The SDGs as a tool to achieve sustainable development through a multi-stakeholder approach in Flanders, Belgium

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Stefano Marta
Programme Coordinator
OECD Programme A territorial approach to the SDGs
Timeline of the pilot in Flanders

- **July 2018**: Formal agreement
- **November 2018**: OECD Questionnaire
- **January 2019**: 1st Mission
- **7 March 2019**: 1st Roundtable
- **November 2019**: 2nd mission
- **TBD with the local team**: Revised report
- **February 2020**: 2nd Roundtable
- **Synth. Report**: Case-Study Report
- **9 December 2019**: 2nd Roundtable
Challenges and opportunities for sustainable development in Flanders

**Overall:** Flanders performs above OECD average in a vast majority of indicators across the different SDGs

- Positive results especially with regard to poverty rates and reduction, R&D and productivity, civic engagement and safety

**With strong economic performance, low unemployment** and a well-educated population, Flanders is well placed to transition to a **green and circular economy**

**Gender gap:** Gender gap in the employment rate between male and female (7.7%) is among the best third of OECD regions, but is particularly pronounced in part-time employment incidences and R&D personnel

**High regional disparities both in Belgium and among Flemish provinces**

Flanders between Brussels and Wallonia

**Environment:** High pollution level is a challenge and opportunity for Flanders

- Every resident of Flanders is exposed to more than 10 µg/m³ of PM 2.5
- Rate of satisfaction with air quality among the lower 40% of OECD regions
- High number of road vehicles per 100 people (51.6) and decreasing tree cover
Policies and Strategies for the SDGs

- **Vision 2050** and **Focus 2030** - two key parts of the Flemish government’s plan to implement its commitment to the SDGs

- **Vision 2050**: Flemish government’s **sustainable development strategy**
  - *Seven transitions priority*: Circular economy, Smart Living, Industry 4.0, Lifelong learning and a dynamic professional career, Caring and living together in 2050, Transport and mobility, Energy

- **Focus 2030**: Key strategy guiding the adaptation and implementation of the SDGs in the context of Flanders identifying 50 goals mapped to the SDG framework
  - Holistic framework based on the Flemish government’s competencies and complemented by other policies and plans

- **Decentralised Development Co-operation** is a key area for implementing the SDGs for Flanders
Vision 2050 provides an innovative governance model aimed at accelerating progress towards the seven transitions priorities.

New governance model is based on transition management principles: system innovation, taking a long-term perspective, involving stakeholders through partnerships, engaging in co-creation and learning from experiments.

Circular Flanders - a multi-stakeholder partnership that promotes a circular economy.

Multi-stakeholders engagement through Strategic Advisory Councils.
Multi-level governance

- Each levels of government develop its own **strategy for sustainable development in Belgium**
- **No formal coordination mechanisms** to implement the SDGs in Belgium
  - Coordination through pre-existing bodies, e.g. Inter-Ministerial conference on Sustainable Development
- **Association of Flemish Provinces** engaged in the 2030 agenda
- Flanders and Federal government jointly support municipalities on SDGs

- Good cooperation between **region and municipalities**, missing link is at **Federal level**?
Key role of Flemish cities and municipalities in the 2030 Agenda

- **Flemish municipalities** are tapping into current momentum to **mainstream the SDGs** in local policy development processes
  - **Ghent** - using the SDGs as an analytical tool to provide inputs for the preparation of its multi-year policy plan,
  - **Harelbeke** - SDGs were used to develop a Joint Memorandum between the city’s Advisory Councils

- Many cities and municipalities are further **using the SDGs to engage with their citizens** to raise awareness of the 2030 agenda

- Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG) closely **working with the Flemish government to strengthen capacities** among cities and municipalities on the SDGs
  - Launch of an **SDG-pilot project** with the aim to experiment with integrating the SDGs in local policies, development of practical tools and guidelines to integrate the SDGs into local policies
  - As of late 2018, **VVSG estimates to reach around one-third of Flanders’ 300 municipalities** in their work on supporting the localisation of the SDGs
Flanders’ localised indicator framework

- **Regional level**: 2 indicator frameworks, external and internal
- **Cities and municipalities** are starting to map the SDGs to their local indicator frameworks
  - How the SDGs will be incorporated into the monitoring of these multi-year plans is still not clear
- VVSG developed a **local indicator set for Flemish cities and municipalities**
  - **20 pilot municipalities** part of the VVSG SDG-pilot project
  - **91 of 169 official SDG targets** were deemed to be relevant - building on them, VVVSG has developed 205 indicators
    - VVSG has prepared a selection of 54 indicators that are almost exclusively available from existing sources, and which cover all the SDGs
    - 28 of them can be used to measure progress against several SDGs
Role of the private sector in the 2030 Agenda in Flanders

- **Private companies** in Flanders are incorporating the SDGs into their core business:
  - **Belgian Sustainability Award** jury noticed a new trend - Companies taking a strategic view to sustainability
  - General Confederation of Liberal Trade Unions: **Private companies use social dialogue** to contribute to the SDG, beyond using them as marketing tool

- **Flanders’ Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VOKA)** is integrating SDGs into its own governance and support to Flemish businesses and entrepreneurship
  - VOKA charter offers companies the opportunity to work on sustainable entrepreneurship using an action plan based on the SDGs
Role of the civil society in the 2030 Agenda in Flanders

• **Civil society** plays an active role in Belgium and Flanders
  – **SDG Voices campaign**: nomination of six organisations (private, public and non-governmental) every year to spread awareness about the SDGs to Belgian citizens
  – **Perspective 2030**: nation-wide campaign coordinated by two civil society coalitions, including a wide range of civil society partners
    • Goal is to **make sure that politicians at all levels** (local, regional, national) **live up to their commitment to implement the SDGs** and include the goals in all their policies

• **Cities and municipalities** actively engaging with civil society and local citizen through different campaigns
  – Example of the **sustainable municipality week** in 2018 organised by the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities as part of their role as SDG ambassador in the SDG Voices campaign

• Key role of the **youth council**
Preliminary policy recommendations (I)

Use the SDGs as a framework to enhance strategic alignment between federal, regional, provincial and municipal sustainable development strategies.

Improve the coordination in the development of SDGs indicator frameworks and create an open data platform to engage civil society.

Raise awareness among citizens about sustainable lifestyles to achieve the SDGs.
Preliminary policy recommendations (II)

- Use the SDGs as a budgeting tool to ensure implementation of the Flemish government’s Focus 2030 strategy
- Continue to support cities, municipalities and stakeholders to implement the 2030 Agenda holistically
- Ensure widespread dissemination and uptake of good practices, in particular related to sustainable public procurement as a tool to leverage private sector contribution to the SDGs
THANK YOU