The European context for monitoring and reviewing SDGs

How EU Member States and the European level are approaching the Post-2015 Agenda

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ESDN Quarterly Report N°37

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ESDN Quarterly Report 37 – July 2015

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In continuation of the work undertaken by the ESDN Office in the past several months on the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and the Post-2015 Agenda, this ESDN Quarterly Report aims at integrating and expanding the debates with a particular focus on the processes of monitoring and reviewing SDGs that will be taking place in Europe and in EU Member States. It collects ideas and discussions held in the events organised by the ESDN on the theme 'Sustainable Development Goals and the Post-2015 Agenda'. More precisely, the report refers to the 2014 ESDN Conference held in Rome in November 2014, and to the recent 12th ESDN Workshop on 16June 2015, for which we offer a summary of its discussions and debates.

The report is structured as follows: In chapter one, the current status of the SDGs and the Post-2015 Agenda is presented with the inclusion of an overview of the zero draft published by the UN on 2 June 2015. The second chapter reflects on the European situation and presents an overview of strategy frameworks, the European approach towards the Post-2015 Agenda, and the role of monitoring/reviewing in Europe. The thridhapter presents the experiences with EU and national SD monitoring and review processes, and includes the key messages from two ESDN case studies. The fourth chapter offers an overview of the main discussions and results of the 12th ESDN Workshop. Lastly, the fifth chapter concludes by reflecting on the Post-2015 Agenda, the SDGs, and the potential role of the ESDN in this context.

Contents

Introduction

In continuation of the work undertaken by the ESDN Office in the past several months on the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and the Post-2015 Agenda, this Quarterly Report aims at integrating and expanding the debates held until now with a particular focus on the **processes of monitoring and reviewing SDGs** that will be taking place in Europe and in EU Member States.

In 2014, the ESDN extensively reflected and opened discussions on the theme of the SDGs, especially during the **ESDN Conference 2014**, "A renewed policy framework for sustainable development – The international SD agenda and its impact on Europe", which took place in Rome, Italy (6-7 November 2014) in cooperation with the then Italian EU Presidency. With 70 participants from 22 countries, this conference mainly reflected on how the UN process on the SDGs impacts on the EU and its Member States in terms of sustainable development policies and governance. Several key messages resulted from the various keynotes, panel discussions, and interactive group work at the ESDN Conference 2014:

- First, the UN process on the SDGs was seen as an **ideal opportunity for Europe to promote an effective transition towards sustainable development**: Europe should be a leader and role-model, also on the international level, by promoting an innovative path towards sustainable development.
- Secondly, the ESDN Conference 2014 highlighted the **crucial role that governance for SD** should have in Europe, especially in terms of leadership, implementation and innovative paths for the future. In this context, a need for '**more Europe**' was shared, particularly a **stronger EU leadership**, with a **renewed political commitment**, and a reaffirmation of a **common vision towards SD**. A recommendation was advanced to focus more prominently on SD by **renewing the outdated EU SDS**. Consequently, it was argued that the Europe 2020 Strategy could not replace a **comprehensive**, **long-term EU strategy for SD**, which is able to consider the **physical limits of ecosystems**. A stronger **focus on implementation of SD objectives** was also suggested – by using, for instance, the European Semester as a process to help EU Member States implement SDGs and targets (i.e. Greening the European Semester) – together with a stronger attention to **policy coherence** and **multi-level governance**.
- Thirdly, the participants of the ESDN Conference 2014 strongly recommended that **all societal stakeholders (especially civil society, business and research) should be involved** by addressing SD issues in Europe through more democratic, inclusive and participatory approaches.

Additionally, between November 2014 and January 2015, as an immediate follow-up of the ESDN Conference 2014, the ESDN Office undertook a **survey among national SD policy-makers in Europe** to receive information about **national activities in relation to the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and on the Post-2015 Agenda**. Of the 29 country representatives approached, 18 policy-makers responded to the survey questionnaires, which focused on three main areas of inquiry: (i) the process (before and after September 2015); (ii) the foreseen implementation phase; and (iii) the governance mechanisms (i.e. leadership, coordination).

The survey results show that in several EU Member States, SDGs-related activities and initiatives have, so far, revolved around the **organisation of events, meetings and workshops for public**

servants, but also on **dialogues with stakeholders** to exchange views and broaden participation towards the post-2015 Agenda process. In addition, SDGs-related initiatives have often been **undertaken through regular or already existing coordination and consultation mechanisms** in relation to the elaboration of national positions among national ministries or in meetings of Secretary of State committees, but also connected to the participation in the Open Working Group (OWG) on sustainable development goals. Moreover, several countries have started processes to suggest changes and to **incorporate results from the Post-2015 agenda in their NSDSs**.

Additional SDGs-related activities and initiatives are foreseen in EU Member States until September 2015. In most cases, stakeholder events and consultation activities will be organised. A strong case is made towards the **renewal/revision of NSDSs** and of **national SD indicators,** taking into account the SDGs. In some cases, already established processes will be kept active. The detailed results of the survey can be found in the ESDN Quarterly Report of January 2015.

