



1st SDG-Conference Regensburg

Together into the future. Together sustainable.

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The 1st SDG Partnership Conference in Regensburg held from April 25th to 27th, 2023 with the motto “Together into the future. Together sustainable.” was a great success. The City of Regensburg welcomed a diverse assembly of experts from almost all of Regensburg’s sister cities as well as from other cooperatively and friendly connected international cities.

I am glad that so many of our international partners followed the invitation to the conference, because through knowledge-sharing and international cooperation we can make a meaningful impact in our communities.

The 2030 Agenda with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) gives us guidance on how to create a more sustainable world and it emphasises the idea of shared responsibility and solidarity among all countries. The wide range of backgrounds and perspectives of the conference’s participants illuminated the truly global nature of the cities’ shared challenges and ambitions in the field of sustainability.

The network that has been established and the insights that were gained at the 1st SDG conference in Regensburg have created a solid foundation for future collaborations and I am confident that the energy and enthusiasm generated by this meeting will advance our shared vision of a more sustainable future.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all participants from Budavár (Hungary), Clermont-Ferrand (France), Odesa (Ukraine), Pilsen (Czech-Republic), Tempe (USA), Memphrémagog (Canada), Valladolid and Vitoria-Gasteiz (Spain), Qingdao (China), Brixen (Italy) and Masaka (Uganda) as well as to the organization Engagement Global, which supported the conference with funding from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

Thank you for your valuable contribution and your outstanding commitment! We are looking forward to further exchanges.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "G. Maltz-Schwarzfischer".

Gertrud Maltz-Schwarzfischer, Mayor

Together into the future. Together sustainable.

By adopting the 2030 Agenda with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the global community has created a basis for enabling all people worldwide to live in dignity and for shaping economic progress in harmony with social justice and within the Earth's ecological limits. It seeks to initiate a change in politics and society as well as to solve global challenges together.

International dialogue and exchange of expertise is an important instrument for achieving these goals. In this spirit, in April 2023, the City of Regensburg invited various municipalities to an **SDG Partnership Conference** with the motto **"Together into the future. Together sustainable."**

Experts from Regensburg's partner cities Budavár (Hungary), Clermont-Ferrand (France), Pilsen (Czech Republic) and Tempe (USA) joined the 2.5-day conference in Regensburg, as well as representatives from the cities of Memphrémagog (Canada), Valladolid and Victoria-Gasteiz (Spain), which are members of the International Network of Michelin Cities (INMC), a city network initiated by Regensburg's sister city Clermont-Ferrand, which Regensburg joined in 2019.

The sister cities Qingdao (China) and Odesa (Ukraine) participated digitally, and the sister city Brixen (Italy) as well as Masaka (Uganda), with which the City of Regensburg maintains friendly relations, joined partially online.

A previous digital planning meeting revealed three key topics for an intensified discussion. As a result, the issues of **climate-friendly economic growth** (SDGs 8 and 13), **clean energy production** (SDG 7), and **sustainable mobility** (SDG 9) filled the agenda.

The 2030 Agenda is both an opportunity and a challenge for cities worldwide. The alliances between Regensburg and its international partners are a chance not only for international dialogue but also for learning from and with each other. With the SDG Partnership Conference, Regensburg has offered a **concept to intensify this exchange** regarding the SDGs and to promote synergy effects in developing future-proof cities.



The event was held at the sustainable conference and event center marinaforum in Regensburg. The particularly resource efficient implementation of the event was awarded with the **„Green Note seal”** from the competence network talk & act management (category A event).

➡ <https://talk-act.de/produkte/green-note>



Welcome

The conference started off with a welcome evening at Regensburg's Old Town Hall.

Mayor Gertrud Maltz-Schwarzfischer gave a warm welcome to all participants from the international partner cities as well as from Regensburg.

"The fact that all of you are here today is a powerful testament to the value of an international dialogue in the field of sustainability."

