The SDGs and Local Government

The United Nation's 2030 Agenda and SDGs

In 2015, the UN proposed and adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and identified 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) based on 169 targets and over 230 indicators. In January 2016, the SDGs came into force. The SDGS are designed to refocus efforts towards policies that directly help people and communities in the long run. They aim to provide both a pathway out of poverty for about a billion people in the world, and a pathway to a sustainable future for all countries and peoples.

Since the adoption of the SDGS, there have been several attempts to track countries' progress on achievement of the goals. In February 2019, Social Justice Ireland published its Sustainable Progress Index 2019 (authors: Clark and Kavanagh). It examines Ireland's performance on the SDGs in the context of its peers in the EU – the focus is the EU15 countries. Comparing relative performance among countries from a similar regional or income group is valuable. Variations observed in small groups of similar regions should encourage policymakers to better understand reasons for divergence and design strategies for achieving the SDGs by 2030.

Data and Method

Data collection for the analysis was far-ranging. The UN Indicator Set (2017) is the starting point for data selection and the final indicator set is as closely aligned as possible with this list. Simple but important rules are used to guide the selection of data, including relevance, quality, coverage, etc. The criteria identify 65 indictors across the 17 goals. (For full details on methodology, see Clark and Kavanagh 'Sustainable Progress Index 2019').

So, How Does Ireland Compare?

Table 1 presents the results of Ireland's ranking by each SDG. Colour codes help identify how Ireland compares to our EU peers. A **green** indicator rating implies Ireland ranks in the top 5 of the 15 countries – hence, Ireland is doing well on these SDGs. **Orange** indicates Ireland's SDG score ranks between 6 and 10. **Red** suggests Ireland is at the lower end of the country rankings and faces significant challenges in achieving the objectives of the SDG.

We can see that Ireland scores well on SDGs relating to **Quality Education** (SDG 4); **Peace and Justice** (SDG 16) and **Clean Water and Sanitation** (SDG6).

However, **Gender Equality** (SDG5); **Affordable and Clean Energy** (SDG 7); **Responsible Consumption and Production** (SDG 12); **Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure** (SDG9); **Climate Action** (SDG13); and **Partnerships for the Goals,** (SDG 17); all score in the bottom third and faces significant challenges in achieving the objectives of these SDGs.

The remaining SDGS are in the middle (ranked 6-10), implying there is still scope for improvement. Going forward, it is critically important to continue to monitor all relevant indicators under SDG to track progress towards these goals.

Table 1 Ireland's Position on the SDGs, 2019

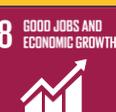| SDG	Rank
1 NO POVERTY	Rank 7/15
2 ZERO HUNGER	Rank 10/15
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	Rank 9/15
4 QUALITY EDUCATION	Rank 2/15
5 GENDER EQUALITY	Rank 10/15
6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION	Rank 5/15
7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY	Rank 12/15
8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	Rank 9/15
9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	Rank 11/15
10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES	Rank 11/15
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES	Rank 8/15
12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION	Rank 14/15
13 CLIMATE ACTION	Rank 11/15
14 LIFE BELOW WATER	Rank 9/15
15 LIFE ON LAND	Rank 8/15
16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS	Rank 4/15
17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS	Rank 11/15

Recommendations for Local Authorities

Everyone has a role to play in supporting Ireland's progress towards the SDGs. Ireland's **National Implementation Plan** for the SDGs identifies the crucial role that Local Authorities have to play in translating the SDGs into practical action at local level. It identifies the **Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs)** and the **Strategic Committees (SPCs)** as well as local plans as being especially well placed to integrate the SDGs into their activities.

Here we set out a series of proposals for Local Authorities, covering all 17 SDGs, that could be included by Local Authorities and their LCDCs & SPCs in their development plans.

Table 2 Policy Proposals for Local Authorities

SDG Number	Policy Proposals	SDG Number	Policy Proposals
1 NO POVERTY	• Support the development of social and affordable housing on State lands. • Seek to replace the Local Property Tax with a Site Value Tax and increase the tax-take while including hardship measures for those who cannot afford to pay it in full.	**10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES**	• Utilise the full allocation for Traveller specific accommodation and support the development of sites for this purpose. • Implement the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy.
2 NO HUNGER	• Provide funding for research on local initiatives on sustainable food production.	**11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES**	• Invest in a deep retrofitting programme for community spaces. • Ringfence continued funding to encourage sports participation and active lifestyle programmes. • Improve the primary road network across the country to support the increased provision of public transport.
3 GOOD HEALTH	• Support the integration of primary care networks and GP led community healthcare services.	**12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION**	• Eliminate all single-use plastics from Local Authority buildings and public spaces. • Develop open consultation on ambitious waste management plans beyond 2021. • Adopt the principles of a circular economy, particularly for construction and demolition waste.
4 QUALITY EDUCATION	• Enhance community education programmes and life-long learning through the library network. • Ensure full implementation of the 'Our Public Libraries 2022' strategy and ensure that its implementation is inclusive and supportive of smaller branch libraries as a hub for local communities.	**13 CLIMATE ACTION**	• Develop Climate Change Adaptation Strategies in each Local Authority area, with the collaborative input of local communities and Public Participation Networks, supported by dedicated sustainable funding in the medium to long-term.
5 GENDER EQUALITY	• Actively promote gender equality in Local Authority elections and on Boards and Committees of strategic importance. • Introduce family-friendly working hours and conditions for female councillors.	**14 LIFE BELOW WATER**	• Put a plan in place to tackle pesticides in drinking water. • Implement the 'Nature' programmes set out in the Climate Action Plan published by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment.
6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION	• Develop a Drinking Water Safety Plan, following EPA Guidelines, for each public water supply identifying all potential risks and detailing mitigation and control measures.	**15 LIFE ON LAND**	• Invest in programmes to rewet the boglands. • Implement the 'Nature' programmes set out in the Climate Action Plan published by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment.
7 ENERGY	• Invest in renewable energy transition programmes for Local Authority offices and community spaces.	**16 PEACE AND JUSTICE STRONG INSTITUTIONS**	• Develop a sustainable strategy for public participation, to include medium and long-term objectives and associated budget commitments; and a move from an annual funding model for PPNs to a 3-5 year renewable commitment.
8 GOOD JOBS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	• Review the sustainability of jobs created through LEOs and develop plans to ensure the security of decent work.	**17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS**	• Develop strategic partnerships with Local Authorities and local government organisations, in Europe and Internationally, to support the implementation of the Goals.
9 INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	• Expedite the roll-out of the National Broadband Plan, commencing with those with the largest proportion of premises dependent on it.		