

TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION

Latvia is a unitary republic with a single tier of elected local governments. The territorial reform in 2021 divided the 43 local authorities into 10 state cities (*Valstspilsēta*) and 33 municipalities (*Novadi*). Municipalities include towns (*novada pilsēta*) and villages (*pagasti*), which comprise less than 5 000 inhabitants.¹



Unless otherwise indicated, all the information in this profile is taken from the previously published Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).²

1. NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR SDG IMPLEMENTATION

The SDGs are aligned with the **Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030 (Latvia 2030)** adopted in 2010. The **National Development Plan 2021–2027 (NDP2027)**, approved in 2020, was created in an inclusive multi-stakeholder process involving representatives of the scientific community, NGOs, workers and trade unions, business and industry, state and municipal officials (see VNR, 2022, p. 10). The NDP2027 sets out four strategic goals, directions for action, and measures in six areas that contribute to the implementation of the SDGs. Policy frameworks and plans have been developed in accordance with NDP2027, which defines government action regarding the SDGs.

1.1 NATIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISMS

The **Cross-Sectoral Coordinating Centre (CSCC)** led by the Prime Minister is the focal point for the SDGs. The **National Development Council** is chaired by the prime minister and comprises key ministries, social partners and other government cooperation partners. The National Development Council is the collegial advisory authority to monitor and advise the prime minister on development planning across all levels, as well as to review the results of public consultation for the development of the NDP2027. Meanwhile, representatives of the scientific community, NGOs, workers and trade unions, business and industry, state and municipal officials collaborated in six working groups in contributing to the NDP2027.

1.2 VNR ELABORATION PROCESS

The **Cross-Sectoral Coordinating Centre (CSCC)** coordinated the preparation of the 2018 and 2022 VNRs. The 2018 VNR is based on a mapping of the SDGs at the target level with Latvian policy, with the participation of all ministries, and on the Mid-Term Impact Assessment of the National Development Plan 2014–2020 (NDP2020) that also tracks progress towards Latvia 2030. An **informal advisory working group** for the SDG Review was established, which included representatives of line ministries and other institutions, the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments (LALRG), the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia (LBAS), the Employers' Confederation of Latvia (LDDK), UNESCO Latvian National Committee, representatives of non-governmental organizations, etc.

In 2022, the analysis of the VNR was based on an assessment of the NDP2020 and Latvia 2030, NDP2027, the European Green Deal, and recent challenges. Stakeholders, including academia, trade unions, municipalities, and libraries, were contacted through a formal letter by the national government, and their contributions were included in the final VNR. A public consultation was held. However, according to the interview with the **Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments (LALRG)**, no multi-stakeholder advisory working group was created for the preparation of the 2022 VNR.

1. See: <https://www.sng-wofi.org/country-profiles/>

See also: https://www.ccre.org/img/uploads/piecesjointe/filename/CEMR_structures_and_competences_2016_EN.pdf

2. See: https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2021/19388Latvia_Implementation_of_the_SDGs.pdf (2018);

<https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2022/VNR%202022%20Latvia%20Report%201.pdf> (2022).

1.3 MONITORING

Latvia 2030 sets 55 specific policy outcome indicator targets to be achieved by 2030 in seven priority areas covering multiple SDGs). The **Central Statistical Bureau** and other national authorities provide data for Latvia's SDG indicator framework, representing priority targets from Latvia's medium-term and long-term development policies that envisage strategic priorities for achieving the SDGs. The new **Official Statistics Portal** was launched in 2020, providing detailed gender, age, ethnic and territorial distribution statistics, as well as a special section on gender equality and thematic publications focusing on specific age groups, such as the annual publication "Children in Latvia" and "Seniors in Latvia."

In addition, four Latvian scientists developed a mathematical tool that enables municipalities to plan and manage sustainable development in 2021 with the support of the Latvian Science Council. The data-based tool for selecting priority activities and projects, developed in line with the UN sustainable development paradigm, quantifies the level of sustainable development using indicators corresponding to the functionality of the municipalities. Released in 2022, the model can be used to determine key development priorities, justify the budget distribution and investment priorities, and compare projects between different sectors.

2. LRGs INVOLVEMENT IN SDG LOCALIZATION

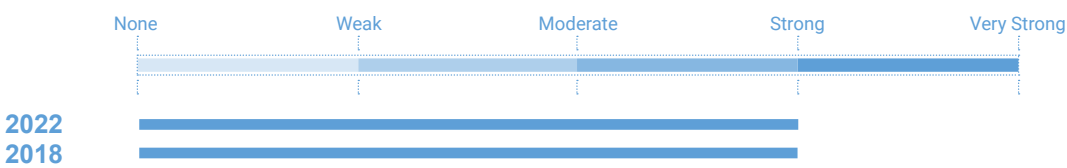
In 2018, the VNR noted that all local governments in Latvia had adopted **sustainable development strategies**. These are the most important territorial development documents at the local government level. They describe problems and instruments chosen by the local governments, and localize solutions for economic, social and environmental issues addressed in the SDGs. These local government sustainable development strategies have a long-term perspective that is based on Latvia 2030 and the Sustainable Development Strategy of their respective planning region. For the preparation of the 2018 VNR, the CSCC counted on the support of a working group in which the **Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments (LALRG)** participated.

