

# VENICE CITY SOLUTIONS 2030

## VISUALIZING AGENDA 2030 IN THE CITY

26 -27<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Concept Note

#VeniceCitySolutions2030



Co-organized by:



Contributing institutions:





## BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES

The Venice City Solutions 2030 is a yearly event that focuses on one specific aspect of the local implementation of SDGs, highlighting the role of local governments as key implementers of Agenda 2030. Venice City Solutions 2030 wants to identify tools for local and regional governments to implement the SDGs and how they are working in other places. Venice goes beyond an event, is also a yearly process to generate new ideas, partnerships, elements for the political narrative about Agenda 2030. In 2018, we explored the need to finance the SDGs at local level, focusing on the dialogue between ministries of finance and local governments. In 2019, we assessed how the SDGs could help local governments to generate citizenship and engage with their population.

With the concept of “VISUALIZING” the Agenda 2030 in cities, the 2020 edition of Venice City Solutions aims to offer local governments tools about how the SDGs can help them analyse what happens in the city, how the different SDGs interact, what are the involved stakeholders and how to use such data to elaborate better policies for a more efficient delivery towards the year 2030. This, somehow “new” use of the term “visualizing” involves a number of elements for the urban dimension of the SDGs:

- (i) how the different SDGs are coming to life in the unique **space** that are our cities and towns;
- (ii) how they **interact** with each other and to the action of different stakeholders;
- (iii) how can the SDG help to **better plan**, imagine, co-create and govern the city to face current and future challenges, and finally;
- (iv) how the SDG can become a transformative mechanism towards year 2030 (**in time**).

Venice City Solutions 2030 brings together partners that believe that cities are one of the most creative entities of our times. In this occasion, we will travel to Venice (either physically or virtually) with urban practitioners and enthusiasts, Mayors, Governors and local government representatives, the United Nations System, architects, private sector and community enhancers to address this specific question *“How visualizing the SDGs can help to better see, imagine and govern the city?”*

Furthermore, Venice wants to advance on the Agenda 2030 as a local instrument within a post-COVID 19 crisis scenario, and to how SDGs are key to rebuild cities and rebuild them better. While cities assess the magnitude of the impact of COVID 19 in their economies and societies, they need to keep their sight the unique opportunity that Agenda 2030 represents, and how they can take this crisis as a departing point for the necessary changes that we need to make to ensure a more sustainable future.

Finally, this year, Venice City Solutions will integrate the process of the UCLG’s **Local4Action HUBs initiative**. This new initiative aims to foster an active global community of cities and regions contributing to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda by creating a platform for visibility through peer exchanges, learning, advocacy and communications work. Venice will be a good opportunity for the initiative to be presented, disseminated and will become a space for the first group of Local4Action HUBs to share their experiences.

## KEY QUESTIONS & OUTPUTS

The event will look for answers to the following questions:

- What are local governments doing to make cities more inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable? How can we “visualize” this local SDG action and better communicate within the city and beyond?
- How do SDGs interact with each other in the city context?
- What are the specific implications of implementing the SDG in the spatial dimension of the city? How is this different from the national contexts?
- How are different city stakeholders contributing?
- How can visualizing tools can help us better plan, imagine and govern the city?
- What can we do better? What is urgently needed for this Decade of Action ahead?

Specific outputs of the event will include:

- Specific tools available to visualize local SDG implementation and how to use such tools to better delivery.
- Challenges in integrating the different aspects of SDGs at city level identified and key solutions discussed.
- Visual tools about how local governments are achieving the SDGs (design, financing, implementing, assessing tools) identified and shared.
- Innovative partnerships to achieve Agenda 2030 at local level mobilized.
- Open dialogue between different local stakeholders on Agenda 2030 and SDG implementation fostered.
- A final report gathering recommendations and proposals to contribute to the 2021 HLPF and other monitoring mechanisms established to follow up the SDG implementation.

