

Social resilience of communities for a sustainable, just and peaceful world

NGO REPORT
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN LATVIA

Latvian Platform for Development
Cooperation (LAPAS)
2022

Iceland Liechtenstein Norway
Active citizens fund



Latvian Platform
for Development
Cooperation

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Introductory remarks by the Director of LAPAS

A crisis is a test of our everyday democratic skills - whether we will act responsibly ourselves, whether we will notice our fellow citizens and their needs, whether we will be willing to share our resources with those in need.

Latvian civil society has been hit by three major challenges in the last two years. First, the initial wave of Covid-19, when thousands of volunteers mobilised to help their fellow human beings in a situation of high uncertainty. A few months later, the need to react quickly with support for the brave Belarusians, whose illegitimate dictator was seeking bloody settlement with his own people. This year, Russia's aggressive invasion of Ukraine, which also killed civilians and hundreds of children, brought a new challenge - refugee flows, an acute need to donate and to help. Latvians have proven themselves to be strong, responsible and capable. We did not wait and ask, we acted from the bottom of our hearts. Crises have strengthened our humanity and belief in democracy.

Society is the key to local resilience, peace and sustainability if there is an empowering environment and support from public administration, institu-

tional mechanisms and the rule of law. Although the drafting of this report was significantly affected by Russia's aggressive invasion of Ukraine in open violation of international principles, the Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation carried out extensive consultations of non-governmental organisations. We spoke especially with young people in the regions, hearing the voice of the future.

Latvia is making gradual and systemic progress on sustainability, in particular through education reform, strengthening civil society, engagement and governance openness, green economy course, and inclusively developing sustainability-based development cooperation policies. At the same time, gender equality, living off the land and reducing social inequalities are areas that need to be strengthened in the coming years.

The public's assessment of progress towards the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals is very similar to the country's own self-assessment. A shared vision for development is a good basis for joint action, because partnerships are where the power lies.



4

INESE VAIVARE,
Director of the association
“Latvian Platform for Development
Cooperation” (LAPAS)

Glossary of abbreviations

5

ACF	A program of the EEA and Norway Finance Mechanism
CSCC (PKC)	Cross-sectoral Co-ordination Centre
EEA	European Economic Area
EU	European Union
LALRG (LPS)	Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments
LAPAS	Association “Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation”
LCCI (LTRK)	Latvian Chamber of Trade and Industry
LDDK	Employers' Confederation of Latvia
LIZDA	Latvian Trade Union of Education and Science Employees
NGO (NVO)	Non-governmental organisation
NDP2027 (NAP2027)	National Development Plan of Latvia 2021-2027
MES (IZM)	Ministry of Education and Science
MoFA (ĀM)	The Ministry of Foreign Affairs
PBO (SLO)	Public Benefit Organisation
SDGs (IAM)	UN Sustainable Development Goals
SMEs (MVU)	Small and medium-sized enterprises

Consultation process

6

PARTICIPANTS - NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (NGOs) - IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (HEREINAFTER - SDGs):

Aizkraukle Region Partnership	Latvian Network of Women's NGOs
Alliance for Cross-Sectoral Sustainable Development	Latvian Scouts and Guides Central Organisation
Alūksne Rural Partnership	Latvian Social Entrepreneurship Association
Auxilio	Latvian Traders Association
Esi labs	ManaBalss/Foundation of Public Participation
Istok	New East
Education Development Centre	Organization of people with disabilities and their friends Apeirons
Education Initiative Centre	Papardes zieds
Latvian Association for Librarians' Education	Shelter "Drošā māja"
Latvian Hemophilia Society	Project workshop for communities
Latvian Youth Council	Repair Cafe Riga
Latvian Rural Forum	Delna Society for Transparency
Latvian Ornithological Society	Centre for Public Policy "PROVIDUS"
Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments	Soli priekšā melanomai
The Civic Alliance – Latvia	Vidzeme Rural Partnership "Brasla"
Latvian Alliance for Rare Diseases	Zemgale NGO Centre
Latvian Samaritan Association	

The questionnaires were published in the information channels of the Civic Alliance - Latvia, the publication for NGOs "NVO nama ziņas" and the association "Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation" (hereinafter - LAPAS). Individual invitations to complete the questionnaire were sent to 108 associations between February and May 2022.

SUMMARY OF THE REGIONAL DISCUSSIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE “ESI NĀKOTNE” (BE THE FUTURE)

VENUES IN FOUR REGIONS
OF LATVIA:



TIME OF THE EVENT:

21.01.-15.05.2022.

A TOTAL OF

324

YOUNG PEOPLE TOOK PART
IN THE DISCUSSIONS

THE DISCUSSIONS WERE
ORGANISED BY

LAPAS, “Visas iespējas”, Development Platform YOU+, Radi Vidi Pats, Nīca Youth Centre, House of Hope, Zenta Mauriņa Grobiņa Secondary School, “Aizputes Ideju māja”, Regīta Zeiļa, Ludza Youth Centre, Culture House of National Societies, Preiļi Free School, Association “New East”, Social Enterprise “Brivupes”, Rūdolfs Pelēkais, Limbaži Municipality Agency “LAUTA”, Youth and Entrepreneurship Initiative Centre “BĀKA”, Purezers Nature Trail, Gubene Municipality Youth Centre “Bāze”, Rūjiena Multifunctional Youth Initiative Centre, Association “Laiks Jauniešiem”, Iecava Youth Centre, Vecumnieki Youth Council, Association “World Culture Space in Tukums”

THE DISCUSSION WAS SUPPORTED BY

the Representation of the European Commission in Latvia within the framework of the Conference on the Future of Europe. The summary of the discussions does not reflect the views of the European Union and is the responsibility of LAPAS.

STUDIES USED:

“NVO Ilgtspējas Indekss Latvija 2020”, Latvijas Pilsoniskā alianse, 2020 (“NGO Sustainability Index Latvia 2020”, Civic Alliance - Latvia, 2020)

“Sabiedriskā līdzdalība lēmumu pieņemšanas procesā: izpētes ziņojums”, Latvijas Pilsoniskā alianse, 2021 (“Public Participation in the Decision-Making Process: research report”, Civic Alliance - Latvia, 2021)

Akule D., “Iedzivotāju ieguldījumu palielināšana pilsoniskajā sabiedrībā”, Latvijas Pilsoniskā alianse, 2020 (Akule D., “Increasing Citizens’ Contributions to Civil Society”, Civic Alliance - Latvia, 2020)

“NVO sektors Latvijā priekšstati, dalība. Kvantitatīvais pētijums”, Latvijas fakti, Kultūras ministrija, 2018 (“NGO sector in Latvia - perceptions, participation. Quantitative research”, Latvijas fakti, Ministry of Culture, 2018)

Zonberga K., Klāsons G., Spuriņš U. “The review of the NGO sector in Latvia: number, activity, finances. 2019”, The Civic Alliance – Latvia, 2019

Lursoft data: https://www.lursoft.lv/lursoft_statistika/?&id=41

“Pārskats par NVO sektoru Latvijā 2015”, Latvijas Pilsoniskā alianse, 2015 (“NGO Sector in Latvia 2015”, Civic Alliance - Latvia, 2015)

“NVO sektora pārskats par 2020.gadu”, Valsts kanceleja, 2020 (“NGO Sector Report 2020”, State Chancellery, 2020)

The report also draws on the results of previous advocacy activities of LAPAS in the area of SDGs, additional consultations with directly involved organisations, the positions of the Latvian Youth Council and the resolutions of the working groups of the UN Youth Delegates Programme national level conference “Security and Human Dignity” (27.02.2022).



The report was significantly affected by Russia’s aggression in Ukraine - NGOs were providing extensive humanitarian assistance to Ukraine and refugees and were therefore unable to participate in the report’s processes - discussions, questionnaires and comments.



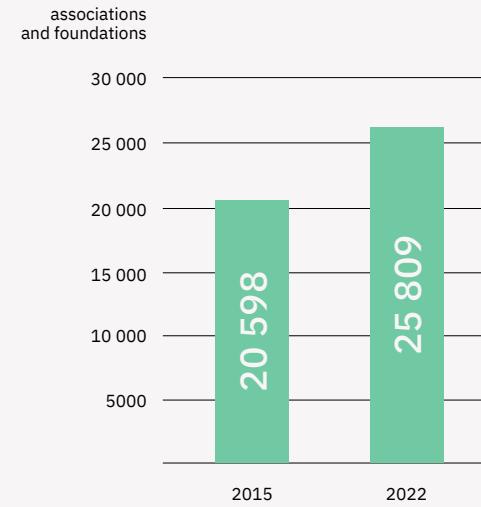
On March 19, 2022, one of the twenty regional discussions “ESi NĀKOTNE” (Be the future) took place in Purezers, Vidzeme region of Latvia. Young people shared their vision about future Europe and their role in it.

National context

NGO sector development trends in Latvia
Influencing factors since the 2018 report
Covid-19 effect
Enabling environment
Involvement opportunities
Financial sustainability
Promoting democracy

NGO sector development trends in Latvia

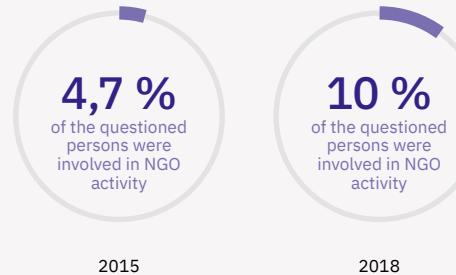
THE NUMBER OF NGOs IS GRADUALLY INCREASING



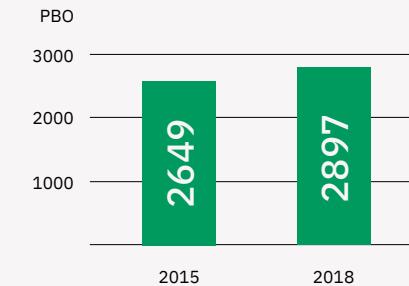
INCREASING NUMBER OF NGO EMPLOYEES



INCREASING INVOLVEMENT OF POPULATION IN NGOs



THE NUMBER OF PUBLIC BENEFIT ORGANISATIONS (hereinafter - PBOs) IS GROWING



NGO MEMBER PROFILE IN 2018



- higher education
- age 35-44
- female
- Latvian
- financially secured
- resident of Riga

THE NGO SECTOR CONTRIBUTES TO ECONOMIC AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

IN 2015,
NGOs CONTRIBUTED

€ 38,7 million

TO THE STATE BUDGET

12

€ 2,2 MILLION IN VAT

€ 21,8 MILLION IN SOCIAL SECURITY CONTRIBUTIONS

€ 14,7 MILLION IN PERSONAL INCOME TAX

IN 2018, THE TOTAL FINANCIAL TURNOVER OF THE NGO SECTOR WAS

€ 434 million

Influencing factors since the 2018 report

The tax reform, which already had a negative impact on funding for the NGO sector in 2018, with donations falling by € 23.5 million the following year. Before the reform, donations accounted for around 29% of NGO revenues; after the reform, less than 15%. The most affected areas were charity (-31%), culture (-30%) and sport (-29%).

The reform of local government by reducing the number of municipalities raised concerns about access to services and opportunities for public participation, but the new draft law includes a number of improvements - mandatory citizens' councils, participatory budgeting, collective submission, publication of explanatory notes to draft binding regulations for public feedback, live broadcasts of council meetings, as well as other aspects of better governance and transparency.

The new **National Development Plan** 2021-2027 (NDP2027) was developed with extensive public involvement over several years. More than 100 individuals and organisations contributed to the drafting process, providing input on the conceptual approach to the document. The Cross-sectoral Co-ordination Centre (CSCC) organised focus groups and 60 meet-

ings with civil society organisations, social partners and the media. The draft document was posted online for comments and the consultation process generated more than 1400 unique comments. The Plan includes a section on civil society and its development - the sixth priority - "A United, Safe and Open Society".

Moneyval's conclusion that Latvia is at a high risk of money laundering and the resulting actions affected the NGO sector's ability to open and maintain bank accounts, so active cooperation was implemented to raise the awareness of all parties about the specifics of civil society work.

Russia's aggressive invasion of Ukraine has mobilised the wider society, with both formal and informal groups mobilising for humanitarian aid to Ukraine and its refugees in Latvia, historically unprecedented levels of donations from individuals and businesses, a broad cross-sectoral community and an overall increase in patriotism and civic activism. In two months, ziedot.lv received donations worth EUR 10 million, just one of hundreds of initiatives by Latvian citizens to support democracy and freedom.

Covid-19 effect

The epidemiological security conditions also affected the NGO sector in Latvia, with restrictions on gatherings, face-to-face services and projects. The biggest challenge was the understanding that NGOs are not economically active and therefore do not suffer losses and do not need to compensate for lost revenues or ensure financial sustainability in times of operating constraints.