Regarding the preparation of the 2022 VNR, the national government engaged different stakeholders, including the LALRG and the municipalities, by sending out letters to collect information on activities related to the SDGs that they had implemented since the 2018 VNR; their opinion on SDG priorities in the coming years; and their proposals on how to improve, expand and promote Latvia's contribution to the implementation of the SDGs. According to the LALRG, however, no response was received after the submission of the survey letter and no further meetings were organized up to the presentation of the 2022 VNR.³

The **LALRG** also mentions regular, although consultative, participation in the national coordination mechanisms for SDG implementation. The national government is responsive to the association's proposals for activities devoted to the SDGs, which includes sharing useful information with municipalities. Yet, according to the **LALRG**, vertical coordination is not "clear" while some policies and plans seem to be implemented by the national government without LRG support or involvement of any kind.⁴

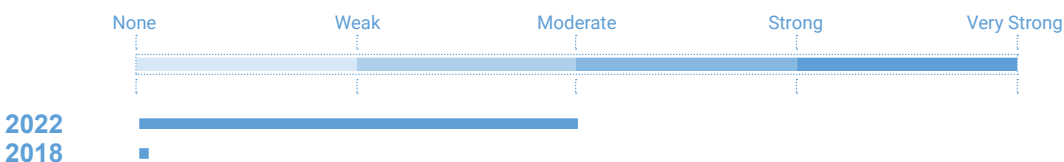
2.1 LRGs PARTICIPATION

► In the VNR process



Comments: Municipal governments were involved by sharing their key challenges and priority areas for action.

► In national coordination mechanisms for SDG implementation



Comments: Municipalities contributed to the development of the NDP2027 by participating in working groups.

This assessment is based on the information collected in the VNRs and in the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments' annual survey on the localization of the SDGs.

3. Answer of the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments to the GTF Survey in 2022.

4. Answer of the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments to the GTF Survey in 2022.

2.2 VNR REFERENCES

The 2018 VNR had a separate section on local government, which noted that all local governments have sustainable development strategies and acknowledged the work of **LALRG** (see VNR, 2018, p. 34-35). It stressed that “the global SDGs have a local dimension, and [that] action and multi-stakeholder dialogue at the local level are key to achieving tangible results.” The presentation of the progress made towards each SDG included some examples of LRG initiatives (see below). Whereas the 2022 VNR offers a summary of stakeholders’ responses (including LALRG, five municipalities and one region) and includes a link to a webpage where the complete responses from these institutions were uploaded (see VNR, 2022, p. 127).

2.3 SPECIFIC PROJECTS AND CASES

▶ The **LALRG** provided two grant competitions for development education in Latvian local governments, and five winning projects were awarded financial support, in **Jelgava, Auce, Jekabpils, Rucava** and **Kekava**. In 2020-2021, the LALRG organized two seminars for the elected officials and administration of municipalities (one on SDG 4 and the other on SDGs 6 and 13). Likewise, reference to the SDGs was made during the European Solidarity Days activities implemented in November 2020 by several Latvian municipalities and their cooperation partners.⁵

▶ The city of **Jelgava** established a Municipal Operational Information Centre Public in 2016 to ensure safety, security, infrastructure monitoring and improvement of people’s well-being. The center provides immediate response in case of emergencies; takes Jelgava citizens’ complaints and suggestions; monitors infrastructure 24/7 (street lighting, pumping houses, meteorological stations, streetlight and intelligent traffic control systems); and supports and coordinates the work of local government specialists and partners.

▶ The city of **Valmiera** introduced smart lighting by installing LEDs in over 50% of its public lighting fixtures. The system ensures more efficient use of electricity by actively adjusting light intensity as traffic and pedestrian activity changes.

▶ The **National Healthy Local Government Network** unites 112 of 119 Latvian local governments that implement health promotion and prevention activities in Latvia’s four priority health care areas – cardio-vascular, oncology, maternal and child care, and mental health (2017 data). 105 educational institutions have joined the Health Promotion School Network and integrate health promotion activities into the school’s daily schedule. Although most local governments have institutionalized health activities, nation-wide data is not available on municipal budget allocations toward health promotion.

