Argentina is a federal republic whose legislation embraces territorial autonomy, identifying the provinces as the key actor in the decentralization process. The provinces also play a crucial role within the multilevel framework for the SDG localization. The National Coordination Council for Social Policies (CNCPS) is the national body responsible for the coordination of the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda.

Vertical integration for SDG localization in Argentina has been grounded on ad-hoc cooperation agreements between CNCPS and the provinces and on the establishment of the Federal SDGs Network that facilitates dialogue and interaction across national and provincial governments. Most provinces in the last few years have engaged in implementing the 2030 Agenda by aligning their strategies, policies, budgeting, monitoring and reviews with the SDGs and the national planning, also thanks to the technical support provided through several capacity building initiatives.

Horizontal integration is ensured by the CNCPS’ inter-ministerial and cross-sectoral working method, which led to establish the National Interinstitutional Commission for the Implementation and Monitoring of the SDGs, composed by political and technical representatives of different relevant national ministries and organisms. Similarly, some provincial government, such as Córdoba, set-up inter-ministerial SDGs roundtables, led by the Ministry of Coordination as Provincial focal point for SDGs, to improve horizontal cooperation among sectors.

Stakeholder engagement is enhanced by the Social Participation Forum for the territorial implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda, representing a national space for dialogue and participation of civil society actors and the private sector with provincial and municipal SDGs focal points. Social participation forums are also promoted at the subnational level in several provinces.
INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The Argentine Republic is a Federal State made up of 23 Provinces and the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires. Provinces are subdivided into 2,327 local governments. The provinces constitute the backbone of the Federal set-up of the State, enjoying a strong degree of autonomy and a wide array of competences, excluding only those that the Constitution explicitly delegates to the Federal State. In addition to the decentralized political structure, there are also deconcentrated units of the federal government in all areas of public policy and it is common for the federal ministries to cooperate directly with the provincial authorities. The SDG localization bears therefore specific relevance and finds its more patent implications in relation to Provincial jurisdictions, as many of the topics associated to the SDGs match primary provinces’ responsibilities.

The provinces are further divided into a total of 529 department, which cover the entire Argentine territory and are further divided into districts. At the local level, the form of local government varies according to each province, and each category – including municipalities – differs in its degree of autonomy. The competences of municipalities are defined in each Provincial constitution, with a great deal of discretion and differences across territories and between formal and informal attributions and arrangements.

VERTICAL INTEGRATION

In terms of political commitment and institutional arrangements, the National Coordination Council for Social Policies (CNCPS) was designated in 2015 as the responsible national body linked to the Presidency for the coordination of the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda. The incorporation of provinces in the SDG implementation process starts with ad-hoc cooperation agreements with the CNCPS (signed at 2022 by 22 out of 24 provinces), and with the designation of an institution acting as focal point for SDG localization process. In most cases, this corresponds to organisms that ensure transversal modernization and coordination functions (as in Córdoba, where the Ministry of Coordination acts as SDG Focal Point). To ensure dialogue and enable vertical synergies with the provinces, in 2018 the CNCPS has established the Federal SDGs Network, which gathers Provincial Focal points with the objective of facilitating the sharing of experiences, tools and practices thus lifting institutional capacities and mechanisms for interaction across national and provincial governments.

The articulation of the National level with Municipalities is more critical. The structural engagement of local governments in dialogue with higher levels remains limited and it does not enable the homogenous diffusion and uptake of the SDGs in all local governments. Rather, the cooperation with Municipalities appears mostly based on punctual support following the signature of individual technical cooperation agreements, as well as the participation in specific programs or initiatives. Some good practices should be highlighted, such as the Province-Municipalities Table that allows coordination between the Province of Córdoba and its 427 local governments.

New political circumstances and a strong priority on social inclusion policies and ‘people-centred’ SDGs, alongside a restructuring of national public administration, led in 2020 to a process of re-alignment of SDG targets to national planning, resulting in the adoption of 121 targets by the federal government. Most provinces have engaged and made progresses in implementing the 2030 Agenda by aligning their strategies, policies, budgeting, monitoring and reviews with the SDGs. The Provincial government of Córdoba incorporates the SDG framework in the strategic planning of its public policies. At the same time, it engages with local governments through voluntary cooperation agreements to support them with the localization of the SDGs. The process of co-creation of a plan for SDG localization during 2020-2021 culminated with the presentation of the Action Plan that is currently underway and will be carried out until 2023, in which 5 municipalities are participating as pilot cases.