This Quarterly Report is structured as follows; In chapter one, the current status of the SDGs and the Post-2015 Agenda is presented with the inclusion of an overview of the zero draft published by the UN on 2June 2015. The second chapter reflects on the European situation and presents an overview of strategy frameworks, the European approach towards the Post-2015 Agenda, and the role of monitoring/reviewing in Europe. Chapter three presents the experiences with EU and national SD monitoring and review processes, and includes the key messages from two ESDN case studies. The fourth chapter offers an overview of the main discussions and results at the 12th ESDN Workshop. Lastly, the fifth chapter concludes by reflecting on the Post-2015 Agenda, the SDGs, and the potential role of the ESDN in this context.

1 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the current debates

1.1 SDGs and the post-2015 agenda: current status

The UN General Assembly's Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG) agreed on and published a 'zero draft' proposal of the SDGs at the conclusion of its 13th and final session on the 19July 2014. The proposal contains **17 goals** (see following Fig.1.1), accompanied by **169 targets**. This list of goals and targets is, however, only temporary as the final decision on the SDGs and related targets will be adopted by the UN Member States at a summit in September 2015 at the UN Headquarters in New York.

Fig.1.1 List of proposed SDGs

Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere
Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture
Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all
Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all
Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries
Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Source: UN (2014a)[1]

The post-2015 agenda can be seen as a **global development agenda beyond 2015 with sustainable development at its core**, with the aim to find convergence between two large discourses at the international level: the *development discourse* and its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and *sustainable development*, which aims to balance the dimensions of social equity, economic development and environmental protection.

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[1] UN. 2014. Outcome Document - Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. Available at:
http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/focussdgs.html

In this context, a process with the aim of developing a set of SDGs was initiated in the Rio+20 Outcome Document[2]. Several **work streams** were, therefore, established in the form of "an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process" (paragraph 248): (i) Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG); (ii) High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda; (iii) UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda; (iv) National, global and thematic consultations; (v) Regional consultations; (vi) Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN); (vii) UN Global Compact.

At the end of 2014, and in response to the UN General Assembly[3], the Secretary-General presented a [Synthesis Report](#)[4] as a contribution to the intergovernmental negotiations in the lead up to the Summit bringing together the results of all different work streams of the post-2015 development agenda until then (December 2014). In this report, entitled "The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet", the Secretary-General recognised the SDGs proposed by the OWG in the 'zero draft' report, and in Paragraph 45 synthesised the added value of the SDGs. Moreover, the report particularly emphasises **the need for a transformational approach of the new agenda**, which seems to be the strongest message within the report. Terms such as 'transformation', 'transformative' or 'transition' to sustainable development are repeated several times throughout the text. Such a strong concept is, for instance, also included in the title of the report and an entire section (Section B - A transformational approach) is dedicated to it. In addition, a particular **sense of urgency** is attached to it as stated, for instance, in Paragraph 159. The Secretary General's Synthesis Report proposes an integrated set of six essential elements, which, taken together, aim to facilitate the deliberations of Member States towards a 'truly universal transformation of sustainable development':

1. **Dignity**: to end poverty and fight inequalities;

2. **People**: to ensure healthy lives, knowledge and the inclusion of women and children;

3. **Prosperity**: to grow a strong, inclusive and transformative economy;

4. **Planet**: to protect our ecosystems for all societies and our children;

5. **Justice**: to promote safe and peaceful societies and strong institutions;

6. **Partnership**: to catalyse global solidarity for sustainable development.

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[2] See: http://www.uncsd2012.org/thefuturewewant.html
[3] See also: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015
[4] UN (2014b) The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, transforming all Lives and Protecting the Planet. Synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the Post-2015 Agenda.

Figure 1.2: Six essential elements for delivering the sustainable development goals
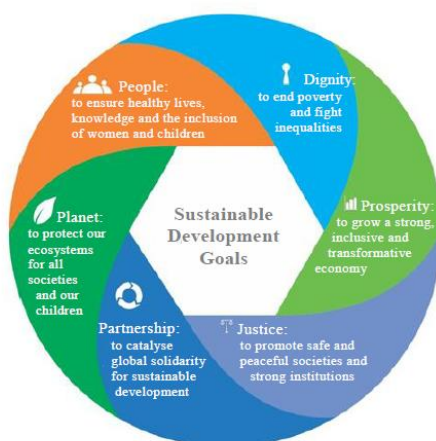
Source: UN (2014b)

Since January 2015, a series of **Inter-governmental Negotiations** (IGN) have started in order to discuss on the post-2015 agenda. Inter-governmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda began in New York on 19 January 2015[5] with the President of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) opening a 3-day session of "stocktaking".

Four elements[6] are discussed and are expected to comprise the **new agenda**[7]: a declaration; a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets, along with eventual indicators; their means of implementation (MOI) and a new Global Partnership for Development; and, follow-up and review of implementation.

Negotiations are following a **road map of eight meetings** from January to July 2015. A final meeting will be convened on **25-27 September 2015 in New York** with a United Nations Summit to adopt the post-2015 development agenda, including a list of SDGs and targets, as a high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly. Parallel discussions have taken place regarding other important issues as i.e. the means of financing the post-2015 agenda for development.