▶ Several Latvian municipalities have implemented information campaigns in 2020 on the SDGs. The **Kuldiga** municipality has made an informative video, and children and youth have created several animated videos on SDG 15. The youth from the city of **Liepaja**, involving local politicians, has made a video on their vision for all SDGs. The municipality of **Preiļi**, together with its cooperation partners in Georgia and Ukraine, has started a set of discussions on the SDGs to identify the most important ones in the daily municipal work and to define priority ones for the cooperation of three partner municipalities in these countries.⁶

▶ The historic center of **Riga** is listed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. To maintain this status, the Riga Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 calls for the protection of the distinctive silhouette, and building regulations prevent new development projects from affecting the skyline. Meanwhile, the city of **Riga** joined the Paris Climate Declaration “Cities leading the way to climate neutrality” in 2021. Riga’s approach is to begin with municipal infrastructure and renovating at least 2,000 multi-apartment buildings by 2030. The goal is to reduce vehicle emissions and to strive for net zero-emission heat production and heat supply. The city plans to rent out the roofs of its buildings for the installation of solar collectors and support energy community projects which require minor capital investments and could increase renewables in the city’s energy balance. Riga plans to localize and integrate the SDGs into the development plans and medium-term operational strategies of planning regions and local governments and their institutions.

▶ In **Ventspils**, the construction of the National Ventspils Music Secondary School (with a concert hall) contributed to education, culture and sustainability.

2.4 VOLUNTARY SUBNATIONAL AND/OR LOCAL REVIEWS (VSRs / VLRs)

Not applicable.

2.5 MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

The 2018 VNR describes the early steps in sustainable finance by Latvian stakeholders, i.e. corporate social responsibility initiatives in the private sector, green public procurement, and green bonds issued by state-owned enterprises. Investments required to ensure the achievement of the SDGs are divided into twelve areas. The funding needs are broken down according to sources, including the national budget, EU funds, and other investments from abroad, **co-financing by local governments** and the private sector.

5. Answer of the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments to the GTF Survey in 2021.

6. Answer of the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments to the GTF Survey in 2021.

In 2021, the Latvian government adopted the [Financial Sector Development Plan 2021–2023](#), which envisages an innovative and accessible financial sector that promotes and supports sustainable economic development. The plan outlines the creation of an institutional framework for sustainable financial goals and a sustainable government bond framework, while ensuring the availability of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) data for assessing sustainability. The [Sustainability Bond](#) issued in 2021 contributed to state budget expenditures carried out and planned in 2020-2022 for measures aimed at achieving the SDGs, such as environmentally friendly transport, the preservation of Latvia's forests, waters and biodiversity, and the reduction of inequalities and poverty.

The 2022 VNR also mentions the collective input of various stakeholders. The Finance Latvia Association, the Financial and Capital Market Commission, Latvijas Banka, Nasdaq Riga, the Latvian Leasing Association, and the Latvian Insurers Association signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2021 to join forces in raising public awareness on the principles of sustainability and sustainable finances for use in business and daily life. The agreement outlines the development of a unified policy for assessing the sustainability of public and private investment. Whereas the Finance Latvia Association has identified contributions that are needed to achieve SDG 11, such as securing funding for renovating apartment buildings and private homes, as well as the energy efficiency of housing.

3. RELEVANT INFORMATION

General comments: In 2018, a comprehensive tax policy reform came into effect in Latvia that is aimed at promoting economic growth and well-being, including reducing income inequality. At the same time, it is aimed at ensuring sufficient and predictable tax revenues to finance state and local government commitments, shifting the tax burden from labor to consumption, environment and property taxes.

The 2018 VNR mentions that the Latvian government has developed a "service basket" model, which is used to determine different levels of service provision in culture, health, social services and education, to ensure service provision in areas where financial resources are limited and the population is decreasing. In 2017, this was used as a tool to restructure the school network and for designing social services for those persons leaving state long-term care facilities. A new challenge is the practical application of this model in public investment planning and value-for-money assessments of investment projects.

3.1 WOMEN PARTICIPATION

In the nationwide municipal elections in 2017, 39% of all registered candidates were women. The election results were such that women make up 24% of all newly elected local government heads/mayors.

The local government of [Skrunda](#) has signed the [European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life](#), committing itself to the principles of gender equality and equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes. That involves carefully considering and incorporating the views of stakeholders of both genders into decisions made, and ensuring that good governance processes take account of women's and men's capabilities and needs.

3.2 COVID 19

The 2022 VNR briefly mentions accelerated actions related to SDG 11 under COVID-19 that are mandated by the parliament, including investment in infrastructure for public safety and energy efficiency. There is no reference to initiatives led by local governments. Furthermore, the [LALRG](#) was involved in a policy-making process in producing a policy regulation draft for the procedure for ReactEU (recovery and resilience package), but recommendations had not been taken into account by the national minister of finance.⁷

7. Answer of the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments in an interview conducted in 2022.

4. SDG INDICATORS⁸

5.5.1. (b) Proportion of seats held by women (%) in local governments		34 (2020)
6.1.1. Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services (%)	Urban	-
	Rural	-
6.2.1. (a) Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services (%)	Urban	-
	Rural	-
11.1.1. Proportion of population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing (%)		-
11.6.1. Proportion of municipal solid waste collected and managed (%)		-
11.6.2. Air pollution – annual means of particulate matter in cities (population weighted)		15.6 (2019)
11.b.2. Proportion of local governments that have adopted local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national strategies (%)		-

8. The data used for this table come from the UN SDG Indicators Database. See: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/database>