany Municipal Knowledge Transfer) project until early 2024 and will continue beyond this date.

"Social participation and gender" is another focus of Geestland's sustainability strategy, which recognises gender equality as a key driver of sustainable development and the future viability of urban society.

The aim is to promote active participation and social, economic and political inclusion within the municipality. Geestland is strongly committed to citizen participation and also involves children and young people in municipal decision-making processes. To live up to this commitment, Geestland launched the "Jugend im Ausschuss" (Youth on the Committee) youth participation scheme in 2019.

Twelve young people are active in the political committees. By contributing their perspectives, they have a direct influence on the development of their local community.

The so-called children's local council in the village of Neuenwalde has a special status. Seven girls and boys contribute their ideas and help to shape local government in their village. For instance, the town of Geestland built a Village Centre 2.0 at the suggestion of the Children's Local Council, complete with smart rubbish bins, a digital display board, bicycle repair station and an e-charging station. These projects particularly contribute to the SDGs 5 "Gender equality" and 10 "Reduced inequality".

4.7 Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg

Source: Mediaserver Hamburg, Timo Sommer

Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg

Federal state: Hamburg

Population: 1.85 million inhabitants (as of March 2024)

Total area: 755.09 km^2

Population density: 2,450 inhabitants/km^2

Website:

www.hamburg.de

4.7.1 Brief profile

The Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, located in northern Germany, is the country's second largest city with a population of around 1.85 million inhabitants. Consisting of 92 % land and 8 % water, the city currently has 37 protected nature reserves covering 10 % of its area – an area almost the size of 10,000 football pitches.

The River Alster and the numerous tributaries, canals and waterways, which are crossed by over 2,000 bridges, give the city its famous maritime ambience. Not only is Hamburg a port and industrial city, it is also a transport hub, tourist destination, high-tech metropolis and media centre, as well as a city with a steadily growing population.

4.7.2 Sustainability reporting in Hamburg

Sustainable action has been a high priority for the Hamburg Senate for many years. Local government policy is continuously guided by the principle of sustainability. Since the 2017 Senate resolution on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Hamburg, the Senate has consistently pursued this path.

In June 2023, Hamburg published its first sustainability report in the form of a Voluntary Local Review (VLR). Using a set of 107 indicators and numerous practical examples, the report demonstrates the progress made in achieving the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Going forward, the report will be updated every two years, with the indicators adjusted in line with the developing sustainability strategy and available data.

In addition to the conventionally published sustainability report, a digital SDG dashboard has also been created. The dashboard is available online in both German and English. It clearly visualises the indicators and provides the public with quick and flexible access to the data. In addition to conventional formats such as PDF files and printed copies, the dashboard is linked directly to data sources, ensuring the information is up to date and making urban sustainability monitoring accessible to employees and citizens alike.

Fig. 17:
Hamburg Sustainability
Conference

Source: Hamburg Sustainability Conference

4.7.3 Hamburg Sustainability Conference and Hamburg Sustainability Week

In 2024, the City of Hamburg hosted the first Hamburg Sustainability Conference (HSC), a global event that brings together leading figures from politics, business, administration and civil society to discuss sustainability issues. The Hamburg Senate drew positive conclusions from the inaugural conference: more than 1,600 guests from 102 countries, including 40 heads of state and ministers, collaborated on various initiatives to implement the 2030 Agenda. Sixteen specific agreements were reached through a variety of formats. As one of the HSC's four initiators, the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg will continue to open its doors to the world in the coming years, actively participating in the annual conference with its own programme items. This is not without reason – after all, cities and municipalities are important drivers in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals set out in SDG 11. This is also reflected in the conference's focus topics: the focus on cities of the future is curated by Hamburg together with international experts. Conference guests and high-ranking panellists also discuss global financial architecture, corporate investment in sustainability and other topics such as health, mobility and biodiversity.

From 2025 onwards, the Hamburg Sustainability Conference will be accompanied by an official action week: the Hamburg Sustainability Week. Hamburg Sustainability Week harnesses the power of international conferences to generate additional momentum for sustainable local transformation. Local stakeholders from civil society, politics, the public sector, business, academia and the arts are invited to collaborate on developing solutions to achieve the SDGs in Hamburg. One focus will be on addressing conflicts between the various sustainability goals. Additionally, Hamburg Sustainability Week will showcase sustainability through a variety of formats, including exhibitions, concerts and city tours.

4.8   State Capital of Hanover

Source: Hannover Marketing und Tourismus GmbH/Christian Wyrwa

State Capital of Hanover

Federal state: Lower Saxony

Population: 520,361 inhabitants (as of 31 March 2024)

Total area: 204.15 km^2

Population density: 2,549 inhabitants/km^2

Websites/Social media:

https://www.instagram.com/hannoverwaltung/

https://www.facebook.com/lhhannover/

https://x.com/hannover

www.hannover.de

4.8.1   Brief profile

Hanover, the capital of Lower Saxony, is one of Germany's greenest cities thanks to its urban forests, parks and recreational areas. Several large companies, including Continental, Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles, TUI, Sennheiser and Bahlsen, are based in Hanover and the surrounding region. The city is also home to 15 universities, the most notable of which are Leibniz University Hanover, Hanover University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Hanover Medical School, Hanover University of Veterinary Medicine, and Hanover University of Music, Drama and Media. Notable attractions include the New Town Hall, the Old Town, the Herrenhausen Gardens, which boast some of the most significant Baroque gardens in Europe, the Maschsee lake and the Eilenriede city forest, which is one of the largest urban forests in Europe and acts as a "green lung" in the middle of the city. There are also many museums

and a diverse cultural landscape. Hanover has one of the world's largest exhibition centres and regularly hosts major international trade fairs and events.

4.8.2   Sustainability concepts

For the State Capital of Hanover, sustainability means acting responsibly by considering economic, ecological and social impacts equally and on a long-term basis. For over 30 years, Hanover has played a strategic and delivery-oriented role in the sustainable development of the city. In doing so, it actively involves a wide range of stakeholder groups in the city sustainability process for the common good. The council resolution on Agenda 21 was adopted in 1995 and today's Sustainability Office was founded in 1996 to anchor sustainability as a cross-sectional task in the administration.

In 2018, Hanover received the "Deutscher Nachhaltigkeitspreis" German Sustainability Award) in the "Germany's most sustainable large city" category for its integrated and strategic approach, which encompasses a wide range of creative practical examples.