1.2 SDGs monitoring and reviewing processes: current status

In particular, the third meeting at the UN level, held on 23-27 March 2015, addressed issues related to the proposed SDGs, targets and indicators. A technical report[8] prepared by the **Bureau of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC)** on the process of the development of an indicator framework for the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda was presented at the meeting. In preparation of the report, international agencies submitted

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[5] Read more at: http://sd.iisd.org/news/intergovernmental-negotiations-on-post-2015-development-agenda-begin-with-stocktaking/

[6] Read more: http://sd.iisd.org/news/negotiations-consider-four-elements-of-post-2015-agenda/

[7] Refer to: United Nations (2014). Decision adopted by the General Assembly on modalities for the process of intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda, Draft Decision.

[8] UNSC (2015) Technical report by the Bureau of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) on the process of the development of an indicator framework for the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda Available   at: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/6754Technical%20report%20of%20the%20UNSC%20Bureau%20(final).pdf

recommendations of global indicators for the targets under all 17 SDGs, which then were assessed by **National Statistical Offices (NSOs)** based on three main criteria: **feasibility**; **suitability**; and **relevance**. Such an assessment, as pointed out by the UNSC, provides a point of departure for identifying appropriate indicators for all targets, which are only provisional and have not been discussed or endorsed by national experts. The purpose of this preliminary proposal was to:

- reassure Member States at the intergovernmental negotiations that the technical work on indicators is well under way;

- inform about the progress of work;

- illustrate how a list of global universal indicators might look, thereby providing some insights on how the targets can be measured; and

- allow Member States to provide feedback and broad political guidance for the future work of the Commission for the development of a proposal for a global indicator framework.

The results over the proposed 304 indicators[9] are reflected in the draft technical report (in Annex 5) and we have summarized them in the following **Fig. 1.3**.

Fig. 1.3: UNSC assessment of proposed indicators[10]

Out of the ***304 proposed provisional indicators***:
- 50 indicators (16%): feasible, suitable and very relevant;
- 39 indicators (13%): only feasible with strong effort, but suitable and very relevant;
- 28 indicators (9%): only feasible with strong effort, in need for further discussion, but very relevant;
- 86 indicators (28%): only feasible with strong effort, in need for further discussion and somewhat relevant;
- 95 indicators (31%): difficult even with strong effort, in need for further discussion and somewhat relevant.

For 23 indicators, an additional fourth question was asked concerning the feasibility of the proposed dis-aggregation beyond age and sex. For 20 out of these 23 indicators, this additional disaggregation was found feasible with strong effort.

Source: UNSC (2015)

Several messages from the UNSC report are important and summarized here:
- The UNSC, at its 46th session (3-6 March 2015), has endorsed a **roadmap for the development and implementation of a global indicator framework** and, in particular, the suggested timetable that foresees the endorsement of an indicator framework at the forty-seventh session of the Commission in 2016[11];

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[9] The **304 proposed provisional indicators** were compiled from submissions of experts from international agencies, organized as clusters under each goal, with each cluster providing indicator proposals in order of their priority (if more than one indicator was proposed) for all targets under the goal. In order to keep the number of indicators manageable and limited, in particular in light of the capacity constraints expressed by the Statistical Commission, only the first two of the proposed indicators for each target were included for this initial technical assessment.

[10] The UNSC report further explains that: when aggregating the results across countries, for each of the questions the rating of "A" was given to an indicator when at least 60 per cent of respondents to this question gave this rating. The rating of "C" was given when at least 40 per cent of respondents gave this rating. In all other cases, the indicator was rated "B". Not all countries responded to all questions and the percentages were calculated excluding non-responses.

[11] The global indicator framework is to be based on the report of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG), the ongoing intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda and the outcome of the High-level summit in September 2015

- The UNSC emphasized that, given the possibility of measurement and capacity constraints of Member States, the global indicator framework: (i) should only contain a limited number of indicators; (ii) strike a balance between reducing the number of indicators and policy relevance; (iii) build on the experiences of the MDGs; (iv) take into account conceptual indicator frameworks that have already been developed; (v) besides global, universal indicators, there will also be additional indicators for regional, national and thematic monitoring, to be organized in an integrated architecture;
- The Commission endorsed the **formation of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs**) that will be tasked with fully developing a proposal for the indicator framework for the monitoring of the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda at the global level, under the leadership of the national statistical offices, in an open and transparent manner.

Particularly relevant is the role of the **IAEG-SDGs**[12]. It has been proposed that at its first meeting[13] on 1-2 June 2015, the IAEG-SDGs will start its work on the development of a proposal for a global indicator framework for the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda. The road map endorsed by the Statistical Commission envisages the development of a first note on possible global and universal indicators and an indicator framework by July 2015. This note is expected to contain the proposed criteria for the selection of indicators for global monitoring. By December 2015, the IEAG-SDGs will provide a proposal of global and universal indicators, and an indicator framework for consideration by the Statistical Commission at its 47th session in March 2016. In parallel to the IAEG-SDGs, the Statistical Commission agreed that a **High-level Group (HLG)** should be established to provide strategic leadership for the SDG implementation process as it concerns statistical monitoring and reporting.