Nevertheless, the two federal mechanisms for dialogue and vertical coordination on public policies and SDGs – i.e. the National Interinstitutional Commission and the federal SDGs network – do not foresee the participation of municipalities through their national association (i.e., FAM), nor provide a comprehensive focus on the alignment of national, provincial, and municipal agendas. The FAM in its 2022 VSR highlighted limited awareness at the municipal level and insufficient dialogue with the national mechanism in charge of coordinating SDG implementation, and only recently started developing a common agenda with the CNCPS.

Concerning SDG implementation, the CNCPS has provided provinces and municipalities with technical support through an ‘Adaptation Guide’, including methodological suggestions on the utilisation of the SDGs as a management and planning tool at the subnational level. Following the signature of agreements with Provincial governments, the joint work of the CNCPS with Provincial focal points is focused on sensitization, capacity building sessions and collective dialogue for provincial officers. Municipalities also benefited from tools, workshops, and training sessions with the support of the CNCPS and respective Provincial governments, and local governments have also made notable progress in developing awareness-raising activities with their staff. The CNCPS is
also facilitating the articulation with the global level and international cooperation in dialogue and synergy with provinces and municipalities, developing methodological tools and practical guides in cooperation with the EU.

In the framework of the Federal SDGs network, workshops were also realised to build awareness and capacities of public officers in budget alignment processes at national, provincial, and local level. In the Province of Córdoba, the yearly Provincial Budget is aligned with the 2030 Agenda, using it as a management and administrative tool for the allocation of resources to achieve prioritised SDGs and targets. Furthermore, the Province of Córdoba began a training programme on the SDGs in 427 municipalities.

In regard to review and reporting, Argentina has realised so far three VNR (2017, 2020, and 2022) and two country reports (2018 and 2021). The CNCPs is responsible for monitoring and assessing progress in the implementation of the SDGs, with the intervention and support of relevant areas of the national public administration, and in the framework of action of the National Interinstitutional Commission. The three core dimensions applied to frame SDG implementation review and monitoring include indicators, strategies and programs, and mobilised resources.

The CNCPs invites provinces to participate in the SDG Provinces Report (Informe ODS Provincias), which seeks to highlight annual progress on the adaptation of the SDGs in each territory, as done by seventeen provinces between 2017 and 2019. To ensure vertical articulation, provincial level reports are compiled and integrated in the preparation of the VNR. Moreover, in Argentina there are several VLR experiences, such as the city of Buenos Aires, Lincoln, Villa Maria, and the Provinces of Córdoba and Santa Fe. Furthermore, the FAM presented a VSR in 2022. However, although the VNRS indicate that consultation with local governments has taken place, the organizations representing local governments note that in some cases the consultation did not directly include them. A key recognised limitation is the lack of locally disaggregated data, which would require the promotion of alliances and coordinated implementation of data management processes.

Concerning planning, the CNCPs ensured coordination with 20 ministries and the adaptation of the SDGs to national priorities through 6 thematic commissions (education, agriculture, housing and urban development, work and employment and social protection), that were active between 2016 and 2017 under the National Interinstitutional Commission. The Province of Córdoba has built a solid foundation to institutionalize the planning and implementation of the SDGs at the government level in connection with its cross-cutting policy priority towards the promotion of social inclusion and justice. The holistic view of the 2030 Agenda is reflected in the alignment of the priority axes of the provincial government action with the SDGs. The institutionalisation of horizontally integrated planning is reflected not only in the setting of priorities and targets for SDGs localization, but in all public policies decision making and programming processes at provincial level.

In the Province of Córdoba, an Open Management Portal accounts for the strong intergovernmental articulation of the SDGs implementation process and constitutes a key instrument to support its implementation. The portal provides, through open-data sets, structured and transparent information to citizens on the plans and initiatives of the Provincial government to implement the SDGs in the different public management areas. As part of the implementation process, the Provincial government in cooperation with the CNCPs assured the sensitization and capa-
city building of all administrative offices in the different departments and branches. The provincial government has complemented the process of linking government policies and actions with the SDGs by fully aligning the provincial budget to the SDGs with a focus on equality and sustainability and a specific gender perspective.

Regarding review and reporting, the Province of Córdoba has prepared since 2016 a ‘government management report’ linked to the Open Management Portal, in which all departments report in a unified document connecting respective plans and programs with related SDGs. The report constitutes an active transparency and dissemination tool for the monitoring of public policies accounting for horizontal policy integration. The Province also developed a framework of multidimensional well-being indicators that serves also as reference to monitor prioritized SDG targets and a matrix of interconnectedness to identify and measure the synergies and trade-offs between the SDGs.

### STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Concerning political commitment and institutional arrangements, the Social Participation Forum serves as a national space for dialogue and participation of civil society actors in their different expressions and from different levels, and links them with provincial and municipal SDG focal points, representatives of the UN system, representatives of the legislative system, and the private sector, to promote joint initiatives, inform policy making.

Social participation forums are also promoted at the subnational level. In 2021, more than 25 Forums were organized in the Province of Buenos Aires; others were organized in the Provinces of Chaco, Misiones and San Juan. The province of Córdoba integrates since 2018 the Córdoba SDGs Forum, a space promoted by the Córdoba Regional Faculty of the National Technological University to gather and promote dialogue between companies, non-profit organizations, governments and decision-makers. The Province of Córdoba also established its Open Government Roundtable, composed of civil society organisations and representatives from academia.

Other federal initiatives aimed at promoting broad stakeholders’ engagement include the Global Pact Network and SDGs business area, which has a function to articulate with the business sector to promote the SDGs as a reference for the management of companies. Finally, a Latin America SDG network was also formed in 2020 and includes today representatives from 14 countries in the region.

In terms of planning, CSOs have been formally invited by the president of the CNCPS to join the six thematic commissions active alongside the National Interinstitutional Commission. Similarly, provinces work with actors from the private, not-for-profit, and academic sectors to provide a reality check on the priorities selected by the government and to assess the interconnectedness across social, economic and environmental SDGs in their territories. The Social Participation Forum elaborates a yearly action plan for contributing to the territorialization of 2030 Agenda at the local level. The stakeholders’ engagement process associated to multi-level governance for the territorialisation of the SDGs led to the co-creation of a policy reform agenda, including different axes as for instance a new economic/productive matrix.

In the Province of Córdoba, a thorough collaborative territorialization process takes place with the private sector, the academia and civil society to inform the definition of priority goals and targets. Furthermore, the multi-stakeholders’ process allowed to develop a matrix that identify synergies across the SDGs in the Province and to develop strategies to adapt the 2030 Agenda to the provincial context.

At national level, the relation with the private sector on SDG implementation is leading to concrete and ad-hoc measures to operationalize support and synergies, including for example the introduction of incentives for investments in renewable energies, the partnership between the provincial government and private companies in the training and placement of workers.

In the Province of Córdoba, a fully integrated and participatory multi-stakeholders’ process is run over a year to orient and inform the SDG implementation and territorialisation process. The process includes information and sensitization sessions, workshops for structured dialogue in the different thematic areas, in parallel with and as input to the horizontal and intersectoral planning process. The Open Government Roundtable complements the process enhancing transparency and accountability through the same principles of cross-sectoral integration and multi-actor participation. The Open Management Portal is considered a key communication tool to promote the provincial activities on the 2030 Agenda and to engage with a wide range of territorial stakeholders and the public.

In the Province of Córdoba, the participatory planning process for the definition of SDGs policy priorities and targets is reflected through an open government approach in the reporting process. The different groups of actors consulted for the elaboration of the plans are equally involved through structured consultation mechanisms in the verification of activities and results in the different policy areas. The 2022 first VLR has been developed in collaboration with the private sector, academia and civil society, following a multi-stakeholder approach.
This summary reports the main information on multilevel governance for SDG localization in Argentina. It is part of the wider global research “Accelerating progress towards the localization of the SDGs and post-pandemic recovery through enhanced multilevel governance”. The research is the building block of UN-Habitat’s effort to strengthen global knowledge and practices on multilevel governance as a key process to localizing the SDGs. The research has been led in partnership with ARCO (Action Research for Co-development) and with the support of knowledge partners: Brookings Institution, LSE Cities, Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance, United Cities Local Governments.

The analysis summarized here is mainly based on information collected through key informant interviews with one of the main associations of Local and Regional Governments in the country (i.e., Federation of Argentinian Municipalities - FAM) and one local authority actively committed to SDG localization (i.e., Province of Córdoba). Moreover, it provides information extrapolated from the official Voluntary National Reviews (2017, 2020 and 2022), the 2022 Voluntary Subnational Review published by FAM and the 2022 Voluntary Local Review elaborated by the Province of Córdoba, as well as from relevant global reports, including the yearly UCLG report to the High-level Political Forum “Towards the localization of the SDGs”, OECD/UCLG (2019), OECD (2020), OECD country profiles on PCSD, Brookings (2020, 2022), and the policy briefs on “Emergency Governance for Cities and Regions” by LSE Cities, UCLG & Metropolis (2021).