With its 2016 council resolution, the State Capital of Hanover committed itself to implementing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda, which affect all areas of the city's activities. The Voluntary Local Review 2020 highlights local challenges and the municipal contribution to implementing the individual SDGs.

The VLR is based on Hanover's city-wide 2020 sustainability report, which sets out sustainability goals (20 key goals and 50 targets) for all areas of sustainable urban development in Hanover, covering the five dimensions of ecology, economy, social affairs, culture and good governance. Approximately 100 indicators, supplemented by projects and measures, enable stocktaking and assessment of the current status and achievement of objectives.

Current ecological, economic and social challenges include strengthening participation and social cohesion, achieving climate neutrality by 2035, inner-city development, transitioning to sustainable mobility, promoting the city as a location and modernising the administration

Fig. 19:
New Town Hall, Hanover

Source: Hannover Marketing & Tourismus GmbH/Lars Gerhardts

4.8.3 Hanover's contribution to implementing the 2030 Agenda: selected projects

Ecology: The State Capital of Hanover aims to achieve virtual climate neutrality by 2035. Its 2035 climate action programme includes measures such as expanding district heating from renewable sources, launching a solar energy campaign, promoting energy-efficient construction and renovation, encouraging new mobility concepts for transitioning to sustainable transport, and developing electric mobility and cycle routes. The programme also aims to promote climate-friendly lifestyles. Hanover's city administration aims to be climate neutral by 2030. The city's climate change adaptation strategy involves measures for climate-adapted urban development, supported by climate analysis, heavy rainfall maps and the "Stadtgrün 2030" (Green City 2030) open space development concept, which aims to preserve the quality of green and open spaces in Hanover.

Economy: To strengthen Hanover as a business centre and promote a welfare-oriented economy, the city is providing support for the local economy, introducing incentives for sustainable business practices (e.g. ÖKOPROFIT Hannover), and pursuing sustainable commercial land development.

Social affairs: As a growing city, Hanover is committed to promoting equal participation and strengthening social cohesion. This involves taking steps to provide affordable and inclusive housing, educational infrastructure tailored to individual needs as well as equal opportunities in education, work, culture and sport. Examples include the housing concept, age-appropriate neighbourhood development and the "WIR 2.0 – Migration und Teilhabe" (WIR 2.0 – Migration and Participation) integration plan.

Culture: Culture impacts all areas of life, connects people and strengthens fundamental democratic values. The Cultural Development Plan 2030, also known as "Vorwärts nach weit" (Forward to Far) provides a strategic framework for promoting art and culture. City partnerships facilitate international encounters and provide practical support on the ground, such as through the planting and fountain project in the Malawi city of Blantyre.

Good governance: A sustainable financial policy is essential for public services, business locations, educational structures and social participation. Key areas of responsibility for embedding sustainability across all administrative areas include creating a strong, modern and efficient administration, educational initiatives for sustainable development in, for example, schools and child day-care centres, and promoting sustainable procurement and lifestyles. "#HANnovativ – die Smart City Initiative Hannovers" (Hanover's smart city initiative) uses modern technologies to support the implementation of political goals relating to climate action, urban development and participation.

In Hanover, sustainability is a joint effort involving many different stakeholders: local government and administration, academics, educational institutions, companies, civil society and, above all, the many volunteers in our city.

4.9 State Capital of Kiel

Source: State Capital of Kiel – Annika Loewe

State Capital of Kiel

Federal state: Schleswig-Holstein

Population: 251,379 inhabitants (as of 31 December 2024)

Total area: 11,865.1 ha

Population density: 2,088 inhabitants/km^2

Website/Social media:

www.kiel.de/

Instagram: @kiel.de

Facebook and LinkedIn: @Landeshauptstadt Kiel

TikTok: @stadtkiel_karriere

4.9.1 Brief profile

Kiel, Germany's northernmost city, lies directly on the Baltic Sea. Home to around 251,000 people, it is the capital of the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein and a major centre for science, business and culture. It is renowned for its long maritime history and as an important port and naval city. The presence of Christian Albrecht University, three other universities and several research institutes — including the internationally renowned GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre and the Institute for World Economics — establishes Kiel as a significant research hub. The shipbuilding industry and the maritime sector continue to play a key role in the city's economy. Kiel is particularly well known for the Kieler Woche (Kiel Week): the world's largest sailing event, which attracts millions of visitors every year. The city also offers a high quality of life, boasting many green spaces, beaches and a maritime atmosphere.

4.9.2 Sustainability concepts

Under the motto "Für Kiel und die Welt. Global denken, lokal durchstarten" (For Kiel and the world. Think globally, act locally), the State Capital of Kiel has been committed to the United Nations' 2030 Agenda since 2017 and is actively working to implement the SDGs. In 2024, the second VLR was published, documenting progress at the local level. Kiel's approach to sustainability combines ecology, the economy and social issues. Kiel has been committed to mitigate climate change since 1995, becoming the first state capital in Germany to declare a climate emergency in 2019. Through its "100 % Climate Action" strategy and "Mobility Master Plan", the city is pursuing ambitious goals, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 95 % and halving final energy consumption compared with 1990, as soon as possible. A key objective is to transform Kiel from a car-friendly city into a people-friendly city, with sustainable mobility and expanded public transport playing a pivotal role. The planned light rail system in Kiel and the expansion of cycle routes are important steps in this direction. As Germany's first certified "Zero Waste City", Kiel is pursuing ambitious waste reduction targets and is strongly committed to marine conservation. The city is also committed to fair trade and has been a "Fairtrade Town" since 2013. Promoting education for sustainable development is key to raising the public's awareness of global interdependencies. In line with the 2030 Agenda principle of "leaving no one behind", Kiel ensures that all citizens, regardless of their origin, gender or financial means, can actively participate in shaping their city. Kiel has received several awards for its sustainable initiatives: in 2021, it received the German Sustainability Award; in 2023, it was named a certified Zero Waste City; and in

2024, it won first place in the "Kommune bewegt Welt" (Municipalities Move the World) competition. In 2025, Kiel received the national award for Education for Sustainable Development.