Moreover, since March 2013, the Commission has been supporting the inter-governmental process towards the formulation of a new development agenda through its **Friends of the Chair group on broader measures of progress (FOC)**. The FOC has also provided inputs to the inter-governmental process on the post-2015 development agenda. Particularly its reports[14] to the Statistical Commission helped prepare and guide the discussion on the development and implementation of an indicator framework for the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda. The work on the development and implementation of an indicator framework for the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda is now taken over by the above-mentioned IAEG-SDGs and the HLG.

In particular, the IAEG-SDGs[15] will consist of 28 representatives of NSOs and include, as observers, representatives of regional commissions and regional and international agencies. The IAEG-SDGs will, among others:

(a) **Develop an indicator framework and a list of indicators** for the monitoring of the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda at the global level to be adopted by the Statistical Commission at its 47th session in 2016;

(b) **Provide technical support for the implementation** of the approved indicator and monitoring framework over the 15-year period towards 2030; ensure the use of

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[12]   More information are available at: http://unstats.un.org/files/IAEG-SDGs%20-%20Terms%20of%20Reference%20(April%202015).pdf

[13] See also: http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/first-iaeg-sdgs-meeting/

[14] See for instance: http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc15/2015-2-BroaderMeasures-E.pdF

[15] http://unstats.un.org/files/IAEG-SDGs%20-%20Terms%20of%20Reference%20(April%202015).pdf

harmonized and agreed indicator definitions; **share experiences** on monitoring the sustainable development goals; and **encourage good practices and innovations**, including in the area of national capacity building;

(c) **Regularly review** methodological developments and issues related to the indicators and their metadata;

(d) **Report on progress** towards the goals and targets;

(e) **Regularly review capacity-building activities** in statistical areas relevant to sustainable development goal monitoring;

(f) **Review and support work by the Secretariat** for the development of a sustainable development goal data-user forum, tools for data analysis and an open dashboard on the state of sustainable development goals.

In this context, a particularly useful piece of information is provided by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), which published on 15 May 2015 the report '[Indicators and a Monitoring Framework for Sustainable Development Goals: Launching a data revolution for the SDGs'](#) offering a contribution to the multi-stakeholder debate in support of the SDGs. The report is the result of over 18 months of consultative work led by the SDSN with the contributions of nearly 500 organizations and thousands of individuals. The SDSN [Thematic Groups](#), a large number of UN agencies and other international institutions, national statistical offices, civil society organizations, academia, and businesses have provided expert input that has helped improve the indicator framework. Several **messages** are particularly interesting:

- o A sound indicator framework will turn the SDGs and their targets into a **management tool** as well as a **report card to measure progress towards sustainable development** and help ensure the **accountability** of all stakeholders for achieving the SDGs;

- o An emerging consensus suggests that the focus of **SDG monitoring will be at the national level**;

- o **Complementary monitoring** will occur **at regional and global levels,** and in a **thematic way**;

- o **100 Global Monitoring Indicators** are suggested, **accompanied by suggestions for Complementary National Indicators**;

- o All SDG indicators need to be considered as an **integrated package:** goals and targets are themselves **interdependent**, must be pursued **together** and also give careful thought to **tracking cross-cutting issues**;

- o A **Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data**, to help drive the **Data Revolution**, should be established.

A special attention in the SDSN report is devoted to the development of an **integrated monitoring framework**. Such a framework should include multi-level review processes and indicators that will need to be not only **national**, but also **global**, **regional** and **thematic** as laid out in the Secretary-General's Synthesis Report mentioned above and described in the following figure 1.4. These four

levels of monitoring – national, regional, global, and thematic – should be organized in an **integrated architecture**, as suggested in the technical report by the Bureau of the UNSC[16].

Fig. 1.4 Four levels of monitoring – national, regional, global, and thematic
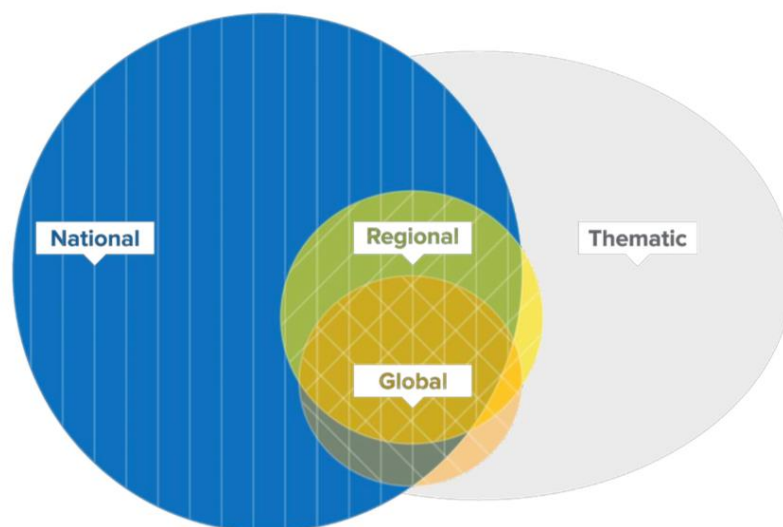
Source: UN (2014)