## VISUALIZING: HOW TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE URBAN DIMENSION OF THE SDG

The city constitutes an extraordinary place for experimentation, and the perfect setting to observe Agenda 2030 into action. As the places where most people live, the cities constitute the venue where most of the challenges and most of the opportunities for humanity actually happen. As the COVID 19 epidemic has demonstrated, cities are the ones experiencing the peak of problems, but also the ones who need to offer quick responses and the first to innovate in the provision of solutions for all its citizens.

Implementing the SDGs in a city has a very distinctive dimension, very different than the more sectorial approach observed at national level. Cities have a unique position to identify vital needs and gaps to improve public service delivery, to engage all stakeholders in designing policy and development strategies, and to understand the challenges their communities and territories face. Cities deal with key challenges related to housing, transport, inequality and access, economic development, cultural and natural heritage, disaster prevention, air quality, access to public spaces, climate change, safety, among others. All such issues are key targets of the SDGs, and they are key to translate the agenda into the territory, thanks to local public policies and action.

Our approach to “Visualizing the Agenda 2030 in the City” aims to consider four different dimensions of the term “visualizing” to create a framework able to analyse, explore and communicate the importance of local actions towards the implementation of Agenda 2030:



This approach can help us solve different questions regarding **WHAT** cities are doing and **WHERE**, (spatial and territorial dimension), **WHO** are they doing it with, (interaction and interconnection), **HOW and WHY** are they doing it (vision for the future and local/global relationship).

Finally, this kind of analysis of how the SDGs play in the city in these different dimensions offers us an interesting approach to reflect on the need to develop better communication strategies on SDG s for the cities to solve a final question regarding **WHO are they visualizing for**. To achieve good local governance and advance on the transformative changes requested by Agenda 2030, cities need to bring on board their citizens, civil servants, organized civil society, the private sector and other local stakeholders to the priority-setting, decision-making processes, implementation, developing and monitoring of the localization of the SDGs. On the other hand, visualization can also be a tool to better advocate towards national governments and international organizations regarding the crucial role of local governments in accelerating the implementation of the SDGs.

## STRUCTURE & THEMES

Using different and interactive methodologies, each session will answer a series of questions and set the debate where the participants will jointly elaborate key messages and recommendations. Each session will showcase specific local experiences to evidence what cities are currently doing to visualize the Agenda offering a specific moment for the UCLG’s Local4Action HUBs initiative.

As in previous occasions, the recommendations from the event will be presented at the High-Level Political Forum, the formal mechanism to follow up on SDGs that gathers in New York in July of each year, giving the opportunity to transfer to member states and governments the new ideas and solutions identified during the event.

The event will host the following sessions:

### **Opening Session - Visualizing Agenda 2030: an approach to better understand the urban dimension of the SDGs**

This opening session will present the “Visualizing” the Agenda 2030 approach and contextualize the debate. As presented before, the approach will focus on the different dimensions of visualization as way to explore and showcase the unique condition of cities for SDG implementation and Agenda 2030 acceleration. This session will reflect on the common challenges and innovations brought by cities. The opening session will also count with the institutional presence of the organizing institutions.

### **YELLOW SESSION - Linking SDGs to the territory: mapping local actions in space**

To visualize means, first of all, **to see**. In the specific context of SDGs in a city, visualization can be used to picture, map and track the actions and impact of SDG across the territory, but also in particular urban areas and specific neighbourhoods. The session will focus on different approaches and tool for mapping the actions in space, to better understand how SDGs interact with each other in the unique spatial dimension of the city. In this regard, urban practitioners are key actors that need to be brought to the SDG discussion and consider their key inputs for the common narrative.

### **GREEN SESSION – SDGs interactions and connections in the city framework**

Visualizing also means **to make something visible**. Visualization can help to better see how SDGs are interconnected, what kind of multiplier effect they have and how they interact with the complex framework that feeds the cities. It can also help local policy makers to identify the actors involved or excluded in these processes and to better mobilize them to improve public policies and enhance partnerships in pursuit of the SDGs. Finally, visualization can be also used to evidence local actions and investments in SDGs and highlight how SDGs are integrated in public policy. This session will examine common challenges and elements of innovation of what cities are doing to bring territorial stakeholders on board and to make SDG actions visible to others.