She reported that, like many cities worldwide, Regensburg faces significant sustainability challenges that require urgent attention. Important steps have been taken; however, achieving true sustainable development continues to be a challenging goal.

The 2030 Agenda provides a roadmap for building a better future. It is important to recognise that the SDGs are not only about individual action. The mayor emphasised that the root causes of unsustainable practises need to be addressed and systemic changes have to be implemented.

Mayor Maltz-Schwarzfischer especially highlighted that the SDGs inspire us to work together and that achieving these goals is a shared responsibility of all players.

For Regensburg, alliances with its international partners play a crucial role. The collaborations

can and will accelerate progress towards a sustainable future.

“We hope that this encounter is a further step that we are taking to ensure that our actions today benefit future generations.”

The working sessions of the next morning were opened by Vice Mayor Ludwig Artinger.

He highlighted the wide range of knowledge and experience gathered at the conference. He remembered that the power of local action and its important impact on realising the 2030 Agenda should not be underestimated. Cities worldwide focus on building a sustainable future and have the unique ability to channel the creativity and dedication of their members towards positive change.

“From adopting sustainable practises in our daily lives to advocating for political changes that benefit the environment, every small step we take contributes to creating a better future.”

The Vice Mayor Ludwig Artinger invited the participants to explore and exchange ideas on the different solutions cities can use to contribute to a more sustainable future. The conference provides the opportunity to connect and to build the basis for a future network and joint projects.

“Let us take this opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals, share our experiences and ideas and collaborate on initiatives that can help us move closer towards achieving the SDGs.”





Localising the 2030 Agenda

The topical introduction was given by Vera Strasser and Frederike Diny of the Service Agency Communities in One World (SKEW), Engagement Global, the organisation that supported the conference in Regensburg with funding from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

They took a closer look at the 2030 Agenda and its relevance at the local level.

The 2030 Agenda explicitly refers to the reality of cities and municipalities, a fact that, according to the speakers, had to be considered quite a new approach back in 2015. **SDG 11** explicitly outlines the importance of cities and aims to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Furthermore, about **65 % of**

the Agenda's targets can only be reached (or are crucial for achieving other SDGs) if action is taken at the local level. Since nowadays half of humanity lives in cities, consuming about 75 % of global resources and being responsible for about 75 % of global emissions, cities have a huge potential to induce change.

According to the speakers, the 2030 Agenda offers a **framework for sustainable and**



integrated urban development planning and monitoring. It provides a benchmark to evaluate existing urban development strategies and it opens a chance for city-to-city exchange and networks.

The latest **Sustainable Development Goals Report by the UN (2022)** states that the current multiple and interlinked crises (climate change, conflicts, COVID-19, etc.) are putting the 2030 Agenda in grave danger, not least because of spin-off impacts on food, health, education, the environment and peace and security.

Regarding the **local level**, however, the report sees some positive outcomes, especially with regard to monitoring air pollution, collecting solid waste and establishing disaster risk reduction strategies. Challenges on the other hand are stemming from the increase in informal settlements, the lack of access to public transport and the poor distribution of public spaces.

At the SDG Summit in September 2019, the world leaders proclaimed a **Decade of Action**, calling all actors to an enhanced effort to reach the goals. This includes mobilising financial resources and strengthening institutions.

Vera Strasser and Frederike Diny then described the process of localising the 2030 Agenda. It involves adapting, implementing and monitoring the SDGs at the local level. There are five main areas: **awareness raising, analysis and strategy development, networking, translating the 2030 Agenda into local action and monitoring and evaluation.**

The speakers closed by emphasising that the SDGs can also be linked to **municipal partnerships**. Municipalities worldwide are facing similar challenges and can share their broad expertise and know-how in implementing local solutions to global challenges.



Presentations of the participating cities

Most of the participating cities presented their activities in the conference and provided a whole pool of expertise on how cities can contribute to sustainable development. The presentations made it clear that there are numerous issues the cities can learn from each other.