1.3 The Zero Draft for the Post-2015 Agenda

On 2 June 2015, a Zero Draft[17], entitled '[Transforming our world by 2030: a new agenda for global action](#)', has been published by the UN. The Zero Draft was discussed at the session of the post-2015 intergovernmental negotiations on 22-25 June 2015. The drafting of the outcome document will continue in the lead up to the UN Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015, when world leaders are expected to adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

The Post-2015 Agenda is seen as a **plan of action for people, planet and prosperity** with the intention to: (i) end poverty and hunger; (ii) secure education, health and basic services for all; (iii) achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; (iv) combat inequalities within and between countries; (v) foster inclusive economic growth, shared prosperity and sustainable lifestyles for all; (vi) promote safe and inclusive cities and human settlements; (vii) protect the planet, fight climate change, use natural resources sustainably and safeguard our oceans; (viii) strengthen governance and promote peaceful, safe, just and inclusive societies; and (ix) revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

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[16] Bureau of the United Nations Statistical Commission, (March 2015), Technical report on the process of the development of an indicator framework for the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda - Working draft.

[17] UN (2015) Transforming our world by 2030: A new agenda for global action. Zero draft of the outcome document for the UN Summit to adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Available at: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/7261Post-2015%20Summit%20-%202%20June%202015.pdf

Strong emphasis is put on the **universality** of the agenda and on its **transformative** character. Moreover, the agenda has the ambition to be the **first ever global compact for human development and preservation of the planet** with **unprecedented scope and significance**.

An equally strong focus is attached to **implementation, action** and **integrated solutions** to respond to the complex and interrelated SD challenges. In particular, means of implementation are explored and described in relation to, for instance, financial resources, capacity-building, the central role of science, technology and innovation, multilateral trading system, policy coordination, and coherence. In the context of the implementation of the Post-2015 Agenda, critical importance is given towards the engagement of all relevant stakeholders, more specifically the document affirms: "Governments and public institutions will work closely in this regard with national parliaments, local authorities, international institutions, business and the private sector, civil society, academia, philanthropic organizations, voluntary groups and others" (para.37).

1.3.1 Follow-up and Review

The 'Zero draft' (see **Section III**) devotes particular attention to a **robust, effective, inclusive and transparent follow-up and review framework** to assist in implementation and accountability. Whilst review processes will be voluntary and will consider different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities, **national ownership** is considered crucial to achieve sustainable development.

The national level will be, therefore, decisive in this context. Paragraph 4 of section III puts the emphasis on the existing processes and strategies, and affirms: "Building on existing reporting and planning instruments, such as **national sustainable development strategies**, we encourage all member states to develop ambitious national responses to the SDGs and targets as soon as possible" (our emphasis).

Multi-level and **multi-stakeholder** review processes also receive great importance, together with for instance national parliaments or existing institutions such as the National SD Councils.

Several **principles** are suggested in the effort to guide the follow-up and review processes:
   a) Address progress in implementing the goals and targets, including the means of implementation, in a manner which respects their integrated and inter-related nature.
   b) Maintain a longer-term orientation, identify achievements and critical success factors, support countries in making informed policy choices and mobilize the necessary means of implementation and partnerships;
   c) Be open and inclusive, supported by an enabling environment for the participation of all people and stakeholders.
   d) Build on existing platforms and processes, evolve over time and minimize the reporting burden on national administrations.
   e) Be rigorous and evidence-based, informed by data which is timely, reliable and disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts. Support for developing countries, particularly LDCs, to strengthen national data systems is critical.

At the global level, the High-level Political Forum (HLPF), under the auspices of ECOSOC, will be at the center of a global network of review processes, with the task, among others, to **facilitate sharing of experiences** and **promote system-wide coherence and coordination of SD policies**.

Regional levels will also come to play in such a framework and contribute to the Post-2015 Agenda, especially in consideration of **mutual learning**, **cooperation on trans-boundary issues** and **discussion on shared targets**.

Below, please find two important graphs from the Zero Draft that illustrate the follow-up and review framework foreseen (see **Fig.1.5** and **Fig.1.6**).