Fig. 21:
"Windjammer Parade" of sailing ships during the Kieler Woche

Source: State Capital of Kiel – Anita Nanninga

4.9.3 Selected contributions to implementation

In 2022, the Sustainability Fund was established with an annual budget of 100,000 euros to support Kiel's civil society projects that contribute to the SDGs. The aim is to strengthen local initiatives and promote the city's sustainable development. As the only German state capital on the coast, Kiel is an important centre for marine research and the maritime economy. Despite not having responsibility on the local level, the city is actively committed to marine protection as the condition of the Baltic Sea is deteriorating due to climate change and species loss. The position of Marine Protection Officer was created in 2023 to connect stakeholders and integrate projects related to SDG 14. Since 2024, Kiel has been pursuing a strategy with three focal points comprising onshore and offshore marine protection, integration, and awareness rasing. A notable achievement are the four onshore power terminals in the Port of Kiel, which supply ships with 100 % green electricity, saving several thousand tonnes of CO_2 annually. Kiel is also planning a marine visualisation centre and supports numerous educational projects and initiatives, further expanding its role as a centre of excellence for marine conservation. In addition, Kiel assumes international responsibility through its annual "Internationales Städteforum" (International City Forum), where representatives from its 14 partner cities and other affiliated cities discuss current municipal challenges. These city partnerships are founded on solidarity, as demonstrated by the "Hatay in Not" (Hatay in Need) fundraising campaign, which raised 500,000 euros for a rehabilitation centre following the 2023 earthquake in Turkey. In the Moshi District of Tanzania, support is being provided to establish a tree nursery and to expand and modernise a health centre. In February 2024, a solidarity partnership was established with the frontline city of Kherson in Ukraine, and several aid transports and support projects have already been carried out.

4.10 City of Cologne

Source: City of Köln

City of Cologne

Federal state: North Rhine-Westphalia

Population: 1,095,520 inhabitants (as of 31 December 2023)

Total area: 405 km^2

Population density: 2705 inhabitants/km^2

Website/Social media:

www.instagram.com/stadt.koeln

www.twitter.com/Koeln

www.youtube.com/user/Koeln

https://www.stadt-koeln.de/

https://www.stadt-koeln.de/leben-in-koeln/nachhaltigkeit-koeln

4.10.1 Brief profile

With a population of around 1.1 million, Cologne is not only the most populous municipality in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, but also the fourth largest city in Germany. Current forecasts predict that Cologne's population will continue to grow. While urban growth brings numerous positive aspects, it also creates points of friction: the growing demand for housing is not only causing bottlenecks in the housing market, but is also increasing land consumption due to new construction and is intensifying competition for land use. Therefore, the direction in which the City of Cologne develops depends particularly on how growth is managed and shaped. Like many other cities, Cologne must address the challenges posed by current trends and developments, such as population growth, demographic change, climate change,

economic restructuring as well as the consequences of globalisation and digitalisation. The aim and task of urban development is to identify Cologne's specific circumstances and challenges, and in doing so leverage the city's strengths to inform its future development.

4.10.2 Sustainability concepts

At its session on 28 September 2017, the Cologne city council endorsed the 2030 Agenda model resolution. Therefore, the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs are serving as a guideline for local government action. The city's "Kölner Perspektiven 2030+" (Cologne Perspectives 2030+) urban strategy is the central overarching strategy that guides the implementation of the SDGs. Since 2021, this urban strategy has provided Cologne with a compass for future-oriented, strategic and sustainable urban development. The "Cologne Perspectives 2030+" urban strategy sets out a strategic framework containing five guiding principles that define the future priorities for urban action. The City of Cologne is committed to the climate action goals agreed at the 2015 UN Climate Change Conference in Paris and, by council resolution in 2021, it has declared city-wide climate neutrality by 2035 to be its central goal. To advance the development and implementation of an overall strategy, the city established a Climate Council in 2020. This advisory expert body comprises representatives from academics, business, housing construction, civil society and city administration. In general, all official bodies of the City of Cologne are involved in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2020, the city's finance department updated its investment guidelines, incorporating the principle of sustainability into the specific requirements for capital investments by the core budget and foundations. The administration is investigating financial instruments, particularly green bonds, that can be used specifically for green and sustainable transformation.

The City of Cologne supports various civil society initiatives and networks, working with a wide range of stakeholders committed to promoting sustainability in Cologne. This includes coordinating the "Eine-Welt Stadt Köln" (One World City Cologne) network and actively participating in the "Fairtrade Town Cologne" steering group, for example. Cologne has been continuously certified as a "Fairtrade Town" since 2011, demonstrating its commitment to supporting fair trade and promoting public relations, networking and raising awareness in this area. In 2017, Cologne was also awarded the title "Capital of Fair Trade".

Fig. 23:
Space for pedestrians –
Ehrenstrasse in Cologne

Source: City of Cologne

4.10.3 Partnerships for achieving goals

Cologne is a city with strong international ties, and collaboration with local authorities in other countries is particularly important. The city maintains close partnerships with many other cities. In addition to contacts at the administrative level, it is above all the diverse encounters between citizens that characterize the city partnerships. The annual "Städtepartnerschaften gestalten!" (Shaping City Partnerships) grant scheme therefore supports civil society projects. As part of the annual project funding for development cooperation, targeted support is provided for projects and activities focusing on education and public relations work concerning the international aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals. Eligible projects currently include those focusing particularly on SDG 13, "Climate Action", and SDG 5, "Gender Equality". Overall, Cologne has 23 international city partnerships, each with a different focus. Municipal climate partnerships play an important role in sustainable development. The city is part of a steadily growing movement comprising three intensive climate partnerships: Cologne – Rio de Janeiro (Brazil, established in 2012), Cologne – Corinto/El Realejo (Nicaragua, established in 2012) and Cologne – Yarinacocha (Peru, established in 2017). Cologne has developed joint action programmes with its partners, setting out overarching goals. These schemes are being implemented gradually and will be updated or further developed approximately every two years. The action programmes include climate mitigation measures as well as measures for climate adaptation, environmental protection, resource conservation and biodiversity conservation. In March 2023, the Cologne city council adopted the City Partnership Concept. By doing so, the City of Cologne has committed itself to international human rights work. The aim of these measures is to strengthen the human rights dimension in global city collaboration, support human rights defenders and raise awareness about human rights in Cologne. This mandate has led to the creation of a new position, which has been filled since February 2023. From 30th of May to 11th of June 2023, the "African Futures – All Around" programme attracted more than 8,000 visitors and featured over 100 events across Cologne. Mactar Ndoye represented the United Nations Human Rights Office in a panel discussion.

He spoke to guests, many of whom were members of the "(Post)koloniales Erbe Köln" ((Post)colonial Heritage Cologne) committee, about colonial continuities. Since 2017, under the motto "Sister Cities Stand Together", the City of Cologne has invited citizens from its twin cities who are committed to the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people.