The presentations mainly referred to the following points:

- short presentation of the city (key figures and a characteristic sight)
- strategies and programmes in the field of sustainability
- implementation of projects and activities with reference to the three workshop topics (climate-friendly economic growth, clean

- energy production, sustainable mobility)
- coordination, stakeholders and cooperation
- major successes and remaining challenges

In **Regensburg (Germany)**, the city council has passed the **“Regensburg Plan 2040”** (2022) as a new basis for sustainable development. The goals set in the strategy are in line with the SDGs and there is a monitoring system with 100 key performance indicators to keep track of progress.



The “**Regensburg Green Deal**” (2021) aims to achieve climate-neutrality for the whole city by 2035. It is based on the close cooperation of all city actors. A cluster policy fosters networking, research and joint projects.

Huge steps have been taken regarding **sustainable mobility**. For example, the public transport operator is the first in Bavaria to offer a complete bus line with electric buses.

Qingdao, a coastal city in the north of **China** with approx. 10 million inhabitants and a strong industrial base, accelerates the green and low-carbon transformation, especially in the fields of **energy, construction and mobility**. Also, the city promotes digitalisation and energy-saving in the industrial field, encouraging companies to fulfil their social responsibilities. The city is dedicated to developing green consumption and low-carbon products. It reports the reduction of carbon emissions and energy consumption while maintaining economic growth.

Budavár, the first district and historic centre of Budapest (**Hungary**), is a densely populated urban area and a hotspot for tourists. Being a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Budavár is challenged to develop effective solutions for sustainability while preserving its historic heritage. The city supports **energy-saving measures** for heritage-protected homes, like rooftop-shaped solar panels. To enhance **public transport** in the hilly landscape, the city has established elevators and limited car access.



A more inclusively managed housing market and extended carsharing are expected to improve the situation further.

The district carries out a variety of **green initiatives on the community level** and is interested in clean energy production and best practises in participatory democracy in order to get citizens on board.



In its **Green Agenda**, **Clermont-Ferrand (France)** sets ambitious objectives for 2050 in the field of energy (increase renewable energy, reduce consumption and reduce greenhouse emissions). The city has a strong focus on bringing all inhabitants and stakeholders together and encouraging a **joint effort**. **Sobriety and fairness** are considered to be the main pillars.

In order to set an example, the city has developed a **carbon budget** (i.e., a certain allowance of greenhouse emissions) with a monitoring system corresponding to a financial budget.

The county of **Memphrémagog** in the French part of **Canada** implements the sustainability plan of its province, Québec, to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. It puts focus on **agro- and ecotourism** and on extending the **protected natural areas**.

Due to the high availability of natural resources, Canada is the second-largest energy producer in the world. At the same time, its extensive energy usage for **transportation** makes it one of the biggest energy consumers per capita. A general shift in the mainstream car culture is needed. **Raising awareness**, however is difficult, since the prices for energy are very low.

In Québec, the electrification of transportation is a priority. In addition, Memphrémagog supports sustainable mobility initiatives (e.g., carpooling and sharing initiatives for employees) and innovative projects on **energy efficiency for industries**.

In **Pilsen (Czech Republic)**, the current main task is to save the city's heritage and revitalise the city centre with new approaches to **urban planning**. This includes establishing pedestrian zones, infrastructure for micro-mobility, cycling routes and greenways. Big steps have been taken in reconstructing riverbanks, building a green infrastructure with new tram and trolley bus lines and in implementing green roofs on city buildings. Currently, Pilsen tries to densify the city to achieve shorter distances and to make transportation more efficient. The aim is to reconnect the spaces and thus improve the city network.

In 2019, **Tempe**, in Arizona (**USA**), adopted a **Climate Action Plan**. It focuses on **energy**, **transportation** and improving its **resilience** in dealing with extreme heat. The city follows a **holistic** and **people-centred approach** that integrates different actors, sectors and perspectives. For example, this includes close cooperation with community centres, libraries, and churches in order to build “micro grids” that enable people to cool off in public spaces and to establish places for emergencies. Moreover, Tempe has one of the first car-free developments in the US.