Fig.1.5 Illustrative follow-up and review framework (1)
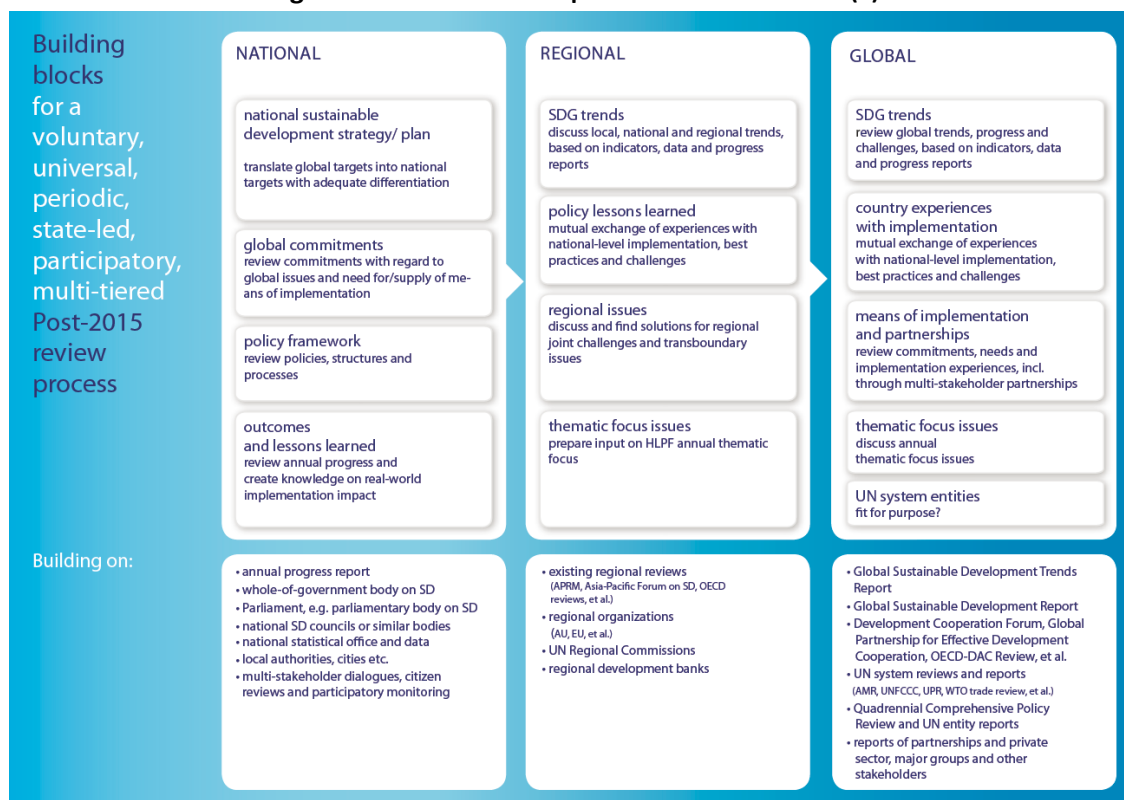
Source: UN (2015) Post-2015 Agenda Zero Draft

Fig.1.6 Illustrative follow-up and review framework (2)

Source: UN (2015)
Post-2015 Agenda Zero Draft

2 A European perspective: strategy frameworks, the Post-2015 Agenda, and the role for monitoring/reviewing

2.1 How the EU is engaging with the SDGs and the Post-2015 Agenda

In the European Union, mainly two policy strategies can be related to the SDGs as their goals and targets are dealing with similar issues: the Europe 2020 Strategy and the EU Sustainable Development Strategy. Additionally, Eurostat is monitoring both strategies extensively with its bi-annual reports, and this fact gives us more information on how to connect the post-2015 agenda and European policy strategies.

2.1.1   The Europe 2020 Strategy

Adopted in 2010, the Europe 2020 Strategy[18], 'A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth', outlines three "mutually reinforcing priorities" (EC, 2010, p.3) 18 for the EU:

- **Smart growth**: developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation;
- **Sustainable growth**: promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy;
- **Inclusive growth**: fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion.

Although they are not exhaustive, **five EU headline targets** are to be achieved by 2020:

1. 75% of the population aged 20-64 should be employed;
2. 3% of the EU's GDP should be invested in R&D;
3. the "20/20/20" climate and energy targets should be met (including an increase to 30% of emissions reduction if the conditions are right);
4. the share of early school leavers should be under 10% and at least 40% of the younger generation should have a tertiary degree;
5. 20 million less people should be at risk of poverty.

The EU headline targets are then translated into national Europe 2020 targets that reflect the different national situations and circumstances.

2.1.2   The EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS)

Renewed and adopted in 2006, the EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS) sets out objectives and concrete actions for **seven key priority challenges**, mostly for the period until 2010:

1. **Climate change and clean energy**: to limit climate change and its costs and negative effects to society and the environment;

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[18] European Commission (2010) EUROPE 2020 - A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. COM(2010) 2020 final, 2010, http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:2020:FIN:EN:PDF

2. **Sustainable transport**: to ensure that our transport systems meet society's economic, social and environmental needs whilst minimising their undesirable impacts on the economy, society and the environment;

3. **Sustainable consumption & production**: to promote sustainable consumption and production patterns;

4. **Conservation and management of natural resources**: to improve management and avoid overexploitation of natural resources, recognising the value of ecosystem services;

5. **Public Health**: to promote good public health on equal conditions and improve protection against health threats;

6. **Social inclusion, demography and migration**: to create a socially inclusive society by taking into account solidarity between and within generations and to secure and increase the quality of life of citizens as a precondition for lasting individual well-being;

7. **Global poverty and sustainable development challenges**: to actively promote sustainable development worldwide and ensure that the European Union's internal and external policies are consistent with global sustainable development and its international commitments.

Additionally, the renewed EU SDS includes two cross-cutting policies that aim to contribute to the knowledge society: 1) **Education and training**; and, 2) **Research and development**.

2.1.3   The EU and the Post-2015 Agenda

On 26 May 2015, Council of the European Union published its Council conclusions on the post-2015 agenda entitled "*A New Global Partnership for Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development after 2015*". These conclusions complement the *December 2014 conclusions*, with a number of other European positions (Fig. 2.1) that altogether set out the EU's vision in this matter, and further develop aspects of the new global partnership needed to achieve the sustainable development goals (SDGs). The conclusions affirm right at the very beginning how the Post-2015 Agenda presents a **great opportunity to address the interlinked challenges** of poverty eradication and sustainable development, and describe such an opportunity as a **key priority for the EU and its Member States**.