### **RED SESSION – The vision for the future: strategic planning and imagining a sustainable city in time**

Visualizing also refers **to envision, imagine and plan**. SDGs can become a great platform to envision and image the cities we want. In an SDG context, visualizing actions and impact can serve for better policy making with the horizon of year 2030 in mind. The session will focus on how cities can and are developing SDG visions and plans to reflect local circumstances and needs.

### **BLUE SESSION - Celebrating UCLG's new initiative, the Local4Action HUBs: Local actions transforming global dynamics**

Visualizing also represents **showcasing and signifying**. In the particular case of the 2030 Agenda, visualizing means to feature and to share concrete experiences, providing *evidence* to signify the collective process of co-creation and generate shared ownership. In this context, this session will focus on how ambitious local actions are able to encourage additional efforts to localize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), triggering a multiplier effect, that can have an impact in global policies and dynamics, while setting the cities and territories as key actors of global sustainable development.

In 2020, Venice City Solutions will be integrated in UCLG process of development of the **Local4Action HUBs**, a new initiative of the organization to foster an active global community of cities and regions contributing to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda by creating a platform for visibility through peer exchanges, learning, advocacy and communications work. The session will generate an open dialogue between different stakeholders on the impact of local actions on the global policies and dynamics, celebrating the Local4Action HUBs as a key platform to connect, synchronize and accelerate the 2030 Agenda localization.

### **Recommendations to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2021**

The final session will also serve to collaboratively exploring the challenges and goals of visualizing Agenda 2030 in the city as per the discussions developed to collect ideas and actions to be presented during the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in year 2021. Each year, Venice City Solutions makes sure to bring the issues discussed in Venice and to be presented during the formal session that, each year, revises the state of implementation of Agenda 2030 during a two-week period at the UN Headquarters in New York<sup>1</sup>.

#### *Methodology*

Since this will be our first workshop combining online with face-to-face activities, we have devised a methodology to allow as much interaction of participants as possible. The event will combine:



## **ORGANIZATION & LOGISTICS**

The event is co-organized by the [Italian Association for the Council of European Municipalities \(AICCRE\)](#), [UNDP](#), [UN-Habitat](#), the [UN SDG Action Campaign](#) and [United Cities and Local Governments](#). The event counts with the financial support of [Platforma](#) and contributions from Fraunhofer Institute and others to be confirmed.

The Venice City Solutions Series comes under the "Localizing the SDGs" initiative, a common effort by UCLG, UN-Habitat and UNDP to support the local implementation of the SDGs thanks to the leading role of local and regional governments. Venice contributes highly to the activities of the initiative, being a yearly global event to share experiences about how different countries are localizing the SDGs.

<sup>1</sup> You can access the presentation of Venice City Solutions recommendations to the HLPF here:

- Year 2018 : [Localizing the SDGs: the role and impact of local authorities for the 2030 Agenda \(HLPF19 Side Event\)](#)
- Year 2019: [Cities as bridges between citizens and SDGs in a post COVID19 world \(HLPF20 Side Event\)](#)

The event will be hosted by the Italian Association for the Council of European Municipalities (AICCRE) in a venue to be confirmed within the island of Venice. Pending the evolution of the COVID 19 pandemic, an online series of events are foreseen in case travel restrictions continue in the last part of the year. Specific information regarding logistics will be given shortly.

Interpretation will be available in English, French, Spanish and Italian.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information on this year Venice City Solutions, please contact:

Ms. *Diana Lopez Caramazana*  
Partnerships Specialist, Cities and Urbanization  
Global Policy Network, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support  
United Nations Development Programme  
[diana.lopez @ un.org](mailto:diana.lopez@un.org)

Local focal point at AICCRE - Ms. Luana Lupi ([lupi @ aiccre.it](mailto:lupi@aiccre.it))