Valladolid, in the northwest of **Spain**, has a strong commitment to **innovation in companies and start-ups**. Municipal services such as the “Innovation Agency” develop activities in the areas of employment, entrepreneurship, investment and innovation.

The city intends to become a benchmark city in the field of sustainable development and innovation. It participates in various larger international funding projects and works in areas like **energy efficiency** (e.g., climate-neutral districts and energy renovation of public buildings), **sustainable mobility** (e.g., the decarbonisation of the municipal fleet, business incentives, a digital platform for travel planning) and **city renaturation**. Also, the city focuses on **digital innovation** (Smart City).

Vitoria-Gasteiz (**Spain**) has based its strategy strongly on the 2030 Agenda (“**Urban 2030 Agenda**”). The city allocated each SDG to a specific department, including the responsibility to follow up on the indicators. Even the financial budget was aligned with the SDGs.

Currently, there is a focus on two major projects: The city is part of the mission “100 Climate-neutral and Smart Cities by 2030” (European Commission) and participates in the EU-Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change.

Vitoria-Gasteiz wants to increase its share of **renewable energies** and is working on urban regeneration and rehabilitation to increase energy efficiency. The **mobility** strategy includes the electrification of public transport and the expansion of pedestrian streets and bicycle lanes.

Moreover, during the last two decades the city has created a **Green Belt** which has led to a significant increase in biodiversity.





Keynote on climate psychology

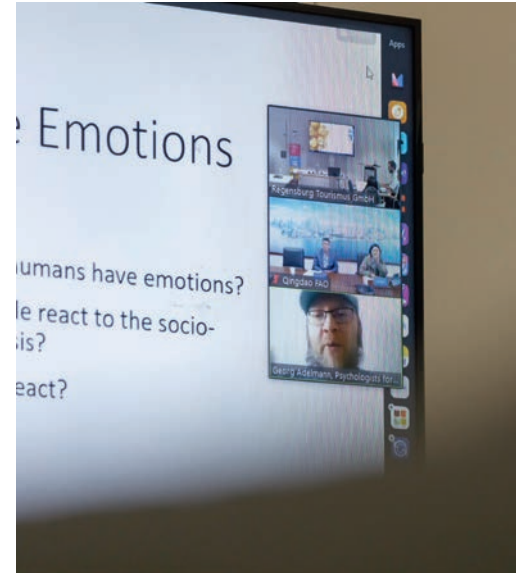
The keynote speech of the conference took a different approach to the implications of change and transition in cities.

Georg Adelman from the association “**Psychologists/Psychotherapists for Future**”, addressed the impacts of the climate crisis on **mental health** as well as the **role cities can play** in promoting mental resilience and activating society to help shape a sustainable future.

Climate change has not only physical but also **psychological effects on individuals and communities**, causing anxiety, anger and hopelessness. This can lead to **social division** and a **decrease in civic participation**, which are both detrimental to the health of cities and their residents.

Therefore, it is crucial, that cities plan ahead and give priority to their citizens’ real needs. This includes promoting initiatives of **self-sufficiency, building communal spaces**, and providing relief measures like **cooling and sleeping places** during extreme weather events. Also, **green spaces** are important, as they have a positive effect on mental health and wellbeing.

In addition, **preventative healthcare measures**, such as promoting plant-based diets and group sports, help maintain physical and mental health.



Georg Adelman also stressed the importance of **empowering citizens and communities** to address climate change. This can be achieved through **citizens' assemblies, communal self-organised neighbourhoods** and **climate cafés**, which provide spaces for individuals to connect and discuss their emotions and concerns regarding climate change. By taking action and working together, communities can build resilience and promote **mental health**.