Fig. 2.1 EU's vision documents on the post-2015 agenda

Commission Communications:
• February 2013: "*A decent life for all: Ending poverty and giving the world a sustainable future*" COM(2013)92
• July 2013: "*Beyond 2015: towards a comprehensive and integrated approach to financing poverty eradication and sustainable development*" COM(2013)531
• June 2014: "*A decent life for all: From vision to collective action*" COM(2014)335
• February 2015: "*A Global Partnership for Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development after 2015*" COM(2015)44
Council Conclusions:
• June 2013: "*The overarching post-2015 agenda*" 11559/13
• December 2013: "*Financing poverty eradication and sustainable development beyond 2015*" 17553/13
• December 2014: "*A transformative post-2015 agenda*" 16827/14
• May 2015: "*A New Global Partnership for Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development after 2015*" 9241/15

Several **guiding principles** are reaffirmed by the EU Council Conclusions of May 2015: (i) universality, (ii) shared responsibility, (iii) mutual accountability, (iv) consideration of respective capabilities, and (v) a multi-stakeholder approach. Such a new global partnership should also be based on and promote: human rights, equality, non-discrimination, democratic institutions, good governance, rule of law, inclusiveness, environmental sustainability, respect for planetary boundaries, women's rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Particular emphasis to reach and implement the post-2015 agenda is then put on national ownership and accountability, especially, for instance, through **sustainable development strategies**: "National ownership and accountability will be of key importance for the Post-2015 Agenda and its implementation, including through commitments at the appropriate levels and instruments such as sustainable development strategies." (Art. 7, Council Conclusions of 25 May 2015)

In this context, the Conclusions describe **eight key components** of a comprehensive approach to means of implementation in the context of a new Global Partnership, for each of which we provide some detailed information:

1. Establishing an enabling and conducive policy environment at all levels

All countries should ensure that appropriate policies are in place including, for example, through effective legislative and regulatory frameworks to implement the post-2015 agenda and achieve the SDGs. Consistently, all countries will need to **promote effective and inclusive institutions and develop transparent policies** with a special reference to **strengthening the link between peace, human rights and sustainable development**. In this context, particular attention should be devoted to full and productive employment and decent work that address inequality and social exclusion. Strong reference is made towards **policy coherence** at all levels as countries at all levels of development should ensure that their policies contribute coherently to their sustainable development priorities, both domestically and internationally.

2. Developing capacity to deliver

The Conclusions stress the importance of effective institutions and having the necessary capacity and human skills for implementing the agenda, especially by ensuring capacity to design and implement policies to tackle sustainable development challenges and to adopt measures, collect data, assess results and review strategies. Particular attention is devoted to an **enabling environment for civil society** both at national and international level: an inclusive engagement of citizens and civil society is key for nurturing democratic ownership, development effectiveness and sustainability of results. In this context, particularly relevant are **multi-stakeholder partnerships** as they can contribute to sustainable development and bring together the knowledge and experience of a wide variety of actors.

3. Mobilising and making effective use of domestic public finance

As domestic public finance is recognized as the largest source of stable and directly available financing for most governments, the Conclusions, therefore, stress the importance **of**

mainstreaming sustainable development in domestic public finance. All countries should commit to achieving levels of government revenue that best allow them to sustainably fund, at domestic level, poverty eradication and sustainable development, including by strengthening the institutions responsible for revenue policy and collection and their oversight. In so doing, all countries should also commit to good governance and ensure that they have systems in place for the efficient and transparent management of public resources, including through public procurement, and the sustainable management of natural resources and the related revenue: **transparency and accountability is key**.

4. Mobilising and making effective use of international public finance

Since international public financing remains an important and catalytic element of the overall financing available to developing countries – including i.e. official development assistance (ODA) – the Conclusions reaffirm the EU's **collective commitment to achieve the 0.7% ODA/GNI target** within the time frame of the post-2015 agenda. The Conclusions also underpin that all international public resources should contribute to supporting poverty eradication and sustainable development in a balanced and integrated way that is both climate smart and climate resilient and ecosystem tolerant. They should be delivered and used effectively and efficiently, in line with development effectiveness principles including ownership, transparency and mutual accountability and emphasis on results. Particular mention is made towards the use of innovative financing and the role of International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and multilateral and bilateral development banks as critical actors for reaching the SDGs.

5. Mobilising the domestic and international private sector

The Conclusions recognise the potential of **private entrepreneurship (i.e. public-private partnerships)** as a central tool for sustainable development. The private sector should be fully engaged in the implementation of the post-2015 agenda through the creation of a conducive and stable business environment for the private sector. Furthermore, investment is key, including level playing fields for competition, as are accountable and efficient institutions acting in accordance with the rule of law. Therefore, the Conclusions stressed the need to support a conductive policy and regulatory framework for the financial sector, the strengthening of financial infrastructure and the building of client-oriented and sustainable financial institutions that mobilise domestic savings. In addition, they underlined the importance of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and enterprises of the social economy to job creation and sustainable development, as well as the crucial role played by small-holder farmers.