The state introduced various mechanisms to support the NGO sector:

- exempt associations and foundations from paying rent for the use of state- and municipal-owned property;
- extended the deadline for submitting annual reports and PBO reports;
- extended the deadline for using public funding for the activities of associations and foundations;
- goods and services provided to various social groups adversely affected by the emergency were recognised as operating expenses of the organisations and were not subject to corporate income tax under certain conditions;
- employers affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, including associations and foundations, were eligible for financial support and tax holidays for up to three years;

- the possibility for members to participate and vote remotely in association meetings;
- EUR 600 000 was allocated to associations and foundations for projects to mitigate the negative effects of the Covid-19 crisis;
- support was also provided by individual ministries, such as the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) to support young people;
- NGOs were involved in decision-making processes to ensure they were relevant to the needs of the sector, including the Strategic Steering Group chaired by the Prime Minister.

NGOs were active in supporting the most vulnerable groups affected by the pandemic, as well as in creating social innovations, e.g., the association Hospiss LV worked with nearly 20 catering companies and restaurants to provide around 1000 meals to hospital and Emergency Medical Service staff across the country by raising donations, while supporting the continuation of restaurants' operations.

Enabling environment

Public benefit status gives NGOs access to special support and tax breaks. Although only 12% of NGOs have this status, PBOs accounted for 49% of all funding in the NGO sector in 2018. In 2019, the Ministry of Finance started work on a new PBO concept, which envisages significant changes to the legal framework for PBOs, as well as a review of the legal framework for all associations and foundations, social enterprises, foundations and state capital companies.

The Government's **legislative portal**, where any registered NGO can follow the government's decision-making process and request opinions, is a major improvement for good governance and transparency. At the same time, it requires public administrations to follow procedures to mobilise NGOs. In the context of health and safety crises, there is a breach of procedures that must not become the norm.

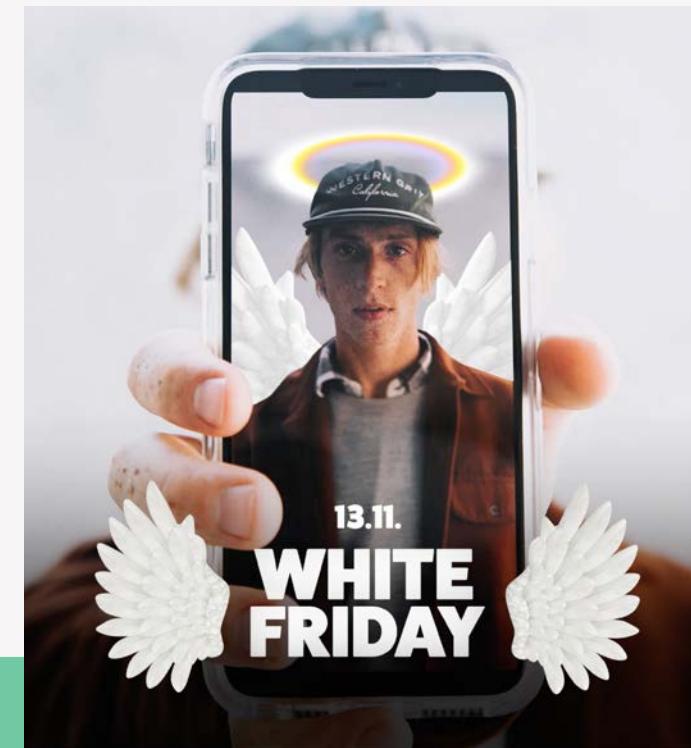
The Volunteer Service Law entered into force in 2016, but no impact assessment has been carried out. In 2022, the first tender for projects to support volunteering was launched with total funding of € 60 000. There are also separate EU-level programmes to support youth volunteering.

Cross-sectoral projects contribute to capacity building and cross-enrichment between different stakeholders. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) is giving special support to cooperation between companies, administrations, NGOs and academic institutions.

Digital involvement increases democratic opportunities. In 2020, the ManaBalss (MyVoice) portal became one of the most popular tools for the public to propose initiatives for legislative changes in various areas - 109 initiatives were published on the [Manabals.lv](#) website (out of 273 reviewed), 42 initiatives were submitted to the Saeima and other institutions that met the minimum threshold of popular support for their further advancement.

“NGOs is a lifeline for democracies. These days they are important as ever. That’s why we are doing our share of helping citizens to acquire a new habit of regularly donating to NGOs. And than we thought if there is a “Black Friday” where one can get nice stuff, there should be also a “White Friday” were one can do some good things.”

ĢIRTS SLAVIŅŠ, entrepreneur, CEO at Mobilly



Involvement opportunities

In 2021, 64% of the 1,499 annotated draft laws required **public participation**. The Ministry of Welfare (98% of those requiring participation), the Ministry of Justice (84%) and the Ministry of Economy (77%) had the highest number of such draft laws and regulations. The most active public consultations were those launched by the Ministry of Health (89% of responses received), the Ministry of Culture (75%) and the MES (70%).

Meanwhile, only 128 out of 965 cases (13%) included detailed information in the annotations about the speakers, the content of the opinions and whether they were taken into account or rejected.

The sectoral ministries provided information on 233 **working groups, advisory councils, coordination councils, monitoring councils, committees**, in which 507 organisations have participated in the last three years.

At the time of data collection (July 2021), minutes of a total of 93 meetings were not available on the **Saeima's** website, so full information on public engagement is not available. In the first half of 2021, overall participation increased to 50%, which could be due to the impact of online meetings under Covid-19.

The organisations participated most actively in the meetings of the Education, Culture and Science Commission (85%), the State Administration and Local Government Commission (76%) and the Sustainable Development Commission (73%). The lowest percentage of participants (7%) was in the Foreign Affairs Committee.

The most active organisations in both the governmental and parliamentary participation processes are the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments (hereinafter - LALRG), the Employers' Confederation of Latvia (hereinafter - LDDK), the Cooperation Council of Agricultural Organisations, the Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (hereinafter - LCCI), the Latvian Finance Industry Association, the Association of Large Cities, the Latvian Trade Union of Education and Science Employees (hereinafter - LIZDA), the Latvian Students' Union, the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia.

NGO representatives point to a lack of human resources, uncooperative state institutions, insufficient and irregular funding, low effectiveness of participation and the formal approach of the administration **as obstacles to participation**.

Financial sustainability

The National NGO Fund, which provides resources for advocacy and capacity-building, civic action and NGO-citizen cooperation projects, has gradually increased its funding to a total of € 1 888 000 in 2022. Overall, government grants to 20% of NGOs in 2018 amounted to € 85.6 million, with the largest share going to the Ministries of Education, Agriculture and Culture. Local authorities also provide small grants of EUR 300-3000 on average for local initiative projects and environmental improvements.

Donations accounted for € 64 million of NGO revenue in 2018. According to the population survey, 22% of respondents had donated to an NGO in the last two years. Latvian Radio regularly organises a donation campaign called “Dod pieci” (High 5), playing songs chosen by people in exchange for a donation. The 2020 campaign aimed to support the prevention and reduction of domestic violence.

Membership fees are a significant source of revenue for NGOs representing professional interests, sport, education and property management.

Foreign financial instruments continue to play an important role in the development of the Latvian NGO sector. Active Citizens Fund, the program of European Economic Area (EEA) and Norway Finance Mechanism (hereinafter - ACF) has increased support to NGOs for advocacy, capacity building, promotion of human rights and democratic culture by 8.5 million.

Equal access for NGOs to EU Structural Funds and other financial mechanisms remains a challenge. There are separate, proportionally small financial programmes for NGOs and NGO support, but most of the resources for infrastructure, digitisation, governance and service development are not available to NGOs because the priority is private sector development.

Service provision is one of the main sources of income for NGOs. They must register for VAT when they reach an annual turnover of € 40 000. The right for PBOs to set up social enterprises is also positive.

For three years running, the company Mobilly has been running a “White Friday” campaign to promote philanthropy, as opposed to “Black Friday” when people are encouraged to buy and consume more goods. The campaign aims to promote public involvement and support in the daily work of various charities and non-governmental organisations. During the campaign, people are encouraged to make regular donations to NGOs, both as part of the campaign and on a daily basis. The Mobilly app currently allows you to donate to 87 different NGOs.

Promoting democracy



To strengthen democracy, in 2020, the Civic Alliance - Latvia, an association representing the interests of Latvian NGOs, in cooperation with other organisations, launched a new initiative “Democracy Week”. It includes the celebration of important dates in Latvian history - 1 May, when the Constituent Assembly was convened; 4 May, Independence Restoration Day; and 9 May, Europe Day. The week aims to highlight the importance of citizens’ participation and involvement in building, sustaining and implementing democracy.

To foster a culture of open conversations, “Dots” Foundation organises the annual LAMPA Conversation Festival. Its mission is to promote civic participation and active involvement in social and political processes, and to promote lifelong learning in an ever-changing world. In 2020, the festival also took place under Covid-19 conditions. It lasted for four days, with 242 events organised by 285 organisations and institutions. 1800 people participated as panellists and 880 people visited the collective viewing areas. The festival website was visited approximately 46 586 times during the festival.

Interest advocacy campaigns focus on acute problems. One of the most visible campaigns took place in 2020, when activists organised demonstrations and formed a human chain from the Freedom Monument to Marsa Park to protest against a decision that was taken without public participation. Despite protests, the long-standing trees were felled and construction of the building began. The incident served as a reminder that civil society must always be vigilant and able to mobilise in emergencies, but that results are not always possible.

Supporting our neighbouring countries in democracy-building contributes most directly to a culture of cooperation and understanding of the interconnectedness of global processes. After the bloody and illegitimate presidential elections on 9 August 2020, a group of volunteers created a civic media Twitter account ↗ *@Free_Belarus_lv*, which translates daily news about Belarus into Latvian and raises donations for civic activities. The account has 20,000 translated posts and 3,000 followers, including media, officials and other interested parties.



Photo: Andrey Strokin

“During recent years we are experiencing various crises (the pandemic, the oppression of civil society in Belarus, Russia’s war against Ukraine) with a continuous process of re-evaluating the society’s values. I believe that Latvian civil society has passed this test by demonstrating a strong position on democratic values and peace, amazing resilience even if it’s not a topic that is purposefully strengthened, and raised the powerful potential of society’s civic activism, which had been sleepy.”

KRISTĪNE ZONBERGA,
director of the Civic Alliance – Latvia

Report on Sustainable Development Goal Implementation

Overall strategy

National implementation

Public information

The principle “Leave no one behind”

The principle “Respecting planetary boundaries”

Involvement of NGOs in planning processes

Involvement of NGOs in SDGs implementation

Involvement of NGOs in the development of the Latvian National Voluntary Report

[SDG 1](#) / [2](#) / [3](#) / [4](#) / [5](#) / [6](#) / [7](#) / [8](#) / [9](#) / [10](#) / [11](#) / [12](#) / [13](#) / [14](#) / [15](#) / [16](#) / [17](#)

For the SDGs implementation report, LAPAS followed the People's Scorecard on the 2030 Agenda methodology, adapting it to the national context and opportunities.

The evaluation was planned in two parts: a survey of NGOs and thematic discussions by goal block, discussing and agreeing on the evaluations.

A separate and additional youth part was implemented in response to the European Year of Youth and to give a wider voice to young people. In the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe, 20 discussions were held across Latvia, including on SDG perspectives.

The Russian aggression in Ukraine, which led most NGOs to become involved in humanitarian aid and refugee assistance, had a direct impact on the evaluation process, both by complicating the first phase and by making the discussion phase impossible.

The assessment of the implementation of each goal consists of four parameters:

1

Assessment of government plans - points were based on the plans mentioned in the Latvian state report and their relevance to the specific goal framework, as well as on the results of a survey that specifically assessed the existence and implementation of the plans.

2

The involvement of public administrations and local authorities was based on the results of a survey.

3

The assessment of the availability of data on the achievement of the target was based on the results of the survey, which asked a separate question on the availability of information on the implementation of the target, as well as on the summary of the assessment of the SDGs and NAP2027 indicators organised by LAPAS.

4

The assessment of civil society involvement was based on the results of a questionnaire.

As the survey included an assessment of the involvement of the different stakeholders, this was also included in the reflection of the evaluation. This information provides a nuanced understanding of the need to increase participation and provide information on existing projects, as well as the importance of promoting cross-sectoral cooperation.

The questionnaire also asked about groups in society that are not sufficiently involved in the implementation of the goal, and these answers were included in the evaluation of the goal. The average rating for the implementation of a target often does not give the full picture, as different parameters tend to have very different ratings depending on the situation.

The questionnaires were rated by respondents on a five-point scale, which, according to the methodology, was further converted into a 100-point scale for better clarity.