He also explained the importance of feelings like anger and fear. These are linked to physical, social and psychological needs and can therefore provide **energy for compassionate action** towards protecting both the environment and society. **Compassion for the environment** can motivate individuals to take action, such as reducing waste or using sustainable products. Similarly, **compassion for our neighbours** can lead to increased **social cohesion** and a **willingness to help others** during times of need.



Workshops

Both of the conference days opened the floor for an in-depth discussion among the participants regarding the three key topics of the meeting, namely climate-friendly economic growth, clean energy production and sustainable mobility. Each hybrid workshop started off with a short input from one of the cities. Later, the participants were invited to share and record their ideas on a digital whiteboard.

The first day's aim was to take stock of the **current situation in implementing the SDGs** and identify common features and differences.

Last but not least, the participants brainstormed on **areas and forms for cooperation** and on the steps to be taken.

The second day focused on **future actions** and their preconditions (structures, governance mechanisms, resources etc.).

All results were presented in a plenary session.

1. Climate-friendly economic growth (SDG 8 and SDG 13)

The first group focused on strategies for climate-friendly economic growth. It discussed measuring standards like the GDP and stated that more emphasis should be put on social measures, starting with people's real needs. This implies a general shift of values and a deep change of awareness. The question is how cities can play a role in this process.

The cities agreed that climate-friendly economic growth needs the **involvement of businesses** and strong **alliances with local partners**. Also, cooperating with **multinational businesses for local goals** and **municipal companies** that work closely with businesses (like the Energy Agency in Regensburg) are promising options and are of interest for further exchange.

The group also discussed that cities need to deepen their knowledge of **green procurement** in order to support the local economy and sustainable providers.

2. Clean energy production (SDG 7)

In general, the cities reported a **lack of (green) energy production and implementation**, while at the same time their **energy consumption is high**. Therefore, energetic restoration and incentives to reduce energy consumption are two important means. Often the **technology** needed is already available, however, strategic moves have to be made, including the development of financial policies, e.g., taxation on emissions or subsidies for renovation. Regulation (of the fossil fuel

industry) and deregulation (of clean energy production) are needed at the same time.

The group shared a variety of **good practises** (for example, collective heat pumps, renovation grants for old buildings, or hydroelectric plants on rivers).



3. Sustainable mobility (SDG 9)

Most of the cities work on providing **low-carbon mobility options**, e.g., carsharing, electric vehicles and infrastructure for charging stations, emission-free bus lines and transport, employer incentives, as well as well-developed public transport. In the case of larger housing projects, **mobility concepts** should be directly integrated into the planning process, cooperating closely with the investors. The participants agreed that **intermodal mobility platforms** offer easy access to public transport. However, the respective technology and the data have to be provided.



Common ground for the future

The workshops revealed a number of common aspects that are related to all the topics discussed before and that the cities share.

Governance and political will: The green transition needs more coordination and collaboration, especially consensus and coherency in multi-level governance. It also needs strong political will and the enforcement of policies.

"We cannot wait for the mental shift."

Apart from that, the cities often use external funding (e.g. the EU) and had the idea of applying for shared tenders as consortia, as this could be more efficient.

"Competence, motivation and perseverance are highly needed to overcome system forces."

Financing: The workshops carved out that the **costs of the green transition** are a big obstacle. Often, they come along with pushbacks from local actors, as higher taxation (e.g., on transport or cars) or higher prices are mostly unpopular.