In the areas of democracy and peace promotion, the city supports its city partnerships with Dnipro, Tel Aviv and Bethlehem. Through this commitment, the city hopes to strengthen the rules-based world order and promote peaceful cooperation and understanding, enabling the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals.

4.11 City of Mannheim

Source: Pixabay/domeckopol

City of Mannheim

Federal state: Baden-Württemberg

Population: 326,941 inhabitants (as of 31 December 2023)

Total area: 144.96 km^2

Population density: 2,255 inhabitants/km^2

Website/Social media:

www.mannheim.de

www.facebook.com/StadtverwaltungMannheim

www.x.com/mannheim.de

www.youtube.com/user/StadtMannheim

www.mannheim-videos.de

www.instagram.com/mannheim_de

https://bawü.social/@mannheim

4.11.1 Brief profile

Mannheim, known as the Quadratestadt (Quadratic City), delights visitors with its unique grid-like street layout and vibrant blend of history, innovation and culture. The city's landmarks include the famous Water Tower and the Baroque palace, which was once the residence of the prince-electors and now houses part of the University of Mannheim. Mannheim is also the birthplace of the automobile and an important business centre. As a UNESCO City of Music, it offers a vibrant cultural scene characterised by the National Theatre and the Pop Academy. Green spaces such as the Luisenpark and the banks of the River Neckar provide perfect places to relax. With its multicultural atmosphere, Mannheim offers a high quality of life.

4.11.2 Sustainability concepts

Digitalisation, climate change, the protection of our natural resources, migration and urbanisation are all challenges of epoch-making dimensions facing the 21st century. All countries in the world have therefore agreed to implement the 17 Sustainable Development Goals jointly by 2030. Hardly any of these goals can be achieved without the involvement of cities.

Mannheim is aware of its global responsibility. As a strong urban society, we are committed to using our knowledge and experience to help achieve the SDGs. The residents of Mannheim have therefore been asking themselves the following question: How do we want to live in our city in 2030, based on the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals? In a broad-based participation process offering a wide range of opportunities for dialogue, diverse groups from Mannheim's urban society developed concepts and clear goals in several workshops. These form the basis for the "Leitbild Mannheim 2030" (Mission Statement Mannheim 2030). The seven strategic priorities for the future outlined in the mission statement represent the tangible implementation of the SDGs in Mannheim.

The mission statement is intended to serve as a compass, providing guidance for everyone's actions in Mannheim. Rather than containing specific measures, it focuses on a vision for the future of Mannheim.

History of sustainable development (milestones)

2017: Signing of the 2030 Agenda model resolution

2019: Adoption of the mission statement "Leitbild Mannheim 2030"

2020: Publication of the first Voluntary Local Review (VLR)

2021: Adoption of the Local Green Deal for Mannheim

2022: 10 years of Mannheim as a Fairtrade Town

2023: 10th Urban Thinkers Campus in Mannheim

2024: Mannheim is on its way to becoming a Zero Waste City

Sustainable development strategy/goals

The seven strategic goals form the core of the Mannheim 2030 mission statement. These goals clarify our vision for Mannheim, derived from the 17 SDGs. They also serve as a guide for future administrative action and are included in the budget. The city's goal is to enable sustainable development for current and future generations through its activities – in ecological, economic, social and cultural terms.

Fig. 25:
Mission Statement
Mannheim 2030 –
Overview of the seven
strategic goals

Source: City of Mannheim

Translation of the goals:
1: Realizing educational equality, ensuring participation
2: Offering quality of life, enabling well-being
3: Living diversity, creating cohesion
4: Promoting commitment, strengthening democracy
5: Driving innovation, attracting talent
6: Acting environmentally consciously, achieving climate neutrality
7: Think globally, collaborate internationally

4.11.3 Sustainability instruments

To implement and transparently present evidence-based, impact-oriented administrative action throughout Mannheim in line with the Mannheim 2030 mission statement, the Mannheimer Steuerungsmodell (Mannheim Steering Model) was developed in March 2023. This model describes the strategic steering process for the city's overall administration through relevant documents and committees. The City of Mannheim's core steering documents are the Mannheim 2030 mission statement, budget, List of Projects and the latest Annual Report/VLR.

The annual report/VLR allows senior administrators and local government to make data-driven decisions and encourage sustainable, forward-looking urban development. It also offers departmental administrators the opportunity to reflect on their own administrative actions, particularly with regard to performance and impact. At the same time, it provides the urban community with clear, comprehensible information on the actions of the city administration. The annual report/VLR describes the City of Mannheim's current progress towards achieving its 2030 mission statement.

To this end, 52 key performance indicators have been developed and collected annually. These cover all seven of the mission statement's strategic objectives. To increase the informative value of the key figures, specific target values were defined for each indicator in collaboration with the relevant departments. The difference between the target and actual values enables the progress made to be assessed quantitatively. This simplifies resource management and enables the municipal sustainability strategy to be implemented in a targeted, impact-oriented manner.

The City of Mannheim is an active member of numerous <u>international city networks</u>, working to implement the SDGs systematically and tangibly. For example, Mannheim holds the chair of the <u>EUROCITIES SDG Task Force</u> and is a partner in URBACT's <u>Cities for Sustainability Governance</u> network and UN-Habitat's <u>World Urban Campaign</u>. Mannheim benefits from these networks in many ways. Participation offers the opportunity to engage with other cities and learn from one another. Furthermore, cities that join forces have a much stronger voice when it comes to promoting their interests. In this context, the Mannheim Annual Report/VLR is also an important tool, as it shows that a VLR can be both a monitoring and steering document.

4.12 City of Münster

Source: Hendrik Wardenga

City of Münster

Federal state: North Rhine-Westphalia

Population: 322,904 inhabitants (as of 31 December 2023)

Total area: 303.28 km^2

Population density: 1,065 inhabitants/km^2

Websites/Social media:

https://www.stadt-muenster.de/startseite

https://www.stadt-muenster.de/nachhaltig

https://www.instagram.com/stadt muenster/

https://www.facebook.com/stadt.muenster

4.12.1 Brief profile

Münster is diverse: the "Peace of Westphalia" signatory city, cycling and climate city. Home to around 60,000 students, Münster is a young city where, in 2022, approximately 74 % of all journeys were made using environmentally friendly modes of transport. Much of the city centre features green and open spaces situated around the Promenadenring (ring around the medieval city wall that surrounds the old city center). In addition to offering numerous job opportunities, the regional centre provides a wide range of cultural and leisure activities.