For better perception the following colour system was created according to the total score of the parameters:



The questionnaire also asked for additional comments on the implementation of the goal, which are reflected in the proposals section. As the second phase of the report could not be implemented, they cannot be considered as comprehensive proposals in the field, as there was no opportunity to discuss and complete them. At the same time, they indicate a trend and opportunities for development.

The youth proposals are based on the summaries of 20 discussions organised by LAPAS, the positions of the Latvian Youth Council, and the resolution of the UN Youth Delegates Programme national-level conference in 2022.

The report serves as a basis for further discussion, and Latvian NGOs are particularly keen to emphasise the democratic framework of the state, which allows the free and open expression of views on public governance, including critical views, building balanced development based on cooperation and citizens' needs.

Overall strategy

60

In Latvia, the responsible institution for coordinating the implementation of the SDGs is the CSCC, which operates under the authority of the Prime Minister. There are no official structures to monitor the implementation of the SDGs in Latvia.

Following the 2018 National Voluntary Report on the implementation of the SDGs, in 2019 LAPAS formed an informal cross-sectoral coalition, with the participation of 40 representatives from different sectors, in which representatives and experts from government, local authorities, NGOs, educational institutions, academia and the private sector volunteered to participate. Various public events were organised for exchanges and presentations of good practices, e.g., on opportunities for sustainability in the context of Covid-19.

As a non-governmental organisation, LAPAS carries out this coordination work within its own capacity, without any support from the state. LAPAS cooperates with the Baltic states' counterpart coalitions in Estonia and Lithuania, as well as with the Icelandic Platform for the transfer of good practice. LAPAS also follows the international work on SDGs in the European organisation SDGs Watch Europe and the global networks Forus and the Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP).

According to public administration opinion, the SDGs are integrated into the national policy planning framework. At the same time, the lack of a transparent mapping in NAP2027 makes it impossible to track whether a comprehensive approach has been applied. The assessment of NGOs also reflects the lack of information on the implementation of the SDGs, indicating that some SDGs are very narrowly and incompletely interpreted in the Latvian context.

As part of the process of developing the NAP2027, LAPAS organised an event in November 2019 to assess the planned goals, targets and indicators against the SDG framework. More than 50 representatives and experts from NGOs, ministries, the private sector, municipalities and educational institutions took part. LAPAS submitted an integrated opinion with more than 70 proposals.

There are no mechanisms for assessing the implementation of the SDGs, coordinating stakeholders and providing national leadership for the comprehensive implementation of the sustainability perspective.

National implementation 75

Most of the SDG processes are still in the form of roadmaps, with balanced implementation only started in some areas, and the overall approach is fragmented.

In line with NAP2027, policy implementation plans have been developed in some areas, but there are SDG areas that are not a political priority and where such plans do not even exist. As not all SDG indicators are integrated in NAP2027, it is also not possible to carry out regular comprehensive monitoring.

National budget planning is in line with NAP2027, but there is a growing tendency for decision-making to be highly politicised, without being linked to plan-

ning documents. For example, the EU's Recovery and Resilience Mechanism process was led by political parties and there was little public involvement, with NGOs setting up their own discussion processes to address inequality and the impact of Covid-19 on it.

Formal participatory processes are extensive, but NGOs often admit that they do not feel listened to and that their proposals are not taken into account. Formalism in consultation and low public influence increase distrust in governance and its processes.

25

Public information 80

There is a translation of the SDGs into Latvian, which has been done informally by LAPAS, and there have been informal inter-sectoral discussions on the interpretation of some terms. Translations and graphic images of the icons are produced and made available by NGOs.

The Saeima Sustainable Development Commission is chaired by a member elected from the opposition party "Saskaņa" and has 17 members (out of a total of 100). The Commission's tasks are to monitor the implementation of the NDP2027, assess the sustainability and consistency of the country's fiscal policies with the country's strategic development objectives, taking into account economic cycles from a sustainable development perspective, promote inter-sectoral cooperation, and implement other expendi-

ture. The Commission's work is mainly focused on the economy, environment, regional development, digitisation and financial redistribution, with representatives of the LDDK, LCCI, LALRG and the Association of Large Cities. Of the 54 meetings held in 2021 and 2022, only a few dealt with health, sport, media. In the Social Sustainability Cluster, there has only been one session on child welfare, where two NGOs working with people with disabilities were invited. NGOs were not invited to the hearing on the Latvian Voluntary National Report 2022.

The Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments promotes the implementation of the SDGs in local governments, including by organising various capacity-building activities. In 2021, a team of researchers and students from the University of

Latvia created a tool that will allow one to determine the level of sustainable development in each territory and define further development directions. The model selects KPIs (key performance indicators) that correspond to the functionality of local governments. The actions to improve the KPIs are determined by each municipality, depending on the circumstances in its area. By putting them into the mathematical expression of the model, it is possible to calculate the value of the sustainable development indicator for a given area and identify the strengths and weaknesses of the development process.

The university sector is also actively implementing the SDGs. For example, Riga Technical University has selected as priority Goals 3, 6, 7, 9, 11 and 12 and is implementing various actions to implement them. Riga Stradiņš University is implementing almost all of the SDGs and has produced an implementation report for 2020. The University of Latvia has also defined specific actions to achieve each goal. Regional universities - Daugavpils University, Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences and others - are also permanent partners of LAPAS in the implementation of SDG activities. The Riga School of Economics has also joined the intersectoral coalition.

SDGs are becoming an increasingly popular subject in the private sector as well. Financial institutions carry out specific assessments and support sustainability activities, and SDGs are integrated into development strategies, including in public corporations. CSR Latvia has already implemented nine Responsible Business Ambassador programmes, where companies learn sustainability perspectives and implement their own initiative projects.

For two years now, the Sustainable Ideas and New Business Habits Forum “Ilgbūtība” (“Sustainability”) has been bringing together businesses and organisations to discuss and debate ideas on sustainability issues. Sustainable development is also a major theme at the LAMPA Conversation Festival each year.

New groups of society and organisations are becoming interested, e.g., in 2020 and 2021 the Latvian Association of Museums actively worked on the implementation of the SDGs in museums, and the Latvian Association of Librarians is a regular and active partner of LAPAS in various SDG events, promoting their implementation in Latvian libraries.

In the NGO sector, the SDG theme is relatively less popular, with more work being done on individual targets. To raise awareness of the SDGs among organisations and young people at different local levels, LAPAS implemented the “Aim for Development!” campaign in 2021, with 30 activities contextualising the SDGs at the local level. The Latvian Scouts and Guides Central Organisation has produced a video on its involvement in the implementation of Goals 3, 4, 5, 13, 16 and 17. For more on the involvement of NGOs, see the section on the assessment of goals.

LAPAS intends to further promote the SDGs in the NGO sector, including by developing specific methodologies for effective implementation.

The principle “Leave no one behind”⁵⁰

Income inequality and poverty are still high in Latvia compared to the European Union, and regional inequalities are also pronounced. In 2021, NGOs organised discussions on funding to reduce inequalities, concluding that there is no comprehensive national strategy in this area. Some of them - such as single-parent families at high risk of poverty - are not even of interest to decision-makers.

NGOs participating in the SDG assessment identified the following target groups that are not sufficiently addressed: single-parent families, seniors, unemployed youth, vulnerable groups in regions, non-citizens and migrants, digitally excluded people, persons with disabilities, health professionals, low-income people, young families, homeless people, as well as other target-specific groups identified in the goal assessment.

The principle “Respecting planetary boundaries”⁶⁸

Environmental issues are becoming increasingly popular, especially in the economic context. Extensive planning documents have been developed and EU funding channelled, but the NAP2027 evaluation event organised by LAPAS identified a critical lack of indicators at the national level to measure targets 14 and 15. Thus, the impact on aquatic and terrestrial life is not even measured and taken into account in decision-making. As nature cannot represent itself and decision-making is largely consulted with private sector and management organisations, the principles of sustainable development cannot be assumed to be respected.

The regional security and Covid-19 crises are fostering narrow decision-making outside procedures, reducing opportunities for all parties to participate. Thus, in 2022, in the context of a possible energy crisis, the decision to cut thinner diameter trees in forests to enable the production of wood chips, currently in high demand, was rushed through without a qualitative environmental impact assessment.

Involvement of NGOs in planning processes⁷¹

In Latvia, there is a qualitative and comprehensive framework for NGO involvement in planning processes. The new local government framework will increase opportunities for public participation. At the same time, NGOs that do not represent groups with broad resources have low capacity to participate in advocacy. There is short-term support from foreign funding - the ACF, as well as small amounts of funding from the National NGO Fund.

Analysis of the work of the government and the Saeima shows that employers' organisations and organisations representing local authorities are the most widely consulted, so that the interests of only a few parties are represented in decision-making. Organisations representing vulnerable groups or those unable to represent themselves report that consultations are often formal and substantive views are not taken into account.

Involvement of NGOs in SDG implementation 65

NGOs can be involved in SDG implementation processes if they have sufficient resources or if they mobilise temporarily to address a specific issue.

NGOs cover a wide range of activities - they provide services to different social groups, carry out informational and educational activities, and there is a wide range of professional, membership, sports and cultural NGOs. The amount of membership fees and government support, including tax breaks for donors, also determine the level of activism in these areas.

In the self-assessment of NGOs carried out by LAPAS, it can be noted that the surveyed NGOs see themselves as more active than other related parties (state, municipalities, private and academic sector) in the implementation of Goals 5, 10, 13, and least involved in the implementation of Goals 6, 9, 15.

Involvement of NGOs in the development of the Latvian National Voluntary Report 65 28

Unlike the process for the 2018 report, no inter-institutional working group was set up in 2022 to jointly coordinate the development of the report. Nor was there an open process for the inclusion of NGO representatives.

NGOs had access to the draft report during the public consultation process 11/03/2022-29/03/2022, but their ability to respond was significantly affected by Russia's aggressive invasion of Ukraine and NGOs' active involvement in the humanitarian response. Opinions were received from six municipalities and their representative organisation, nine cultural and educational institutions, two trade unions and two financial organisations. The opinions are publicly available on the website of the EU's Resource Coordination Centre. NGOs were not invited to the discussion of the report in the Saeima.

LAPAS coordinated the development of the NGO Side Report on an ongoing basis.

It is positive that in 2022, as in 2018, a representative of NGOs is included in the Latvian delegation and will participate in the presentation of Latvia's report to the UN.

As with NGO involvement in governance in general, the process of the SDG evaluation report has been open in a formal way through public consultation, but joint collaboration at all stages of the process and support for mobilising NGO views, especially from groups with low representative capacity, would have improved the quality of its production.

GOAL 1

“No poverty” 56



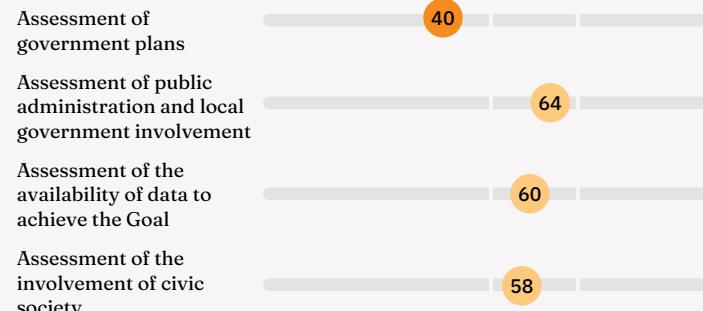
NUMBER OF ORGANISATIONS THAT HAVE PROVIDED AN ASSESSMENT –

16

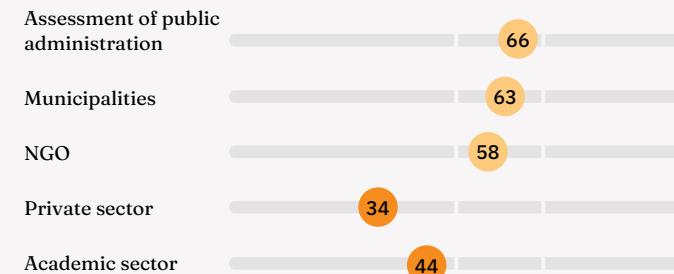
SOCIAL GROUPS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN SUFFICIENTLY INVOLVED IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOAL:

single-parent families, seniors, groups at risk of poverty, unemployed youth, vulnerable groups in regions, non-citizens and migrants, people with low digital skills, people with disabilities, people with low incomes, including those who do not receive state support because they do not qualify for it, families with low incomes, homeless people

ASSESSMENT OF GOAL ACHIEVEMENT



ASSESSMENT OF SECTOR INVOLVEMENT



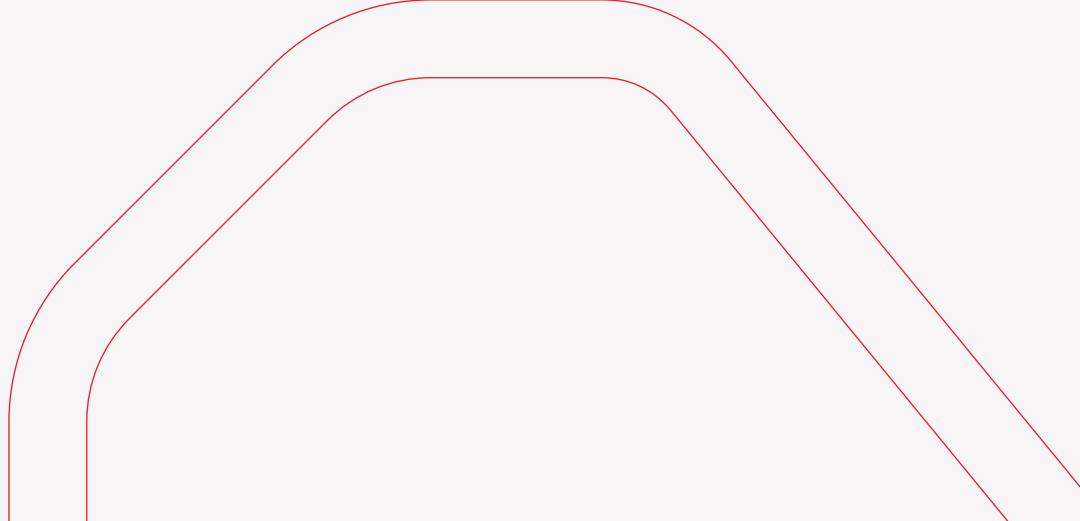
29

There is no coordinated and targeted action to achieve the goal. Some policy documents exist, but their implementation has not been effective, as inequality and poverty remain high in Latvia. NGOs are active in poverty reduction, but have limited resources because the target groups themselves cannot contribute financially to solving their problems. The private and academic sectors have a low level of interest in tackling social problems.



