



Galway City Community Network
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Galway City Community Network CLG

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Galway City Community Network, The Public Participation Network in Galway City

SDG National Implementation Plan

2021 - 2023

GCCN Submission

September 2021

Preface

Established in 2014, **Galway City Community Network (GCCN)** is the Public Participation Network in Galway City. It represents groups and organisations in the community, voluntary and environmental sectors in Galway City.

GCCN Role

The role of GCCN is to:

- **Facilitate representation** of the community, voluntary and environmental sectors on relevant local government, local development bodies and any local, regional, national or international structures deemed appropriate by GCCN.
- Act as a platform for the community, voluntary and environmental sectors to **develop policy and positions** on issues of common concern and to advocate for these policies and positions to be implemented.
- **Strengthen capacity** of the community, voluntary and environmental sectors, including to represent GCCN on all relevant structures.
- **Provide information** relevant to the environmental, social inclusion and voluntary sectors and act as a hub around which information is received and disseminated.

GCCN welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the consultation on the SDG National Implementation Plan 2021 – 2023.

Context

For several years, GCCN has worked on localising the SDGs to use them as a tool for planning in the city. GCCN members have participated in various workshops to develop their knowledge on the SDGs and explore how they could be implemented at a local level. GCCN has also ensured to use the SDGs to frame our work.

The GCCN's submission on the draft SDG National Implementation Plan focused on the sub-national implementation of the SDGs at Local Authority level with practical suggestions for the localisation of the SDGs. It also included a mapping of the goals to local authority competencies and concerns.

GCCN and broader civil society worked to ensure the SDGs were included in the Galway City Local Economic and Community Plan. GCCN convenes the LECP Working Group which is driving the implementation of the specific actions in the plan related to the implementation of the goals. This working group includes collaboration across a broad range of partners which is a crucial part of implementing these cross-cutting goals.

'Galway City LECP Implementation Plan 2020-2021:

- *Action - Advance capacity and commitment to drive implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.*
- *Purpose - to promote the SDGs, make them relevant for Galway, and establish the means for advancing their implementation through mainstream policies, plans and programmes.'*

GCCN and the Working Group is currently focusing on embedding the SDGs in local planning and has collaborated with NUI Galway and Galway City Council to hold a workshop with Councillors and City Planners to examine how the SDGs can be meaningfully localised.

Recommendations

Consultation Process

The SDGs are a holistic framework and as such cannot be implemented in a piecemeal way as all the goals are interconnected. As a result, GCCN is concerned at the questions within this consultation process which ask participants to rank the five most important goals. It is not appropriate to rank the goals in this way as they are not competing agendas rather part of the same framework. The implementation of the goals requires a whole of government approach which identifies responsibility for the achievement of each target under each goal.

The use of the term 'citizen' (Citizen Engagement) excludes all those who live in Ireland who do not have citizenship. A more inclusive term is resident to support the inclusion of all those who reside in Ireland.

The consultation process is a useful opportunity to assess Local Authorities implementation of the SDGs through question focusing on whether the SDGs are embedded in planning at a local level for example asking if the SDGs are part of City/County Development Plans and Local Economic and Community Plans and if Local Authorities have conducted baseline studies to map the goals locally to inform future actions to achieve the goals.

Move beyond promotion and awareness raising

To date, actions as part of the current implementation plan appear to be mostly focused on the development of accessible information and branding. Participation appears in the most part to be confined to the Stakeholder Forum and consultation processes and there appears to be little evidence of facilitating broad ranging meaningful participation across communities. The Support priority appears to be limited to the action on SDG Champions as there are no other actions related to fostering public participation.

The new plan needs to move beyond promotion and awareness raising of the SDGs and focus on implementing the SDGs as a holistic framework across all sectors. The SDGs should be incorporated into all aspects of planning at a national and local level.

Implementation

The implementation plan should focus on how the SDGs will be delivered holistically across all Government Departments. A crucial part of the implementation of the SDGs is meaningful strategic collaboration between departments, agencies, civil society and communities. The plan must contain clear and defined actions to achieve all relevant SDG indicators. These actions need to be monitored, measured and assessed.

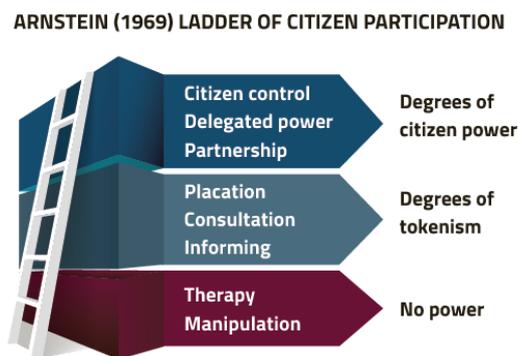
The SDGs should be a core framework across all national and local government plans and strategies. Currently the SDGs feature in plans in a tokenistic manner. For example, in the new Housing for All one SDG target is mentioned without illustrating how this target will be achieved or the relevant indicators which will measure the success of achieving this target. In the Social Enterprise Strategy the SDGs are mentioned but there is no reference to targets or indicators. At present plans and strategies at a national and local level mention the SDGs but do not show how they will be delivered.

The new plan should take cognisance of the policy architecture at local authority level, including the City & County Development Plans and Local Economic & Community Plans. The role of sub-national policy in the realisation of the SDGs is crucial. Government is in a position to play a positive enabling role to support

local authorities to achieve policy coherence and drive SDG implementation locally. GCCN recommends that Government, through the Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government and the Local Government Management Agency issue guidance to local authorities on the aligning of local authority budgets to SDG implementation priorities. GCCN recommends that departments and local authorities should be required to show evidence of embedding the goals in planning to access funding.

Stakeholder Engagement

GCCN proposes “Arnstein’s ladder” as a framework for assessing the effectiveness of public participation in SDG implementation. The governance arrangements for stakeholder engagement should seek to empower communities and move towards the highest rungs of the ladder.



In engaging all stakeholders, GCCN considers that the NIP should make reference to community development is an essential approach to supporting better and more inclusive public participation in decision making. As stated above, the NIP should reference and complement the Government’s (2015) Framework Policy for Local and Community Development. In designing stakeholder participation processes, particular attention must be paid to communities that are marginalised such as Travellers, women, lone parents, asylum seekers, migrants, the LGBTQI community, etc. Pobal, Local Development Companies, SICAP implementers all have a role to play in supporting broad and inclusive stakeholder engagement.

We highlight our *Guidelines for Successful Community Engagement*¹ as a useful resource when designing stakeholder engagement mechanisms. Specifically, we urge Government to move towards a model of partnership and collaboration.

Impact and Accountability

The new plan should facilitate the SDGs to have a tangible impact and support social, economic and environmental justice. The SDGs should be a framework for planning and driving visionary action rather than retroactively labelling existing work.

Part of the development of the new plan should include a review of current programmes to measure their impact and effectiveness. This review should inform if current programmes are continued.

The plan should also establish a framework to hold Duty Bearers to account for not delivering on the goals. The actions within the plan should relate to the targets and indicators of the goals and move beyond awareness raising to implementation.

¹ Available here: <http://galwaycitycommunitynetwork.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/GCCN-Guidelines-for-Successful-Community-Engagement.pdf>