Münster's commitment to sustainability dates back to the late 1990s. Many of the initiatives introduced at that time can still be seen in everyday city life, such as the organic farmers' market and the bicycle stations. In 2016, the city signed the German Association of Cities' 2030 Agenda model resolution to

make Münster "future-friendly" in line with the 17 SDGs. In 2019, the city was honoured with the German Sustainability Award in recognition of its responsible use of natural resources and strengthening of social cohesion.

4.12.2 Sustainability concepts

Through the "Global Nachhaltige Kommune (GNK)" (Global Sustainable Municipality) model project in North Rhine-Westphalia, the City of Münster has worked closely with the GNK Project Advisory Board, comprising over 60 urban stakeholders, to develop its Münster 2030 sustainability strategy since 2016. This strategy encompasses over 50 of the city's existing concepts. Providing a value-based guiding framework for the sustainable development of Münster, it has been adopted by the City Council with the following ten strategic goals:

1. Enabling social participation for all

2. Providing affordable, environmentally friendly, socially equitable and healthy housing

3. Preserving natural resources

4. Making business, commuter and leisure travel environmentally friendly and climate neutral

5. Actively working towards climate neutrality

6. Enabling good work

7. Developing the economy in a forward-looking manner

8. Taking a holistic approach to educational equity

9. Embedding global responsibility in its actions

10. Realising sustainable production and consumption patterns

These goals are supported by a further 42 targets and 56 operational targets. These are being implemented through more than 139 measures, including prioritised key projects. In addition, five of these sustainability action areas were prioritised by the Münster city council in 2022 and 2024 as medium-term guidelines for action, giving them greater weight in the municipal budget as part of the transformation process.

The 2024 Sustainability Report provides an overview of the implementation and highlights developments since 2016 using 51 indicators. Alongside the Sustainability Report, a Voluntary Local Review and a Summary Report aimed at citizens were also published. According to the city's motto "Münster gemeinsam nachhaltig" (Münster together for sustainability), the Summary Report contains tips on how individuals can contribute to sustainable development through their behaviour and social engagement.

4.12.3 Partnerships to achieve the goals

The following key activities have been implemented in Münster in relation to SDG 17, "Partnerships":

1. Support for the sustainability process by the GNK Advisory Board

The GNK Advisory Board was established as a project advisory board and made permanent by the city council in 2021. In 2024, the Advisory Board published a statement on the further development of the sustainability strategy, which was adopted by the city council as a basis for the upcoming further development and published alongside the Sustainability Report.

The Advisory Board highlights the following areas where Münster has made particular progress: publicly funded housing construction, networking on migration and development, adopting the resolution to become climate neutral by 2030, actively shaping international project partnerships and networking on education for sustainable development. However, the Advisory Board also identifies clear challenges – such as the need for more acceleration in achieving targets. In line with its role as a model city, the City of Münster intends to implement additional strong projects of its own, for which sufficient resources are required. Ultimately, the aim is to strengthen the involvement, participation and empowerment of all citizens.

2. "Inclusive Participation" guidelines

The city is committed to further strengthening public participation in shaping its development. In particular, Münster is committed to inclusive participation in order to engage with people who are not well reached by conventional procedures.

This was implemented in practice by developing the "Inclusive participation" guidelines with people with disabilities and a temporary advisory board. As only those affected can really assess how accessible the participation offerings are, 39 people with disabilities visited and evaluated regular participation offerings as voluntary participation pilots. Their recommendations formed the basis for the "Inclusive Participation" guidelines adopted by the Council in 2024. These guidelines contain a checklist that specifies the quality standards.

3. Establishment of a project partnership with Tamale (Ghana)

A key project within the sustainability strategy is the establishment of a project partnership in the Global South with Tamale in Ghana. Joint projects in the cultural sector, such as art projects, theatre workshops with young people and student exchanges, have already been implemented in both cities. Initial bilateral exchanges have also been facilitated between various stakeholders, including hospitals, universities and waste disposal companies.

A jointly organised SDG partnership conference took place in Münster at the end of 2024. In addition to Tamale and Münster, the following cities also took part: York (UK), Enschede (the Netherlands), Kristiansand (Norway) and Winnizya (Ukraine). There was an intensive exchange of views on the SDGs and their implementation in a municipal context. Many different challenges and approaches to solutions emerged. The central message of the conference was: "Sustainability comes from collaboration and dedication. No excuses!"

4.13 County of Oldenburg

Source: County of Oldenburg

County of Oldenburg

Federal state: Lower Saxony

Population: 134,600 inhabitants (as of 1 April 2024)

Total area: 1,063 km^2

Population density: 127 inhabitants/km^2

Websites/Social media:

www.oldenburg-kreis.de

https://www.facebook.com/people/Landkreis-Olden-
burg/61551077296084/

www.wir-für-gutes-klima.de

https://www.oldenburg-kreis.de/portal/seiten/gesundheitsregion-land-
kreis-oldenburg-900000253-21700.html

4.13.1 Brief profile

The county of Oldenburg is located in north-western Lower Saxony and com-
prises eight municipalities. Its diverse landscape, which stretches over
1,063 km², is characterised by agricultural land, nature reserves and moor-
land. The north and east of the county are close to the Free Hanseatic City of
Bremen. To the north-west, the county borders the town of Oldenburg, and
to the south the landscape is characterised by the vast expanses of the
Wildeshauser Geest, one of the largest Geest areas (an area of sandy heath-
land) in Lower Saxony.

The moorlands and valleys of the River Hunte provide a habitat for a rich va-
riety of flora and fauna. The diversity of nature contributes to the county's ap-
peal for nature lovers and those seeking local recreation. The county's eco-
nomic strength lies in its diversity.

In addition to traditional agriculture, numerous small and medium-sized enterprises have established themselves in various industries.

4.13.2 Sustainability concepts

The county of Oldenburg (LKO) has been committed to sustainability since 2015. The municipality of Wardenburg was the first in the county to be awarded the title of "Fairtrade Municipality", followed by three others. Another important milestone was the county administration's participation in the international "Leverage Points for Sustainability Transformation" research project at Leuphana University Lüneburg (www.leuphana.de/portale/leverage-points.html). Shortly afterwards, numerous local projects were launched: repair cafés were set up in all eight municipalities, fair trade exhibitions were organised and upcycling projects were launched in schools. These activities formed part of the "Kurze Wege – Initiierung von Projekten auf Nachbarschaftsebene" (Short distances – initiating projects at the neighbourhood level) grant scheme.