PROPOSALS BY NGOs:

- develop a systemic approach to poverty reduction, involving NGOs that already work with different target groups on a daily basis;
- support NGOs to improve the quality of their work, including in the provision of social services;



- evaluate and review existing poverty reduction programmes, supporting the development of social innovations, in particular cross-sectorally at a local level, effectively reaching different target groups with their specific needs;
- highlight the low pay of certain professions, such as doctors, teachers and social workers, who also perform important social functions;
- increase private sector involvement in addressing social challenges by understanding how they affect the long-term growth of the country's overall economy;
- promote fair taxation by explaining how the informal economy directly affects the opportunities for support for different social groups;
- openly discuss migration issues, finding effective ways to integrate migrants and improve their quality of life;
- examine the possibility of diversifying taxation in rural areas to boost entrepreneurship;
- strengthen NGOs that can represent the interests of different social groups, ensuring a diversity of views in decision-making processes;
- continue to support Covid-19 and other crisis-affected groups in particular.

30



PROPOSALS BY YOUTH:

- reduce social and regional inequalities, in particular income disparities in rural areas.



GOAL 2 “Zero hunger” 54



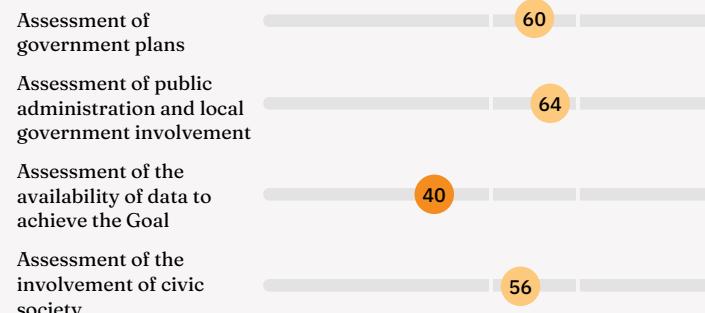
NUMBER OF ORGANISATIONS THAT HAVE PROVIDED AN ASSESSMENT –

9

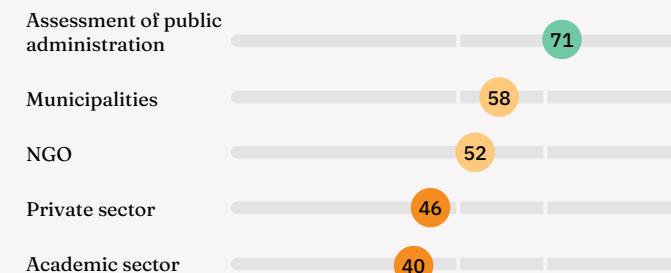
SOCIAL GROUPS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN SUFFICIENTLY INVOLVED IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOAL:

lonely and elderly people living below the minimum subsistence level, low-income people, people with chronic diseases who spend a lot of money on treatment

ASSESSMENT OF GOAL ACHIEVEMENT



ASSESSMENT OF SECTOR INVOLVEMENT



31

The Russian aggression in Ukraine, which will have negative consequences for food security worldwide, has a major impact on achieving this goal. The challenge is to combine agriculture - a business for profit - and access to food for low-income groups in a single goal. Latvia's policies have so far focused on agricultural development, but there are low-income groups for whom food access is also a challenge. Coordination in the field is narrowly sectoral and producer-based, with little involvement of NGOs from other sectors.



PROPOSALS BY NGOs:

- draw up a development plan for organic farming, as also called for by the European Commission;
- develop support instruments, incentives and financial capacity for municipal green food procurement to encourage the widest possible inclusion of local growers and producers in municipal menus;
- encourage local produce becoming more accessible to people with low incomes;
- continue to develop new cooperation and local co-operations, increasing the competitiveness of local products.

GOAL 3

“Good health and well-being”

56



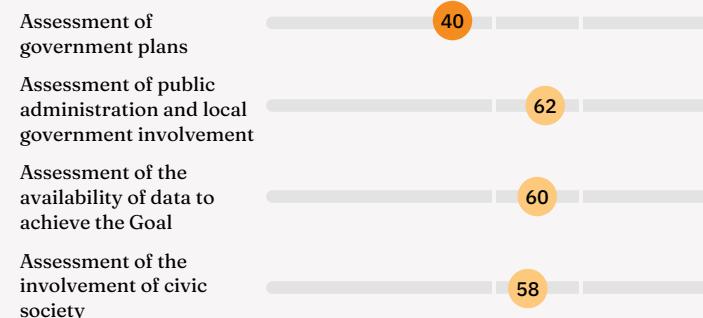
NUMBER OF ORGANISATIONS THAT HAVE PROVIDED AN ASSESSMENT –

14

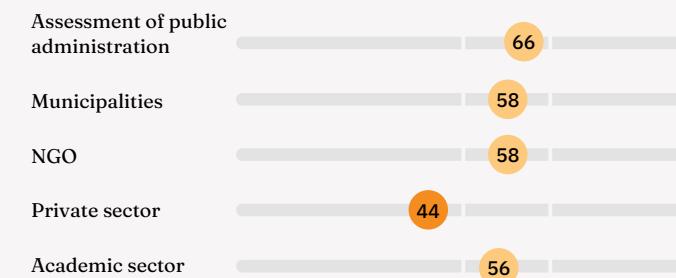
SOCIAL GROUPS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN SUFFICIENTLY INVOLVED IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOAL:

children and young people, seriously ill people who need expensive treatment, including outside Latvia, or medicines that are not available on the Latvian market

ASSESSMENT OF GOAL ACHIEVEMENT



ASSESSMENT OF SECTOR INVOLVEMENT



32

The implementation of the goal is fragmented. A very large part of public health care is funded by people themselves or through charity campaigns to raise funds for treatment. NGOs advocating for patients' rights do not feel involved in decision-making processes. Remuneration of health workers has not been addressed for a long time and there is a lack of information on the return on investment in health. Existing policy frameworks have little relevance to understanding SDG 3.



PROPOSALS BY NGOs:

- perform policy coordination, defining the responsibilities of the parties and involving NGOs in planning processes;
- also focus on prevention, reducing the risk of disease;
- review the system of reimbursable medicines and services;

- develop digital solutions for access to healthcare;
- increase access to health services in the regions, in particular access to prescription medicines for people with reduced mobility, doctors' services and medical supplies.



PROPOSALS BY YOUTH:

- invest in reducing addictions, including phone addiction, alcohol use and smoking among young people;
- monitor and reduce mobbing in educational establishments;
- provide young people with knowledge about mental health problems (such as depression, anxiety, fear and shame about seeking help) and access to help;
- set up a youth health monitoring system;
- promote local access to a range of health professionals, such as psychologists and nutritionists;
- promote health education based on reliable evidence and research, including on healthy lifestyles and diets;
- promote the use of publicly funded screening and other routine health checks;
- providing free healthy school lunches;
- promote education and awareness-raising for parents and professionals on youth health issues;
- create a safe environment, protecting young people from physical and mental harm and encouraging them to be active and adopt healthy lifestyles.

GOAL 4

“Quality education” 66



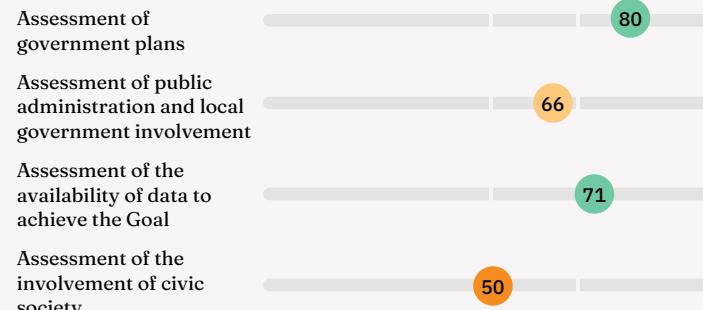
NUMBER OF ORGANISATIONS THAT HAVE PROVIDED AN ASSESSMENT –

14

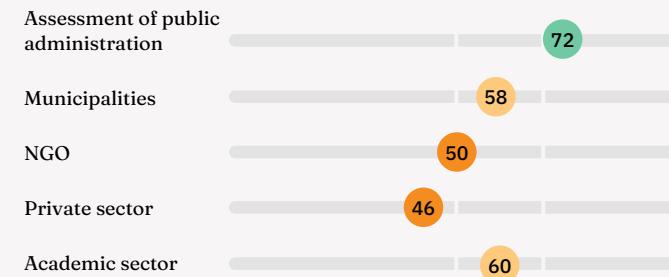
SOCIAL GROUPS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN SUFFICIENTLY INVOLVED IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOAL:

minority youth and educational institutions, children and young people, parents, students

ASSESSMENT OF GOAL ACHIEVEMENT



ASSESSMENT OF SECTOR INVOLVEMENT



The actions of the public administration and policy planning documents are positively assessed as contributing to the achievement of the target, giving hope for the possibility of quality reforms, although it is underlined that they are slow. Although some NGOs (e.g., LIZDA) are very publicly visible, it is not clear on what criteria the responsible institutions select cooperation partners.



PROPOSALS BY NGOS:

- make higher education more accessible;
- reform teacher training programmes in higher education;
- develop a system to measure the quality of education and make this assessment publicly available on an ongoing basis;
- increase local authorities' awareness of and leadership in ensuring the quality of education;

- coordinate the involvement of all parties, including the private sector, defining responsibilities and ensuring that education goals are put into practice;
- provide more opportunities for the representation of students, young people and parents, as the current focus of participation is predominantly on the interests of educators and local authorities;
- provide resources to support the capacity of NGOs representing different groups in the education process;
- develop cooperation between educational institutions and NGOs;
- promote digital literacy, including support in using everyday devices and services;
- support employers in improving the professional skills of their staff;
- expand access to knowledge on current trends in terms of practical implementation and possible actions, e.g., green economy, climate change mitigation measures;
- promote access to education as close to home as possible (or providing quality and accessible logistics) for primary school children, including through a long-term vision on the closure of small rural schools;
- ensure access to pre-school for all and quality early childhood care;
- monitor inclusive education, including the inclusion of children with disabilities and returnee/migrant children in the education system, including access to the environment and professionals;
- raise the profile of vocational education, justifying the massive investment in it;
- promote access to technology in schools and appropriate investment;
- improve the quality of and access to lifelong adult learning, including work-based learning;
- reduce age discrimination in access to education;
- include global citizenship education indicators and policy actions in education strategies.