Awareness-raising: Education was considered to be a crucial key for a green transition and for building a social consensus. This implies raising social acceptance for slower growth (or even degrowth) and lower energy consumption, and it includes not only the popu-

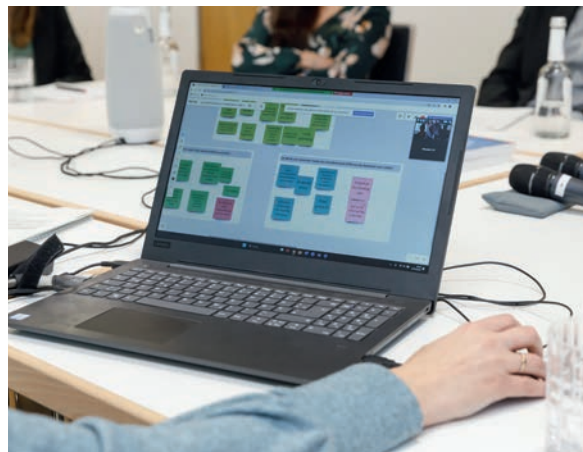


lation but also (political) decision-makers and industries. Furthermore, it is a chance to deal with the pushbacks of local actors in the case of unpopular regulations or taxations, which are necessary to induce change.

A question to follow up on was how municipalities can activate society and empower their citizens. A good example in this context are events like the European Sustainable Development Week (ESDW), which shows the broadness of the SDGs and makes initiatives visible.

“When we create something desirable, nothing is impossible.”

Voluntary Local Reviews: These reviews are a helpful tool for monitoring the SDG implementation progress in a city. In Europe, the reports are mainly used for reflection, as a monitoring tool and as a benchmark. The cities expressed their interest in a deeper exchange about monitoring practises.



Alliances: The cities agreed that **alliances with local partners** who have the same vision and also alliances on an international level are helpful to move on. Good practises in this field could be another topic for further exchange.



Networking and Side-Events

Aside from the thematic agenda, the conference provided a variety of opportunities for the participants to connect.

The **welcome evening**, the **joint dinners**, and last but not least, the **lunch and coffee breaks** during the conference were vividly used to network, to chat and, of course, to deepen discussions started in the conference room.

Also, the City of Regensburg made the most of their opportunity to introduce their guests to their city.

A **guided tour of the Old Town Hall** at the welcome evening and a **city tour** on the last day took the visitors to the most special places in Regensburg.





Guided tour of “Rubina”

A highlight was the field trip to “RUBINA”. RUBINA (short for Regensburg, Environment, Education, Innovation and Sustainability) is a **multifunctional centre for energy and environmental education** and a lighthouse project of Regensburg’s vision of a sustainable city. It houses various facilities, such as the energy education centre “**um:welt**”, the **Energy Agency Regensburg**, the student research centre “**MINT-Labs Regensburg e.V.**”, and the **MINT children’s centre**.

➡ www.um-welt.bayern/rundumwelt/rubina



Gallery Walk

In-depth exchange was also enabled by a gallery walk installed at the conference centre. Each of the participating cities was invited to present its programmes and activities on a movable wall. In this way, the participants could learn about a variety of sustainable projects, discuss their details and brainstorm on further collaborations.





Closing and next steps

Stay in touch

The conference was closed by the conference's organiser **Anja Kink** from the International Department of the City of Regensburg, who expressed her gratitude towards the participants.

"It was you who brought the ideas and the input to this conference and made it what we had hoped for: an enriching and inspiring exchange."

The conference has marked a first step in discussing topics and questions of sustainability among the participating cities. And it has clearly revealed a strong wish for more peer-to-peer exchange and for further platforms for sharing ideas and expertise.

Anja Kink invited the participants to keep each other informed about their plans and exchanges in order to keep track of the outcomes of the conference.



To be continued

The conference ended with clear prospects for further cooperation. Face-to-face exchange in combination with regular online meetings as well as subgroups on certain issues were considered to be helpful.

Also, a digital platform could enhance the exchange of information and ideas, best practises, contacts, etc..

“Cooperations between the cities and knowledge exchange help to tackle our current challenges.”

The cooperation also extended to further networks. Clermont-Ferrand (France), for example, invited all participating cities to join the next meeting of the “International Network of Michelin Cities” (INMC) that will take place in April 2024 in Anderson, South Carolina. A great opportunity for a personal meeting to continue the exciting exchange that the City of Regensburg initiated with the 1st SDG conference and thus to work together on a more sustainable future.



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