In 2022, the LKO participated in the project "Global Nachhaltige Kommune Niedersachsen" (Global Sustainable Municipality Lower Saxony), developing a set of recommendations for action in line with the 2030 Agenda. One of the objectives was to prepare a comprehensive sustainability report. In January 2025, a Voluntary Local Review (VLR) was published with the help of the Servicestelle Kommunen in der Einen Welt von Engagement Global (Engagement Global's Service Agency Communities in One World). Projects and indicators were presented for all 17 SDGs. In addition, the climate action team regularly participates in sustainability trade fairs and organises lectures with experts. They also gave a short presentation at the 16th Federal Conference on Municipal Development Policy. The importance of sustainability and climate action is reflected in the organisational structure: the department responsible for climate mitigation, climate adaptation and sustainability reports directly to county commissioner Dr. Christian Pundt. These issues are also set to be embedded in the county's mission statement. A council resolution on achieving greenhouse gas neutrality by 2045 highlights the LKO's long-term dedication to a sustainable future.

Fig. 28:
Pestruper burial ground in the Wildeshauser Geest Nature Park

Source: Doreen Otte Fotografie & Kommunikationsdesign

4.13.3 Selected contributions to implementation

In 2015, the LKO's Health Region began its work, thereby supporting the Health Department's work and goals. Its core tasks are:

- Improving local healthcare provision
- Strengthening health promotion
- Strengthening primary prevention

Through its "BewegungsPass" (Exercise Pass) scheme, the Health Region encourages children to exercise, showcases regional sports activities and provides road safety training for children.

One cross-district project is "ERLEBEN – Erhöhung der Überlebensrate nach Herzstillstand" (ERLEBEN – Increasing the Survival Rate After Cardiac Arrest). After the emergency services have been alerted, an app directs first responders to emergencies so that cardiopulmonary resuscitation can be started quickly, before the emergency services arrive. There are more than one hundred first responders in the county administration. Additional first responders undergo regular training through in-house courses.

In regions where school entrance examinations reveal developmental deficits in children, additional aptitude tests are carried out at the beginning of kindergarten age, so appropriate support can be provided from the age of three if necessary.

According to the motto "Wir für gutes Klima" (We for a good climate), the County of Oldenburg is implementing targeted measures to strengthen local climate action. A climate action concept forms the basis for these measures. The county administration has already received the nationwide "Climate-Active Municipality" award twice, for example for the "Klimaallianz in der Landwirtschaft" (Climate Alliance in Agriculture) project, which involves creating individual greenhouse gas inventories for agricultural businesses and organising lectures. Cooperation partners include the Lower Saxony Chamber of Agriculture and the Oldenburg County Farmers' Association.

Electric-powered citizen cars are available on demand for residents. Volunteer drivers take fellow citizens to doctors' surgeries, supermarkets and weekly markets, and help them with their shopping. Another EV is used at the vocational schools. There it serves as a training vehicle for prospective mechatronics engineers and is also used by the caretakers. This project enables people with mobility needs in sparsely populated communities to participate more fully in social and community life. Prejudices against e-mobility can be overcome through direct contact with EVs. At the same time as the electric cars were introduced, the charging infrastructure for EVs was further expanded. A charging infrastructure concept is in place for the rapid and systematic expansion of additional public charging points. The concept identifies the charging capacity required for EVs by 2030 and specifies over 150 locations that have already been agreed with the electricity grid operators.

4.14 City of Regensburg

Source: City of Regensburg

City of Regensburg

Federal state: Bavaria

Population: 177,123 inhabitants (as of 31 December 2023)

Total area: 8,070 ha

Population density: 1,972 inhabitants/km^2

Websites/Social media:

https://www.regensburg.de/

https://zukunft.regensburg.de/

https://www.instagram.com/stadtregensburg/

https://www.youtube.com/stadtregensburg

https://www.facebook.com/regensburg.de

4.14.1 Brief profile

Regensburg was once a thriving commercial metropolis and the political cen-tre of the Holy Roman Empire. It is now considered the best-preserved medi-eval city in Germany. It has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2006 and, in 2021, it was awarded a second title for the "Danubian Limes" Roman fortifications. Visitors are fascinated by the old town's medieval architecture, narrow lanes and Regensburg's Gothic cathedral. Another notable feature is the Stone Bridge, which has spanned the river since the 12th century.

With around 177,000 inhabitants and a metropolitan area of approximately 700,000 people, Regensburg has not only established itself as an international tourist destination, but has also developed into one of Germany's most important economic centres.

Its success is underpinned by a blend of industry, a dynamic start-up scene, innovative technology companies, research institutions, high-tech clusters and globally connected universities. Regensburg impressively combines history and modernity.

4.14.2 Sustainability concepts

On 28th of July 2021, the City of Regensburg, represented by Mayor Gertrud Maltz-Schwarzfischer, committed itself to implementing the SDGs at the local level when she signed the 2030 Agenda model resolution by the Association of German Cities and the German Section of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (RGRE). This was preceded by the Regensburg City Council's declaration of support for the United Nations 2030 Agenda.

The aim is for Regensburg to become greener, fairer and more productive, making it a better place to live for everyone. The path to becoming a "future-friendly" city is set out in the "Regensburg Plan 2040" urban development concept, which was developed in consultation with the citizens of Regensburg and is aligned with the 17 SDGs. The aim is now to work together to bring the plan to life. Regensburg is facing a huge transformation: providing affordable housing as the population grows rapidly, redesigning mobility, decarbonising the economy and the building stock, increasing land scarcity and adapting the city to the consequences of climate change are just some of the challenges Regensburg will have to face in the coming decades.

In order to provide a decision-making basis for demand planning and political decisions, the city of Regensburg has recently continuously expanded its sustainability monitoring. The "Regensburger Zukunftsbarometer" (Regensburg Future Barometer), an interactive online platform that brings together all municipal measures and activities related to sustainable development and provides information about their background, was developed in 2023. With the publication of its first Voluntary Local Review (VLR), the City of Regensburg has now set another milestone. Supplementing the Zukunftsbarometer, the report provides additional qualitative and quantitative evaluations of the city's progress in implementing the 17 SDGs.

Source: City of Regensburg

4.14.3 Selected contributions to implementation

Sustainable development is an ongoing process. Regular and transparent reporting on the local implementation of the 2030 Agenda will accompany this process in Regensburg, making progress visible and measurable while highlighting strengths and weaknesses. This reporting provides a solid foundation for making forward-looking decisions on the path to a more sustainable future. It also promotes transparency and trust in the ability and integrity of politicians and administrators to take action.