PROPOSALS BY YOUTH:

- promote young people's civic and political participation, implementing quality and diverse content in all curricula and extra-curricular activities;
- ensure equal access to formal education, inter alia, through distance learning, including equal access to technical solutions, especially for low-income families;
- promote access to diverse, evidence-based information and debate in educational institutions for responsible individual decision-making, in particular on contemporary forms of family, sexuality;
- develop non-formal education in youth work, in particular its accessibility in the regions;
- increase access to the teaching of different languages in schools;
- introduce a modular system, allowing young people to learn what they need and choose high-quality, modern teachers;
- modernise the school environment, introducing modern traditions and incorporating topical issues - critical thinking, media literacy, national defence, etc;
- develop international lessons with guest speakers and international projects;
- foster positive attitudes to learning at all ages;
- raise the prestige and pay of the teaching profession;
- in higher education and education in general, focus more on preparing young people for the labour market in practice;
- develop digital skills, including motivational courses for families and seniors to learn digital innovations as part of lifelong learning;
- raise the prestige of regional universities;
- educate young people on national cultural values;
- organise events for young people in the context of formal education - meetings with young musicians, influencers.

GOAL 5

“Gender equality”

58

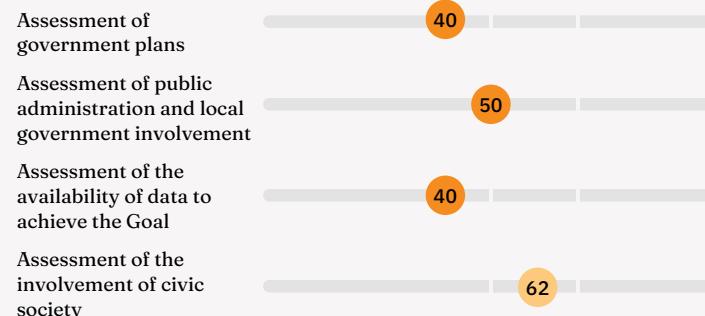

NUMBER OF ORGANISATIONS THAT HAVE PROVIDED AN ASSESSMENT –

12

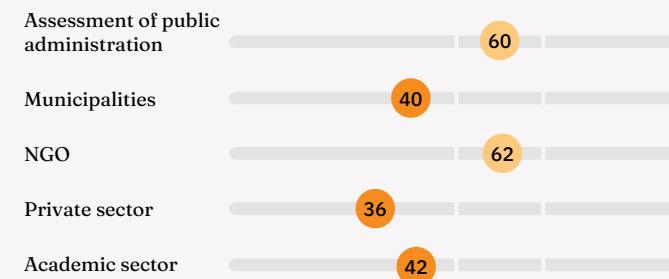
SOCIAL GROUPS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN SUFFICIENTLY INVOLVED IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOAL:

women, including victims of violence, non-binary people and transgender people

ASSESSMENT OF GOAL ACHIEVEMENT



ASSESSMENT OF SECTOR INVOLVEMENT



36

Although gender equality indicators in Latvia are positive from a global perspective, NGOs draw attention to the lack of targeted policies and the disinterest of state and local governments in equality issues. This is the goal where NGOs rate the role of civil society the highest. The long-running and heated public debate on violence, the delay in ratifying the Istanbul Convention, show that a strategic approach and immediate action are urgently needed in the field of gender equality.

PROPOSALS BY NGOs:

- continue violence prevention and public education, especially in the regions;
- raise awareness of gender equality among state and local authorities and the wider public;
- involve competent NGOs in policy processes;
- address women's health equality.



PROPOSALS BY YOUTH:

- build confidence in the police's ability to prevent violence by ensuring transparency in policing and the flow of information;
- create more media and education campaigns, including publicly funded ones, on reporting and recognising violence (physical, sexual, emotional, economic, etc.), including real life stories, while preserving anonymity;
- eliminate media content that includes stereotypical advertising and articles about women as trophies or objects;
- normalise addressing for psychological help and counselling after experiencing domestic and gender-based violence;
- organise training for teachers to develop their ability to recognise the signs of domestic violence and to educate pupils about what constitutes violence, as well as to stress the importance of teaching pupils the principles of ethics and gender equality;
- invest in places of refuge, including highlighting the shortage and leveraging public finance to create new places of refuge, including those that specifically accommodate women;
- create a system where people willingly take in victims of violence, including children;
- develop a national planning document on the elimination of domestic and gender-based violence that coordinates targeted, practical action;
- ratify the Istanbul Convention and highlight the issue of violence eradication as a policy priority, promote inter-institutional cooperation to tackle the problem;
- reduce gender roles, starting with small steps in families, kindergartens and schools, such as not separating girls' and boys' toys, and stopping cycles of intergenerational trauma;
- engage in multilateral action, promote international exchanges of experience, highlight good examples of other countries' efforts to eradicate violence.

GOAL 6

“Clean water and sanitation”

54



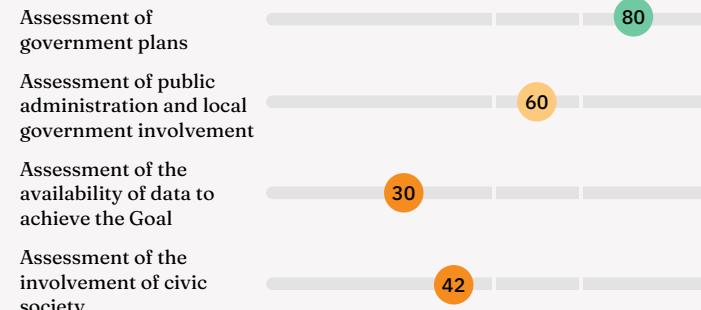
NUMBER OF ORGANISATIONS THAT HAVE PROVIDED AN ASSESSMENT –

8

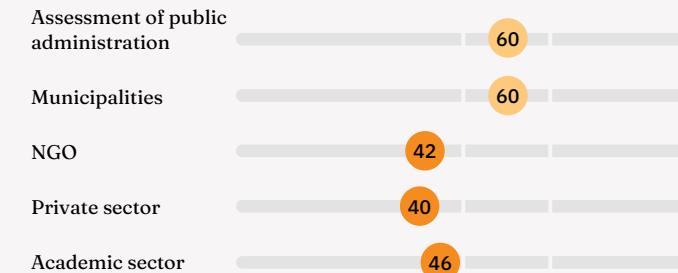
SOCIAL GROUPS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN SUFFICIENTLY INVOLVED IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOAL:

consumer NGOs, rural residents, residents of populated areas where systems have not been upgraded or cleaned up, businesses and institutions whose activities pollute water resources

ASSESSMENT OF GOAL ACHIEVEMENT



ASSESSMENT OF SECTOR INVOLVEMENT



38

In assessing the implementation of this goal, there was a striking volume of NGO reactions to the lack of information on the implementation of this goal. Theoretically, the volume of planning documents suggests that national and local governments are concerned about water, but the lack of real indicators and assessments makes it impossible to draw positive conclusions about the impact of actions on climate change mitigation. Young people in particular note that water levels are rising, threatening biodiversity, water pollution from wasteful consumption and non-separation of waste.

PROPOSALS BY NGOs:

- publish information and impact assessments on access to clean water, especially in the regions;
- ensure access to drinking water in municipalities, institutions and workplaces.

PROPOSALS BY YOUTH:

- stop washing cars in public water bodies;
- undertake purification of water bodies;
- take action to reduce water pollution.

GOAL 7

“Affordable and clean energy”

56



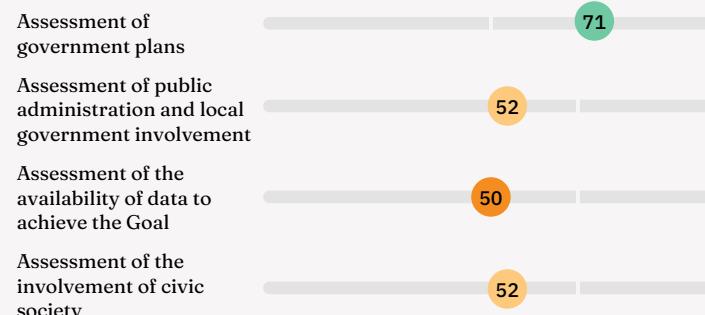
NUMBER OF ORGANISATIONS THAT HAVE PROVIDED AN ASSESSMENT –

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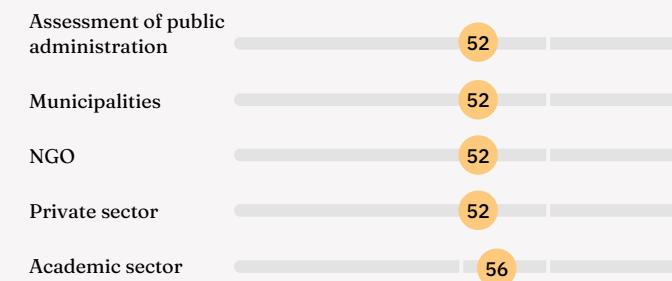
SOCIAL GROUPS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN SUFFICIENTLY INVOLVED IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOAL:

citizens and households, small and micro enterprises

ASSESSMENT OF GOAL ACHIEVEMENT



ASSESSMENT OF SECTOR INVOLVEMENT



Although energy is widely discussed, NGOs acknowledge that there is a lack of comprehensible information, as well as concerns about the lack of impartiality of the administration and the dominance of economic interests in the development of strategies. Access to energy efficient solutions for citizens and households, micro and small enterprises is not sufficiently supported, especially if they do not qualify for some investment and support programmes. There is therefore a concern that sensitive groups pay more.

 PROPOSALS BY NGOs:

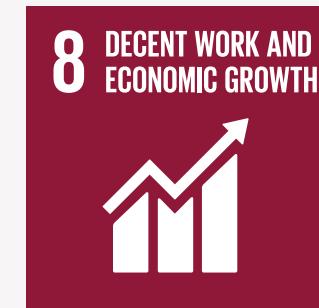
- develop the potential of energy communities, including the legal framework, by adopting good practices from other countries;
- support energy efficiency measures for small and micro enterprises;
- encourage the use of renewable energy resources;
- reduce the energy efficiency gap between institutional buildings, where expensive solutions are available, and apartment buildings, where heat losses are high and buildings are expensive to run.

**PROPOSALS BY YOUTH:**

- build energy communities, an energy circular economy, and diversify access to energy;
- transform energy production by replacing all fossil fuels with renewables, initially through a higher tax on fossil energy;
- fund research into renewable energy and encouraging private investment in this field;
- expand ALTUM's energy programmes;
- develop producing energy from waste;
- install solar-powered charging stations for smart devices in parks and shops;
- undertake an energy loss assessment for insulated and uninsulated buildings.

GOAL 8

“Decent work and economic growth” 66



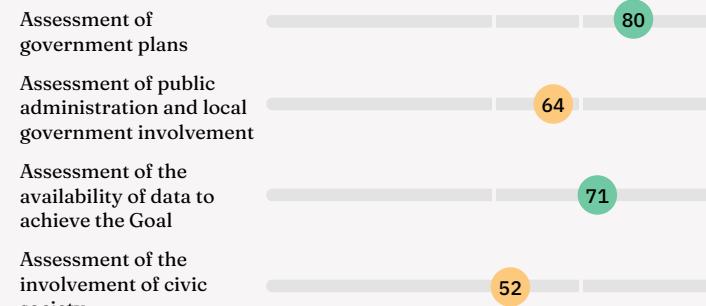
NUMBER OF ORGANISATIONS THAT HAVE PROVIDED AN ASSESSMENT –

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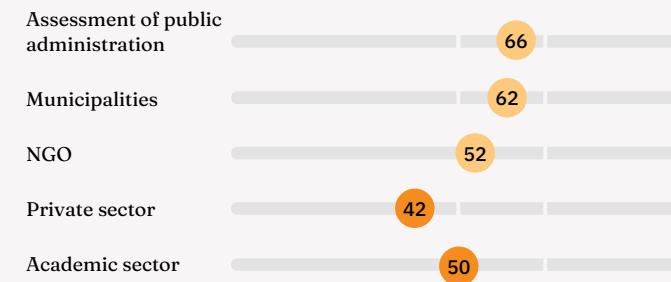
SOCIAL GROUPS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN SUFFICIENTLY INVOLVED IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOAL:

young people, the unemployed, pre-retirement and retirement age groups, people living in poverty

ASSESSMENT OF GOAL ACHIEVEMENT



ASSESSMENT OF SECTOR INVOLVEMENT



41

Various planning documents exist for the implementation of the target, and regular progress measurements are carried out, but respondents stress that there is a lack of information at a regional level, reflecting the real situation more accurately. Interestingly, the NGOs see low private sector involvement in decent work, which is also reflected in the high and stagnating income inequality in the EU context. NGOs themselves are rarely perceived as a significant employer, even though statistics show that the sector employs around 20 000 people. Employment is a particularly topical issue for young people.



PROPOSALS BY NGOs:

- make it possible for employers to send their employees for lifelong learning or professional development (including digitisation) training, receiving compensation for the days the employee is in training;
- monitor and address illegal employment and slavery issues;
- promote occupational safety and its measurement, including by gender and migration status.



