



PhD-project 'SDG in ACTION

Data Driven Coaching of local Communities in Achieving SDG Goals

SDG in ACTION is a PhD-project that wants to inspire and support actors within the Brussels Capital Region in the field of SDG monitoring, based on current scientific insights and further research. The outcome will translate into a state-of-the-art data-driven policy and steering instrument with which actions and impact regarding Agenda 2030 can be monitored in a user-friendly manner.

The SDGs: from global sustainability framework to local implementation and follow-up

The Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs in short, at record speed became the standard for sustainable development at the international, national and local level. Governments, companies and organizations use the SDGs as a guiding framework for their own planning and action. The question is, are we moving fast enough? Will we collectively achieve the goals set by the UN by 2030? To provide an answer to these questions, there is a need for instruments to support SDG implementation and follow-up. The PhD-project SDG in ACTION will do this within the context of the Brussels Capital Region (BCR).

SDG in ACTION: A refreshing academic look at SDG monitoring

The PhD-project starts from the existing (academic) knowledge and expertise on monitoring and evaluation of SDGs both nationally and internationally, but wants to take important steps forward in each of the following areas: the lack of common indicators to measure output or impact, the lack of accurate data, the lack of insight into the relationship between interventions and their effect, as well as the lack of user-friendly tools for monitoring. In line with this, the project puts forward five research questions:

1. Can we design a common set of SDG indicators so that aggregation at the level of the BCR is possible?
2. How can the global SDG indicators be translated into objectives and indicators, tailored to local actors in the BCR, with attention to comparability and aggregation to the (inter)national level?
3. How can a user-friendly dashboard support organizations in the BCR instrumentally in the follow-up of their SDG actions and ambitions?
4. What under-utilized or new data sources could be used at the local level in the BCR?
5. How can it be verified that the efforts of organizations are contributing to the intended effects?

A leading and innovative position for Brussels within Europe regarding the local follow-up of SDGs

The SDG in ACTION project will enable the BCR to take a leading and innovative position in Europe in terms of local follow-up of the SDGs. It will innovate on 3 major fronts:

Development of collective steering instruments

Recognizing that the SDGs can only be achieved through collective action, the project aims to measure the collective efforts of municipalities, businesses, citizens' initiatives, organizations, etc. within the BCR. This assumes the use of common indicators for monitoring.



Data driven approach, with the search for new public and private data sources

An important aspect in the choice of indicators is the availability and quality of data. Existing initiatives often use government data, which has its limitations: many of these government sources only offer insights at an aggregated (national or regional) level and are only renewed after one or more years.

The increased availability of data, among others from IoT applications, citizen science or open data, offers new opportunities. Besides selecting the relevant existing (local) government data, the project will focus on underused or new data sources that are relevant within the local context of the BCR.

Not only context indicators, but also monitoring of efforts

The indicators included in existing monitors are mainly context indicators. They tell us about the state of deprivation, carbon₂emissions, unemployment, etc. in a given area, but they do not tell us much about the efforts made by a local stakeholder in relation to these issues.

The project will meet this need by also developing indicators that allow the concrete actions and efforts of organizations to be measured and monitored. In addition, the relationship between their own efforts and the environmental indicators will be examined.

A fundamental research project with broad valorization potential, both socially, academically and in terms of business.

The 4-year project will result in a practical tool to deal with monitoring information in a user-friendly way. This on an individual organization level, as well as on a more aggregated level within the BCR. In a first phase, the dashboard will be developed together with the various stakeholders within the region, and then tested within a number of local partnerships (consisting of a local government, companies and other organizations). In addition, the project will bridge with existing sustainable development projects within and outside the BCR.

The project combines the knowledge and expertise of the research group *Studies in Media, Innovation and Technology (SMIT)* at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel - and *IDEA Consult*, on smart cities, (open) data (driven policymaking), SDGs, monitoring and evaluation.

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