Voluntary Local Review

The Voluntary Local Review (VLR) is a sustainability report on the local implementation of the 17 SDGs, which is inspired by the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). These national reports are submitted to the United Nations on the implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Selected reports are presented annually at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in New York. Regensburg is one of the first German municipalities to publish a VLR.

The Regensburg Zukunftsbarometer

In addition to the VLR, the City of Regensburg operates a digital, interactive sustainability portal called Zukunftsbarometer (future barometer). This online platform uses interactive sliders to provide a transparent overview of all developments over the past decades, based on objective indicators. It also presents background information on a wide range of current urban measures and projects. The Zukunftsbarometer's data and qualitative content are updated several times a year. The displayed values can be filtered individually and relate to the following fields of action: climate action and energy, mobility and infrastructure, environment and resource conservation, life and housing, participation and involvement, global responsibility, work and economy as well as science and digitalisation. It is possible to filter according to the

17 SDGs, as well as according to the action dimensions "green", "fair" and "productive", which follow the logic of the New Leipzig Charter. The Zukunftsbarometer can be found at https://zukunft.regensburg.de/.

The indicators that form the framework of the VLR and the Zukunftsbarometer are based on the contents of the 2030 Agenda and the goals and findings of the Regensburg Plan 2040. This set of indicators was agreed by the city administration in collaboration with scientists, Regensburg initiatives and associations as well as interested citizens. The database consists of statistics collected by the city itself and by external sources such as the Bavarian State Office for Statistics, the Employment Agency and the Federal Network Agency.

4.15 State Capital of Stuttgart

Source: State Capital of Stuttgart, Kaarina Bauer

State Capital of Stuttgart

Federal state: Baden-Württemberg

Population: 609,334 (as of 31 December 2024)

Total area: 207.4 km^2

Population density: 2,938 inhabitants/km^2

Websites/Social media:

https://www.stuttgart.de/

https://www.stuttgart.de/lebenswertes-stuttgart

https://sdg.dashboardstr.de/

https://www.meinstuttgart-meinewelt.de

4.15.1 Brief profile

Although the State Capital of Stuttgart is relatively small compared to global scales, it is a unique city with 50 % of its area covered by green spaces, located in the midst of a vibrant, economically strong region in the heart of Europe. It is characterised by an agile and cosmopolitan urban society with over 160 nationalities, a high level of life satisfaction among the population, an innovative arts and creative scene as well as a world-leading science and production hub, particularly in the automotive and supplier industries. The state capital also has many years of experience with urban policies focused on sustainability. Stuttgart aims to become climate neutral by 2035 and supports the 2030 Agenda model resolution by the Association of German Cities, adopted in 2018.

4.15.2 Sustainability concepts

Stuttgart understands local action in a global context with the aim of securing the livelihoods of present and future generations. The 2030 Agenda provides a cross-sectoral framework for sustainable urban development in Stuttgart. Stuttgart's commitment originates from the Agenda 21 and the UN Millennium Development Goals, as well as the Stuttgart One World Partnership (2005). All departments in the Stuttgart City Council contribute to embed the 2030 Agenda within the administration. A permanent coordination office for international sustainability and development and a cross-departmental working group promote the process. Stuttgart is one of the global pioneers in SDG reporting, which measures administrative actions against the sustainable development model. Every two years, Stuttgart submits its VLR to the UN HLPF and contributes to the further development of the nationwide SDG monitoring project "SDG indicators for municipalities" and the international learning dialogue (including EUROCITIES). Through pilot projects within the framework of the overall financial management, Stuttgart is increasingly integrating SDG monitoring and budget planning. 2030 Agenda alliances and initiatives are working citywide and at the district level to help the urban community achieve the international Sustainable Development Goals.

- 2018: city council resolution adopting the "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Shaping Sustainability at the Local Level" model resolution put forward by the Association of German Cities

- 2018: 2030 Agenda alliance "mEin Stuttgart - mEine Welt" (My Stuttgart – My World)

- 2019: First SDG stocktaking report entitled "Lebenswertes Stuttgart" (Liveable Stuttgart) (published every two years)

- 2019:"Aktionsprogramm Weltklima in Not – Stuttgart handelt " (Action Programme on World Climate in Distress – Stuttgart Takes Action)

- 2022: Roadmap to climate neutrality by 2035

- 2023: "Nachhaltig und innovativ mobil in Stuttgart " (Sustainable and innovative mobility in Stuttgart) action plan

- 2023: City Digitalisation Strategy "Digital MoveS – Stuttgart.Gestaltet.Zukunft " (Digital MoveS – Stuttgart.Shapes.Future)

- 2024: SDG dashboard for evidence-based monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals

Awards (selection)

- Fairtrade Town since 2013

- Signatory municipality to the 2030 Agenda model resolution since 2018

- 2019 EU Fair and Ethical Trade Award, special "Monitoring for Impact" award

- 2021 German Sustainability Award in the "Large Cities" category

- 2021 Honorary Plaque from the Council of Europe

- 2023 UNESCO National Award for Education for Sustainable Development
- 2024 Top ten German cities in the Smart City Index

4.15.3 Stuttgart's contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

With its regularly published SDG stocktaking reports entitled "Lebenswertes Stuttgart" (Liveable Stuttgart), the state capital of Stuttgart ensures that local measures for sustainable development remain transparent and targeted. The SDG barometer and the interactive SDG dashboard presented below illustrate not only the progress and challenges, but also provide a model for other municipalities to effectively advance the 2030 Agenda.

SDG dashboard

All results of the SDG monitoring are available in the city's own SDG dashboard. The dashboard provides an interactive display of all indicators and enables a detailed analysis of the progress made.

SDG dashboard as a mid-term review

As the 2030 Agenda approaches its midpoint, the City of Stuttgart has developed the SDG barometer, a tool designed to systematically measure the current status of sustainable development. This innovative monitoring tool, based on the methodology used by Eurostat and Statistics Austria, assesses the average annual growth rate of the SDG indicators.

- A structured assessment approach:

  The trend assessment differentiates between five categories, ranging from "significant progress" to "significant movement away from the sustainable development goals". This standardised approach facilitates the clear identification and communication of progress and challenges in sustainable development over time.