PROPOSALS BY YOUTH:

- promote employability and access to education for young people, giving them the opportunity to upgrade their skills in an existing trade or to acquire a new qualification;
- reduce barriers to job-seeking, eliminating labour market discrimination (e.g., age, language skills, etc.);
- increase employment opportunities in summer;
- cover travel costs to work and make local public transport more responsive to job mobility;
- encourage and motivate employers to create jobs for young people, including through tax incentives or projects, by exposing them to different careers and giving them the first experience;
- extend vocational courses to include practical experience in general education;
- reduce the informal economy, including youth employment;
- expand career education opportunities;
- raise young people's self-confidence to compete in the labour market;
- provide more workplaces for students;
- facilitate the process for company start-ups.

GOAL 9

“Industry, innovation and infrastructure”

68



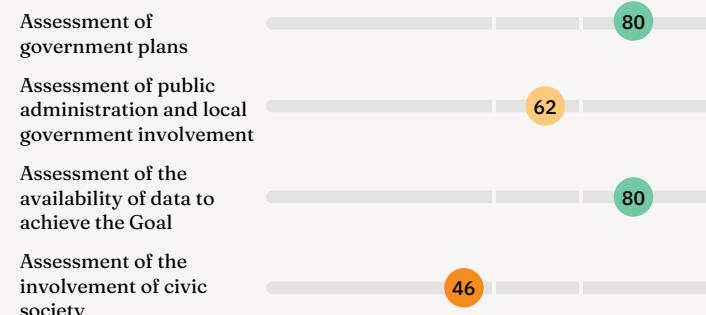
NUMBER OF ORGANISATIONS THAT HAVE PROVIDED AN ASSESSMENT –

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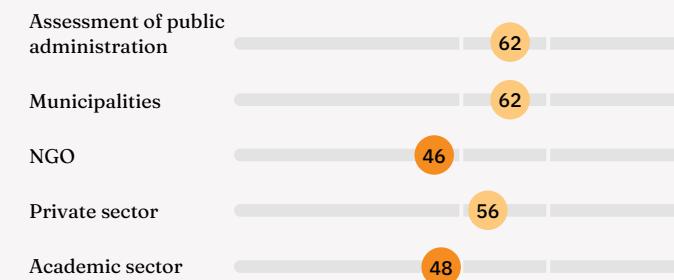
SOCIAL GROUPS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN SUFFICIENTLY INVOLVED IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOAL:

regions, especially remote and rural areas, citizens and young people, people with disabilities

ASSESSMENT OF GOAL ACHIEVEMENT



ASSESSMENT OF SECTOR INVOLVEMENT



43

There are many different plans, measurements and assessments for implementing the target. However, NGOs point out that this development goal typically focuses on the urban environment only, ignoring the need for balanced development throughout the territory. Young people are particularly concerned about the accessibility and relevance of infrastructure to the needs of a diverse population and the link with climate change. It is significant that NGOs see themselves as marginal to achieving this goal, although neighbourhood community and development associations are gradually developing, and NGOs are initiators of various social innovations that are no less important from the perspective of balanced economic development.



PROPOSALS BY NGOs:

- develop innovation processes in the regions, as current mechanisms are very limited;
- balance innovation and infrastructure between urban and rural areas so as not to adversely affect SDG 2 and motivate people to continue farming, including organic farming and small farms;
- to consider the impact of rural-urban migration in infrastructure planning and its cumulative impact on the balanced development of the country;

- make measurements in the production perspective - the value of production as a proportion of the gross national product and gross domestic product;
- support micro, small and medium-sized enterprises by increasing their productivity and value added, and by appropriate measures such as value added per employee in small and medium-sized enterprises (hereinafter - SMEs), or the number/proportion of jobs in high value-added SMEs;
- ensure the availability of development instruments for SMEs, in particular for research and development.



PROPOSALS BY YOUTH:

- improve public transport provision;
- develop cycling infrastructure, including access to and the provision of bicycles, e.g., for public administration staff;
- create an environment and infrastructure facilities that meet the needs of young people;
- promote micro-mobility in cities by creating the right infrastructure;
- improve sports, recreation and medical infrastructure;
- promote the culture of small and urban gardens;
- green and sustainable construction, recycling of recycled materials in road construction;
- make electric scooters more accessible in the regions;
- increase access to public infrastructure - parks, stadiums, educational and cultural facilities;
- make use of the diversity of the environment for development; for example, by creating a natural cinema theatre;
- tackle the problem of derelict buildings and unsafe environmental sites.

GOAL 10

“Reduced inequalities” 56



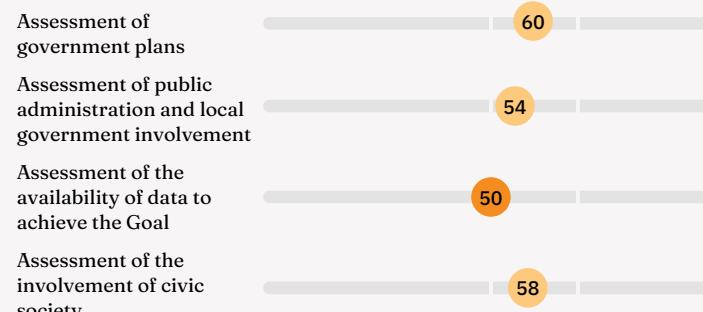
NUMBER OF ORGANISATIONS THAT HAVE PROVIDED AN ASSESSMENT –

11

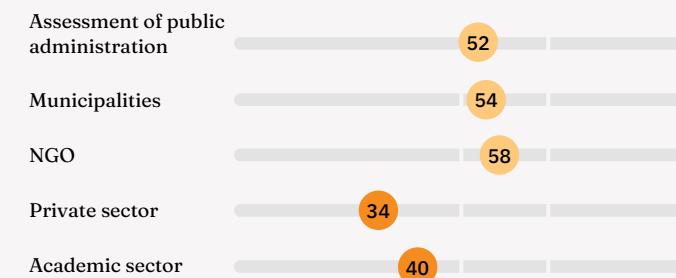
SOCIAL GROUPS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN SUFFICIENTLY INVOLVED IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOAL:

young people, the unemployed, pre-retirement and retirement age groups, people living in remote regions

ASSESSMENT OF GOAL ACHIEVEMENT



ASSESSMENT OF SECTOR INVOLVEMENT



45

As with the closely related SDG 1, NGOs do not feel that the state cares about reducing inequalities. Regional inequalities are particularly pronounced, but other inequalities are also relevant, such as age, opportunity and access to services. Financial instruments lack targeted cohesion strategies and private sector involvement is low.



PROPOSALS BY NGOs:

- involve NGOs representing different groups in society in development planning;
- pay particular attention to regional inequalities, focusing investment in rural areas on reducing disparities;
- reduce productivity and income inequalities between Riga and more distant regions;

- develop a rural development strategy;
- assess the impact of sectoral policies on rural space;
- target cohesion funding to areas with lower capacity, unique challenges;
- look at inequalities not only in terms of income, but also access to services, age structures, access to finance and more.



PROPOSALS BY YOUTH:

- reduce regional and social inequality;
- ensure the equal treatment of all groups in society, including people of different nationalities;
- reduce senior isolation.

GOAL 11

“Sustainable cities and communities” 60



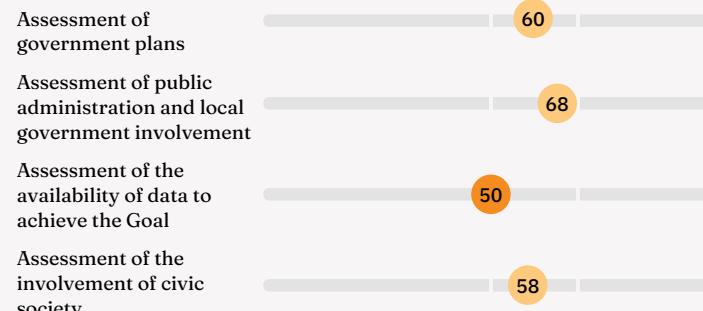
NUMBER OF ORGANISATIONS THAT HAVE PROVIDED AN ASSESSMENT –

11

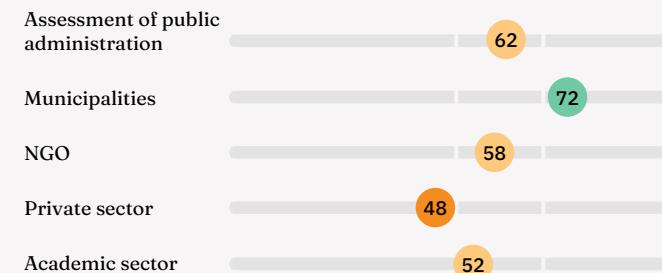
SOCIAL GROUPS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN SUFFICIENTLY INVOLVED IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOAL:

people living in rural areas, people's organisations, low-income urban residents

ASSESSMENT OF GOAL ACHIEVEMENT



ASSESSMENT OF SECTOR INVOLVEMENT



46

The development of sustainable cities and communities in Latvia is at an early stage. NGOs are positive about the contribution of local authorities to this goal. At the same time, concerns are expressed about the impact of this goal on the considerable challenges for rural development. Community NGOs are gradually emerging and taking responsibility for involving citizens in development processes, in particular in solving various specific local problems.



PROPOSALS BY NGOS:

- further develop the application of services to community needs, such as the existing activity in the Transport Guidelines - transport on demand and free travel in areas with low population density;
- develop quality residential fund in regions;
- create a safe and inclusive environment in cities;

- make more efficient use of municipal properties;
- improve air quality in cities;
- support the development of community associations.



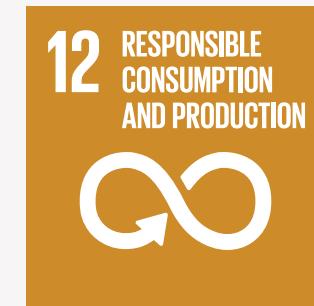
PROPOSALS BY YOUTH:

- create events for young people to learn about cultural heritage through the urban environment;
- develop cities and their service baskets locally, not just in neighbouring big cities;
- keep young people informed about what's happening in the city in an accessible and up-to-date way;
- create green and blue zones in cities;
- improve air quality in cities;
- mobilise local communities, create team-building events;
- invest in young people, creating a sense of belonging and loyalty to the local community and Latvia;
- set up national exchange programmes for young people;
- support NGOs in developing cultural facilities and revitalising degraded areas;
- promote the availability of waste sorting facilities and educate the public on mechanisms to reduce land-based pollution through awareness-raising campaigns on composting, practical explanations for sorting, and by clearly demonstrating the positive results of sorting (e.g., by creating sorting bins from sorted materials).

GOAL 12

“Responsible consumption and production”

60



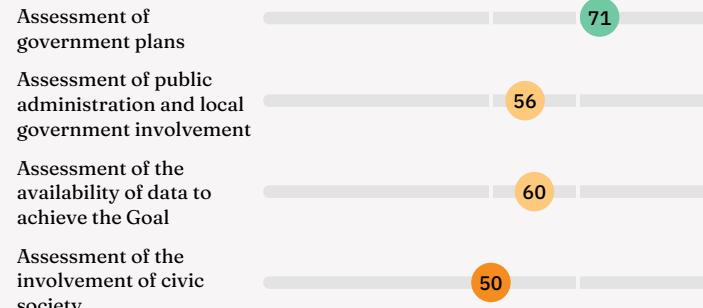
NUMBER OF ORGANISATIONS THAT HAVE PROVIDED AN ASSESSMENT –

9

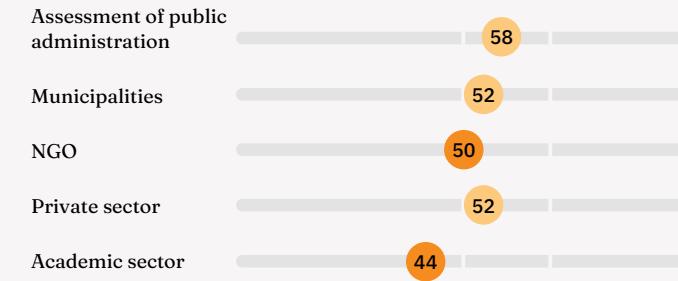
SOCIAL GROUPS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN SUFFICIENTLY INVOLVED IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOAL:

NGOs that do not represent economic interests

ASSESSMENT OF GOAL ACHIEVEMENT



ASSESSMENT OF SECTOR INVOLVEMENT



48

The country is implementing various strategies to implement the target, but NGOs have a relatively low opinion of their own involvement, including in educating the public about changing their habits. This is typically seen as the remit of environmental organisations, but any NGO can also promote sustainable consumption through its activities.

**PROPOSALS BY NGOs:**

- examine different subsidies and their relevance to local needs;
- support small entrepreneurs who responsibly develop their neighbourhoods;
- introduce strict sustainability rules for public procurement at all levels;
- create sustainable tourism strategy;
- educating society about sustainable consumption;
- advance the use of recyclable packing.



PROPOSALS BY YOUTH:

- promote plant-based diets and support caterers offering them, as well as informing the public about the consumer and environmental benefits of reducing meat consumption in the diet;
- use recyclable materials in production;
- use competition and contest formats to promote green actions such as zero waste lifestyles, purchase of second hand clothes, reusable bags in shops and green innovation;
- expand the prohibition of plastic;
- promote direct shopping in communities and the consumption of local products;
- introduce a circular economy of technology.

GOAL 13

“Climate action” 62



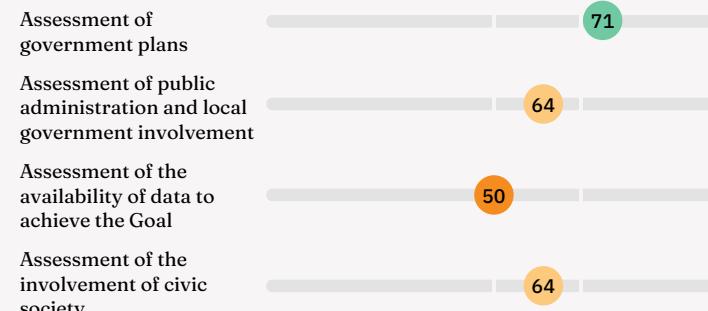
NUMBER OF ORGANISATIONS THAT HAVE PROVIDED AN ASSESSMENT –

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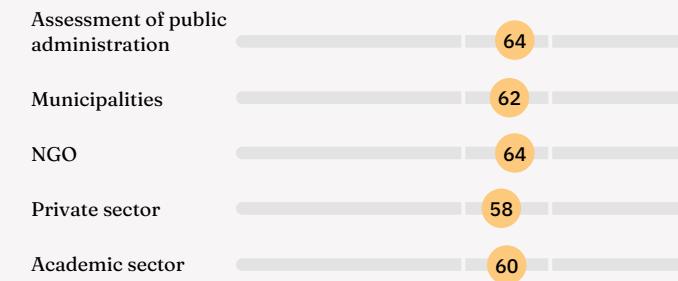
SOCIAL GROUPS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN SUFFICIENTLY INVOLVED IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOAL:

NGOs representing the population

ASSESSMENT OF GOAL ACHIEVEMENT



ASSESSMENT OF SECTOR INVOLVEMENT



50

The implementation of the target has received a lot of attention at the EU level, which also encourages a more effective approach at the national level. NGOs see themselves as active actors in the climate field, while the involvement of the private sector and constant public awareness, especially in the social and justice dimension, are equally important.



PROPOSALS BY NGOs:

- increase the availability of information on specific climate change indicators;
- raise awareness of private sector climate initiatives.



PROPOSALS BY YOUTH:

- encourage a shift towards greener vehicles, initially by taxing each new fuel-consuming car more, and by investing in the development and accessibility of a strategic, people-friendly public transport system;
- audit and prosecute companies and countries that commit greenwashing, with appropriate sanctions;
- raise awareness about the impact of the climate and waste crisis on everyone's lives now, focusing on children and young people, who will continue to face the effects of the crisis more and more frequently throughout their lives;

- see the climate crisis as a cross-cutting issue that cuts across many other policy areas, with social justice at its heart and solutions accessible to the whole of society, with a particular focus on financially and socially vulnerable groups;
- make climate and environmental education accessible to the public and implemented in both formal and non-formal education;
- support youth organisations at the national and local level to develop new initiatives to tackle the climate crisis at the local and national level;
- involve young people in the development and implementation of climate and environmental policies at the local, national and EU level;
- reduce atmosphere pollution;
- develop network of eco-schools.

GOAL 14

“Life below water” 60



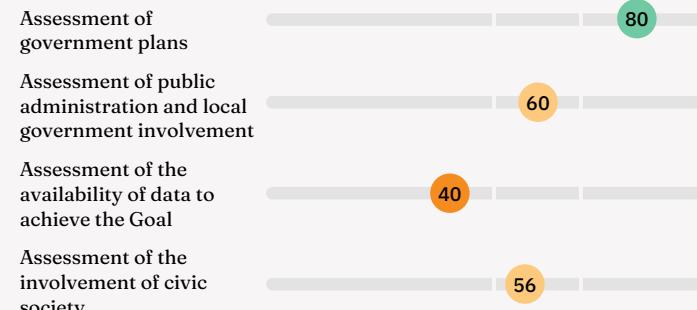
NUMBER OF ORGANISATIONS THAT HAVE PROVIDED AN ASSESSMENT –

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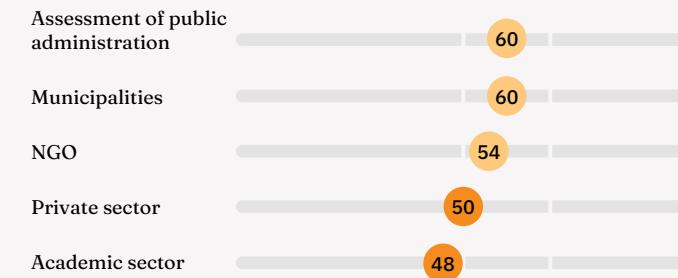
SOCIAL GROUPS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN SUFFICIENTLY INVOLVED IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOAL:

not identified, as there is very little information on the implementation of the target

ASSESSMENT OF GOAL ACHIEVEMENT



ASSESSMENT OF SECTOR INVOLVEMENT



52

There are different strategies to implement the goal. NGOs are carrying out various actions to protect the Baltic Sea and clean rivers, but NGOs are very concerned about the availability of real information about the state of the Baltic Sea, its waters and life in the water.



PROPOSALS BY NGOs:

- reduce the release of medical waste into water;
- publish information on the impact of water pollution, including the Baltic Sea, on life under water;
- assess areas and populations affected by flooding and erosion, and develop plans to mitigate these impacts;
- measure inputs of nitrogen/phosphorus compounds to surface freshwater bodies (tonnes/year);

- monitor the amount of plastic waste at sea;
- identify and monitor the proportion of marine bathing sites in good condition and the number of Blue Flag eco-certificates awarded to marine bathing sites;
- implement marine spatial planning based on an ecosystem approach;
- monitor marine protected areas and draw up nature conservation plans or individual rules for their protection and use;
- measure changes in spawning stock biomass;
- monitor catches in key fishing grounds.



PROPOSALS BY YOUTH:

- reduce water pollution.

GOAL 15

“Life on land” 46



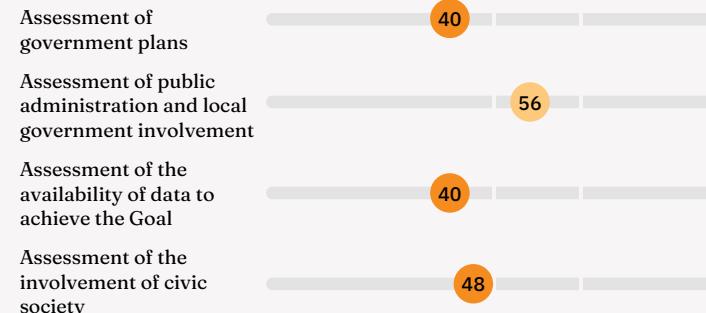
NUMBER OF ORGANISATIONS THAT HAVE PROVIDED AN ASSESSMENT –

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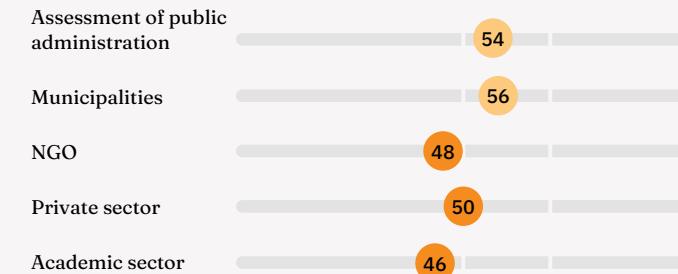
SOCIAL GROUPS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN SUFFICIENTLY INVOLVED IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOAL:

NGOs that do not work in the field of environmental protection but whose target groups are indirectly affected by environmental issues

ASSESSMENT OF GOAL ACHIEVEMENT



ASSESSMENT OF SECTOR INVOLVEMENT



53

Achievement of this goal is critical because there are no national strategies, environmental impacts are not sufficiently assessed qualitatively, and many important indicators related to the sector are not included in national measurement systems. In the public sphere, environmental protection is contrasted against economic development, and environmental NGOs are scorned. Public administration authorities, influenced by political and economic interests, have little capacity to mediate in the search for a consensus among all parties.



PROPOSALS BY NGOS:

- develop open participatory processes for gathering the views of different stakeholders and making them publicly available;
- provide truthful information on the effects of agricultural chemicals;
- provide comprehensive and truthful information on forests;
- measure the presence and impact of fires in forests, swamps and farmland;
- develop early warning systems for pests and diseases;

- measure total forest cover and the distribution of forests by age group;
- monitor the share of specially protected areas in the national territory and by ecosystem type;
- determine the area of forest (ha) available for economic activity, taking into account both the potential for the afforestation of degraded areas and the projected intensity of deforestation and the need to remove areas from economic activity for biodiversity conservation;
- measure the proportion of people who regularly recreate in forests (%) - a social indicator for sustainable forest management;
- measure the proportion of habitats of EU importance that are in a favourable conservation status - for forest habitats this serves as an environmental indicator for sustainable forest management, but also covers other ecosystems;
- measure the proportion of species of EU importance that are in favourable conservation status - covering Annex II, IV and V of the Habitats Directive and all naturally occurring bird species in the wild;
- monitor the proportion of specially protected areas for which nature management plans have been drawn up and implementation started;
- list the proportion of species and habitats of EU importance with conservation targets (%);
- measure the number of invasive species targeted by control measures;
- monitor per capita consumption emissions (carbon footprint);
- reduce the amount of pesticides used in agriculture.



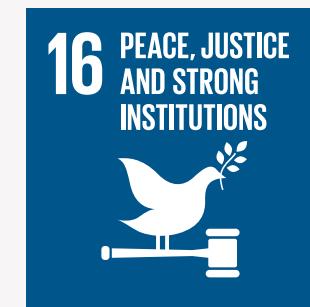
PROPOSALS BY YOUTH:

- respect animal rights and tighten animal protection rules;
- eradicate poaching.

GOAL 16

“Peace, justice and strong institutions”

58



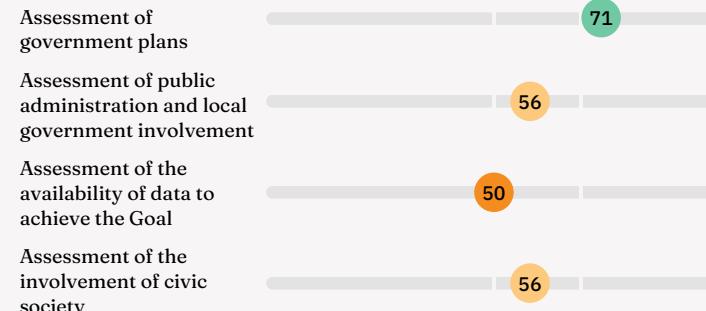
NUMBER OF ORGANISATIONS THAT HAVE PROVIDED AN ASSESSMENT –

13

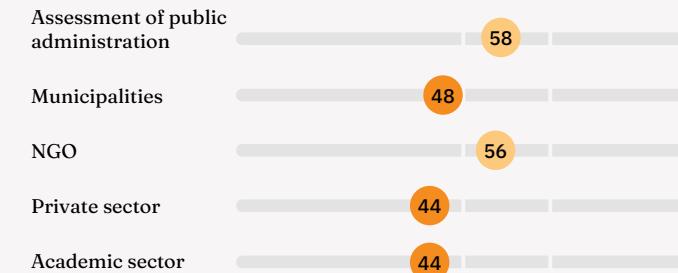
SOCIAL GROUPS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN SUFFICIENTLY INVOLVED IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOAL:

different social groups without the resources to represent themselves

ASSESSMENT OF GOAL ACHIEVEMENT



ASSESSMENT OF SECTOR INVOLVEMENT



55

The impact of Russia's aggression in Ukraine on this goal is crucial for the overall development process. While there is a broad legal framework for public participation in governance contexts, and innovative processes are being implemented, the challenge is to measure and design policies that genuinely engage different groups in society. Special attention should be paid to youth engagement.