- Results of the SDG barometer:

  The barometer (Fig. 32) shows that more than half of the indicators in Stuttgart are making moderate progress (light green). Significant improvements were recorded for the "Mobile working" (SDG 16), "Soil index - loss of high-quality soils" (SDG 15) and "Charging station infrastructure" (SDG 7) indicators (dark green). However, one third of the indicators show potential for improvement. Some show moderate movement away from the SDGs (light red). This underlines the need for targeted measures in these areas. On a positive note, no indicator shows a significant negative trend (dark red). For 14 % of the indicators, there is insufficient data for an assessment (light grey).

- Added value for other municipalities:

  The SDG barometer provides a transferable assessment framework to help municipalities analyse their sustainability indicators. The methodology summarises the most important developments in the indicators over time, showing at a glance the priority areas for action required to achieve the goals.

- Further information:

Detailed information on the SDG barometer is available here.

Fig. 32:
SDG-Barometer

Source: State Capital of Stuttgart, Statistisches Amt (Statistical Office)

5. Conclusion and outlook

5.1 What measures have been implemented in Germany since the last VNR in 2021 that exemplify an ambitious, transformative and systemic implementation of the 2030 Agenda?

Municipal sustainability management

Municipalities play a key role in implementing the 2030 Agenda. Cities, counties and towns are key players in this process. Sustainability is a cross-cutting issue that affects all areas of local government action. Municipalities are localising the 2030 Agenda in municipal sustainability strategies, underpinning the goals with measures and plans for their implementation. In doing so, the Sustainable Development Goals are becoming increasingly embedded in municipal budgets. It is essential here that the Sustainable Development Goals are interlinked with one another and preferably with an impact-oriented budget.

By signing the model resolution "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Shaping Sustainability at the Local Level", 265 German municipalities have committed themselves to promoting sustainable development at local and global levels. Over 240 municipalities in Germany have already drawn up SDG stocktaking reports and sustainability strategies, or implemented digital SDG monitoring. The number of municipal sustainability reports is also growing steadily. Around 100 municipalities have published comprehensive reports so far. The "Berichtsrahmen Nachhaltige Kommune (BNK)" (Local Sustainability Reporting Framework, BNK) (Nagel et al., 2024) is a suitable tool for this purpose. Around 30 municipalities have used this to date. A further developed version of the BNK, developed by the "Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung" (German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE)) in collaboration with the Difu, the Bertelsmann Foundation and the SKEW, was published in October 2024. This version is supported by the local government umbrella associations, the LAG21 and the KGSt. Other municipalities use their own reporting formats. The "SDG indicators for municipalities" provide a suitable data basis for this purpose. In addition, the SDG portal offers the option of creating standardised or customised sustainability reports. These reports present the current status with regard to achieving sustainable development goals. This also enables municipalities to record and monitor their sustainable development progress in detail. Eighteen municipalities have already conducted voluntary local reviews, reporting their progress in implementing the 17 SDGs to the United Nations. Municipalities regularly participate in international conferences organised by the United Nations, such as the High-Level Political Forum, the World Urban Forum and climate summits, or the OECD, where they discuss the best possible implementation strategies with global institutions.

Global partnerships

Additionally, there are over 800 partnerships between German municipalities and those in the Global South, including more than 100 climate and sustainability partnerships. SDG indicators are also increasingly being taken into account in partnership work. In 2024, Bremen, Durban and Windhoek published their first joint SDG report, focusing on the SDGs 6, 11, 13 and 17. Through platforms such as "Connective Cities" and the "Club der Agenda

2030 Kommunen" (Club of 2030 Agenda Municipalities), German local government umbrella organisations are collaborating with associations and networks from 15 partner countries to share knowledge on how to develop and use VLRs. German cities played a substantive role in establishing the Eurocities SDG Task Force, which is a network of over 50 European cities, as a learning platform and interest group.

Sustainability as a task for society as a whole

For sustainable development to be successfully implemented, collaboration is needed between local government and administration, local and regional businesses, cultural organisations and civil society. Municipalities are the driving force behind the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Locally anchored initiatives contribute to achieving the SDGs and many municipalities have sustainability advisory boards that bring together a wide range of stakeholders. This ensures that sustainability is addressed as a task for society as a whole. Some municipalities have launched creative campaigns, such as competitions and exhibitions, to raise public awareness about the goals of the 2030 Agenda, or to publicise sustainability initiatives in local magazines and on social media.

5.2   What has been the overall impact of the commitment to sustainability by the municipalities?

Since the introduction of the 2030 Agenda, the development of "SDG indicators for municipalities" has revealed both positive and negative trends. However, a clear distinction needs to be made between areas where municipalities have direct influence and those where they depend on state or federal legislation. This is most evident in SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities), where no clear development trend can be identified beyond well-known issues relating to housing and mobility. While there are positive trends in the expansion of renewable energies and infrastructure (SDGs 7 and 9) and in the economy and employment (SDG 8), the indicators in the areas of health (SDG 3), reduced inequality (SDG 10) and life on land (SDG 15) reveal old and new problems. Differences also emerge between different types of municipalities: large cities generally show better development in terms of financial resources (SDG 16), which has a significant impact on the scope for sustainability activities. Recently, however, municipalities in predominantly rural areas have made greater progress in achieving gender equality (SDG 5). Small municipalities are making more positive progress in regard to education (SDG 4). Medium-sized towns and urban counties outside major cities demonstrate the weakest performance across all SDGs. Growing municipalities performed comparatively poorly in terms of reducing poverty (SDG 1). However, there is still a lack of up-to-date, readily available data for identifying trends across the entire sustainability spectrum, particularly in the key areas of climate action and biodiversity protection (SDGs 13, 14 and 15), the circular economy (SDG 12) and development cooperation (SDG 17).

5.3   What can be done better?

"Common tasks" are best solved together. Currently, effective coordination between the federal, state and local levels is not guaranteed for many issues. Assigning tasks without allocating the necessary resources can create structural difficulties for municipalities that cannot always be resolved sustainably

at the local level in emergencies. A new approach is needed. Public investment at the local level is essential for the efficient and effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda. To this end, municipalities must be given the financial resources they need to take action. Local participation is also necessary because the 2030 Agenda contains inherently conflicting goals that ultimately have to be resolved locally. Conflicting goals lead to contradictory measures being taken. Progress towards achieving one goal can counteract progress towards achieving another. For example, how can mobility infrastructure be improved or affordable housing created with as little land use as possible? How can the share of renewable energies be increased without jeopardising the goal of affordable energy? These conflicting goals must be resolved locally. Municipalities must therefore be included in the processes for a post-2030 agenda.

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