**PROPOSALS BY NGOs:**

- increase overall public participation in governance and its real impact on policy processes;
- promote internal security, including public education and involvement in resilience building and civil protection;
- continue the positive progress on public participation and good governance at the local and regional level, and the use of new methods in public administration;
- promote volunteering and more active community involvement;

- support the involvement of youth and other organisations in building national and community security and peace;
- implement the public participation mechanisms provided for in the new Local Government Law;
- measure public attitudes towards different groups in society to measure the level of integration in society;
- reduce corruption;
- increase the cohesion and mutual cooperation of the NGO sector for common goals;
- increase funding for interest advocacy NGOs, as well as for capacity-building for groups that are weakly represented;
- increase the quality and regularity of monitoring of public participation in policy planning and implementation at the national and local level, and in parliamentary processes;
- develop digital participation tools, both in terms of legislation and financial support.



PROPOSALS BY YOUTH:

- implement more transnational projects and cooperation for young people on democracy;
- empower citizens (especially young people) to be more involved in decision-making;
- involve young people directly in the electoral process;
- create a more inclusive society;
- reduce digital inequality, misinformation and censorship, develop digital codes of conduct and cybersecurity;
- train young people on how to prevent online fraud;
- reduce ultranationalism and racism;
- make it easier for small regional organisations to apply for EU funding;
- involve young people in local decision-making;

- create the framework conditions for a civically active youth society by strengthening youth NGOs and a culture of participation and ownership among children and young people;
- ensure that young people are educated and involved in a timely manner in various forms of participation - volunteering, youth organisations, youth centres, national and local politics and decision-making processes (participatory budgeting, elections, public consultations, etc.);
- encourage national and local government support, both through adequate funding and easing administrative burdens, and by providing the right environment and infrastructure specifically for youth organisations;
- involve youth NGOs and NGOs working with young people in the effective implementation and integration of diverse integration measures;
- promote the prestige, recognition and contribution of volunteering;
- promote the development of youth work in Latvia by ensuring a common approach, access to funding, fostering inter-sectoral cooperation in the youth field and long-term development-orientated youth policy implementation;
- support the involvement of NGOs in international networks and platforms;
- to support the initiative to amend the “Law on Elections to the City Council and Regional Council of the Republic” on granting the right to vote in elections to the councils of republican cities and regions from the age of 16.

Youth proposals on hybrid warfare and human rights:

- implement a coherent and comprehensive EU approach to address hybrid threats and improve coordination and cooperation between Member States;
- raise awareness of information manipulation and interference through targeted awareness-raising and media literacy programmes in the EU and its Member States;
- integrate media and digital literacy, critical thinking and public participation into curricula from early childhood to adult education, including the training of teachers and researchers;

- more actively identify and include young people's voices at the national and EU level to promote societal resilience to hybrid threats;
- provide secure and sustainable sources of public funding for independent fact-checkers, researchers, quality media and journalists, and NGOs investigating information manipulation and interference;
- adopt binding EU rules limiting the amount of data that digital and social media platforms can store on users, the length of time this data can be used, in particular for platforms using private and/or sensitive data such as messaging, health data, financial data, dating apps and small discussion groups;
- modify the algorithms of digital platforms to neutralise content originating from inauthentic accounts and channels that artificially promote the spread of harmful, manipulated information;
- underline the need for global cooperation between like-minded countries on these very important issues;
- stress the importance of strategic countries such as the EU's eastern and southern neighbours and the Western Balkans, as Russia seeks to use them as a laboratory for information manipulation and hybrid warfare.

GOAL 17

“Partnerships for the goals”

71



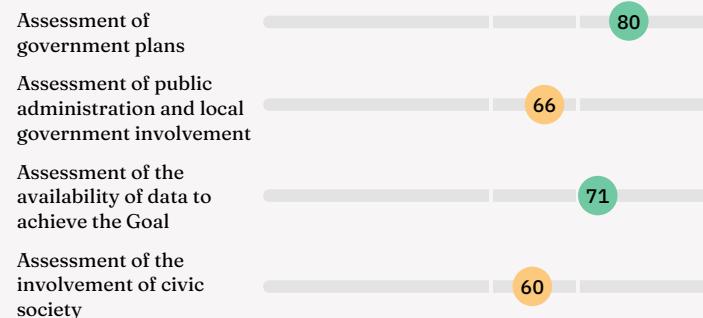
NUMBER OF ORGANISATIONS THAT HAVE PROVIDED AN ASSESSMENT –

12

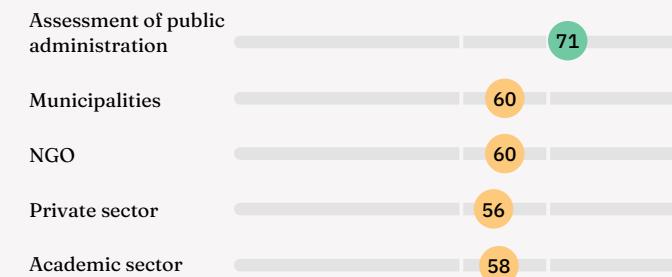
SOCIAL GROUPS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN SUFFICIENTLY INVOLVED IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOAL:

small NGOs without the resources to start development cooperation projects

ASSESSMENT OF GOAL ACHIEVEMENT



ASSESSMENT OF SECTOR INVOLVEMENT



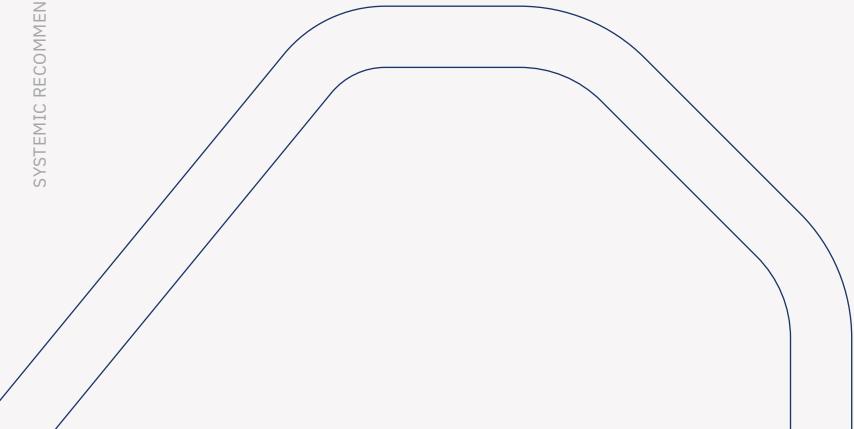
58

Latvia has gradually developed a qualitative and inclusive development cooperation policy, listening to and involving different stakeholders. Increased official development funding can further improve policy implementation, including by focusing on more innovative and effective approaches, as well as by broadening the range of partner countries.



PROPOSALS BY NGOs:

- provide more support for cross-sectoral and cross-cutting projects through integrated and comprehensive approaches to support mechanisms;
- continue to provide support for NGO development cooperation projects and study visits for project preparation;
- continue to support, in particular, the development of the Eastern Partnership countries and sustainable partnerships at different levels;
- develop the design and coordination of the humanitarian system;

- 
- continue to base development cooperation on the needs of partner countries and the principles of sustainable development;
 - increase official development cooperation, in particular for bilateral projects promoting democracy, human rights and balanced development;
 - monitor private sector involvement in development cooperation through accountable partnerships that primarily empower the partners themselves;
 - expand the range of beneficiary countries in response to broad global needs;
 - raise awareness of development cooperation policies and their relationship to local and national ones, in particular by supporting NGO work in awareness-raising and global education;
 - national support for NGO involvement in international networks and cooperation platforms;
 - promote policy coherence for development at national and international level, and encourage the impact assessment of draft legislation in an international context, including on less developed countries;
 - develop an effective monitoring and supervision system for development cooperation projects, focusing on substantive impact assessment;
 - in particular, contribute to advancing gender equality worldwide;
 - develop civil dialogue at the national level by expanding the social dialogue format.



PROPOSALS BY YOUTH:

- share experiences and resources at the transnational level;
- organise international projects and campaigns that bring together different countries to present their national cultures, development needs and opportunities for cooperation;
- organise debates so that different groups in society can get to know each other and increase mutual respect and support;
- increase the mobility of young people, allowing them to learn from a wide range of international experiences.

Systemic recommendations

For balanced development
For the development of participation
For support of NGO sector

For balanced development

- Support cross-sectoral cooperation and initiatives to implement the SDGs, including the work of the National Cross-Sectoral Coalition. Only the equal involvement of all parties in development planning is the path to sustainable development.
- Undertake a true assessment of NAP2027 against the SDGs, as the current superficial mapping gives the illusion of balanced development, while the detailed synthesis of views clearly shows a narrow interpretation of the implementation of some goals, or even ignores important aspects.
- Take national responsibility for the implementation of the SDGs where progress is starting to falter, in particular SDG 5 and SDG 15, quality implementation of which is vital for sustainable development.
- Explain the SDGs to the public, using research and systemic indicators to promote evidence-based understanding. Also ensure open access to information, creating debate and consensus-building between different parties in policy areas where there are strong contradictory views.
- Demand greater private sector involvement in social and environmental responsibility, giving preference in procurement, in fund support to companies that implement sustainability initiatives themselves, and through specific mechanisms such as green procurement and socially responsible purchasing.
- Continue to actively support neighbouring and other partner countries in their democratisation and development processes, in particular through cross-sectoral projects. Address the social and environmental responsibility aspects of private sector projects.

For the development of participation

- Establish a mechanism for civil dialogue, extending the existing social dialogue, thus demonstrating the genuine interest of public administrations and decision-makers in the whole of society and in all dimensions of sustainable development, not just the economic dimension. In particular, improve public involvement in parliamentary processes, especially in the work of committees, access to information and the equal hearing of NGOs.
- Continue to implement innovative forms of co-operation, such as innovation labs to improve the legal framework for the NGO sector, which allow all stakeholders to get to know each other and to develop consensus-based decisions that are better for society.
- Bring greater clarity to practical decision-making processes and stick to statutory procedures that allow for quality public participation. Crises are a constant feature of the modern world, but their existence must not undermine democracy and the public voice, or even be used as a cover for narrow political interests to get on the agenda.
- Advocate for the sustainability of democracy, in particular the involvement of young people in decision-making processes. Low political and civic participation, lack of trust in governance and institutions, pose a threat to democracy and the ability to cope with various geopolitical, climate, social and other challenges.
- More attention to changing forms of participation, especially for young people. Participatory habits are changing along with the digital world and the pace of life, which means that new ways of engaging and listening to the public are needed alongside traditional institutional forms of participation, while not forgetting those who do not have access to such tools.
- In the face of rising inequalities, focus on listening to those groups in society without access to representative resources. Support the development of participation of these groups through networks and platforms. Not forgetting the need for regional representatives to participate fully in the public voice by developing support mechanisms such as reimbursement of participation costs.
- Monitor and evaluate the impact of the Legislation Portal on public participation, improving its functioning if this proves necessary. Digitisation and access to information should contribute to the quality of the law-making process.
- Organise continuous skills development for public administration in the fields of NGOs and civil society, in particular in participation in decision-making processes.

For support of NGO sector

- Establish a monitoring system for the NGO sector and civil society, so that continuous assessment of key indicators provides progress reports on the real situation and development needs.
- Create an empowering environment for community-led initiatives, especially at local level, by legally and financially supporting the development of cross-sectoral projects, community ownership of problem-solving and the development of local resilience.
- Recognise NGOs as equal partners in sustainable development at all levels, including by ensuring access to adequate resources for social innovation, inclusion and integration projects, and other activities.
- Actively implement the planned positive and innovative participatory mechanisms at local level, contributing to local democracy and community resilience.
- Invest in the development of volunteering by reducing bureaucratic barriers to everyday volunteering for everyone and supporting organisations working in this field.
- Focus in particular on digitisation of the NGO sector, given that it works with different groups in society and can not only act as an intermediary for digitisation, but is also an important employer and contributor to the overall development of the country.
- Develop a mapping of financial resources available to NGOs and a financial sustainability strategy for the NGO sector, creating both an empowering environment and facilitating balanced access to NGOs from different sectors and different sources of finance.
- Undertake a fair assessment of the impact of corporate income tax reform on national development, given that in the short term the reform has had a markedly negative impact on social development and the resources available for NGO activities.
- Increase the availability of national resources for advocacy and the NGO sector in general, given that a significant proportion of such projects are currently covered by foreign funding. Listening to the public must be a national priority.
- Ensuring equal access to resources from the funds for NGOs as well, thus contributing to social innovation and to the resilience and sustainability of society itself.
- Support the NGO sector to organise itself to improve the quality of its services and the functioning of the sector, including by understanding the need for remuneration of administrative staff and investment in capacity development.
- Establish a national NGO fund as an important source of finance for a balanced development of the NGO sector, including by steadily increasing the amount of funding available.

The Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation (LAPAS) was founded in 2004 and unites 29 non-governmental organisations, including national associations and networks working in the fields of global education, humanitarian aid, sustainable development and development cooperation.

www.lapas.lv



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