6. Stimulating trade and investments

While **trade is seen as one of the key factors** for inclusive growth and sustainable development, and as an essential means of implementation for the post-2015 agenda, the Conclusions recognise the primacy of the World Trade Organisation with regard to trade issues at global level. Particular attention is, therefore, devoted to trade policy, including trade and investment agreements, as it must appropriately integrate sustainable development including its social and environmental dimensions: greater support should be given to multilateral efforts and the

plurilateral agreement on environmental goods and services, and to the implementation of ILO core labour standards and fundamental conventions, as well as to the implementation of MEAs.

7. Fostering science, technology and innovation

Investments in science, technology and innovation (STI) are vital to achieving poverty eradication and sustainable development as well as to identifying and addressing pressing global societal challenges. In order to improve evidence-based decision-making, the Conclusions stress the need to **improve the science-policy interface**. All countries should, therefore, increase bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation on STI to promote the implementation of the SDGs. The EU is committed to fostering STI, for example, through its framework programme for research and innovation: Horizon 2020 will also support sustainable development, both within the EU and in cooperation with international partners.

8. Addressing the challenges and harnessing the positive effects of migration

In this regard, the Conclusions affirm that **well-managed migration and mobility** can make a positive contribution as an enabler to inclusive growth and sustainable development. Migration should be addressed in a holistic manner, taking full account of the opportunities and challenges of migration for development. The new Global Partnership should foster a more collaborative approach to increase the benefits of international migration for sustainable development and to reduce vulnerabilities. All countries need to make efforts to manage migration effectively with full respect for the human rights and dignity of migrants.

2.2 Monitoring and reviewing in EU

The EU Council in his recent conclusions is particularly clear on the need for a strong **monitoring, accountability and review framework** as an integral part of the post-2015 agenda. The framework's main objectives are delineated as to: (i) monitor global progress; (ii) foster exchange of best practices and mutual learning including collectively addressing shared challenges; (iii) actively engage all stakeholders; (iv) provide political and leadership focus to motivate and incentivise further action.

While the Council recommends that such a framework operates at national, regional and global level, but **building on already established systems** for monitoring and accountability, countries are encouraged to commit to multi-stakeholder processes and to set up systems for accountability at national level on the basis of **national sustainable development strategies** or other relevant frameworks. National parliaments, local governments and civil society actors, including knowledge institutions, play important roles in this context. Monitoring at national level should also contribute to monitoring at global level including through the provision of statistics and other relevant information on the global indicators. The regional level could provide a useful forum for peer review and learning, and encourage countries to set ambitious targets and stimulate implementation. Work at the regional level could also help to ensure progress on transboundary issues and on regionally shared targets.

The EU Council also clearly supports the work done by the UN Statistical Commission and welcomes the creation of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators and of the High Level Group.

With regards more specifically to indicators, the Conclusions point out that indicators and data should be **based on existing indicators**, when possible, in order to ensure robust datasets and cost effective solutions. A particular mention is then made on the crucial aspect of **making an integrated framework that embeds inter-linkages** and **balances the three dimensions of sustainable development**.

3 Experiences with EU and national SD monitoring and review processes

3.1 The EU SDS's processes of monitoring and reviewing

As measuring progress towards sustainable development is an integral part of the **EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS)** in the European Union, Eurostat has been given the task to produce a monitoring report bi-annually, based on the EU set of sustainable development indicators (EU SDIs). Until now, Eurostat has published five monitoring reports that quantitatively assess whether the EU is moving towards its sustainable development objectives[19]. In these monitoring reports, the object of the evaluation is, therefore, the relative direction and rate of change in light of sustainable development objectives, not the 'sustainability' of the situation at any point in time. It is, therefore, a relative, not an absolute assessment.

Box 3.1 A short history of Eurostat's role in SD measurement

Eurostat took its first steps towards measuring sustainable development (SD) in the 1990s. Following the United Nations (UN) Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (also known as 'Rio Earth Summit'), Eurostat worked closely with the UN work programme on global indicators of sustainable development, and published indicator compilations in 1997 and in 2001.

A first EU-oriented set of SDIs was proposed following the adoption of the first EU SDS in 2001 and was endorsed by the European Commission in 2005. The set was slightly revised after the review of the EU SDS from 2001 that led to the adoption of a renewed strategy in 2006. Since then, several reviews of the SDI set have been carried out by the Commission with the assistance of the working group on SDIs, which is composed of both statistical and policy representatives at Member States and EU level. Nevertheless, the current set of SDIs very similar to that endorsed in 2005.

Source: Eurostat (2013)

The set of EU SDIs is organised within a **theme-oriented framework**, to provide a clear and easily communicable structure and relevance to political decision-making. The EU SDIs framework is based on priority policy issues and is organized in **ten themes**[20]:

1) Socioeconomic development;
2) Sustainable consumption and production;
3) Social inclusion;
4) Demographic changes;
5) Public health;
6) Climate change and energy;
7) Sustainable transport;
8) Natural resources;
9) Global partnership;
10) Good governance.

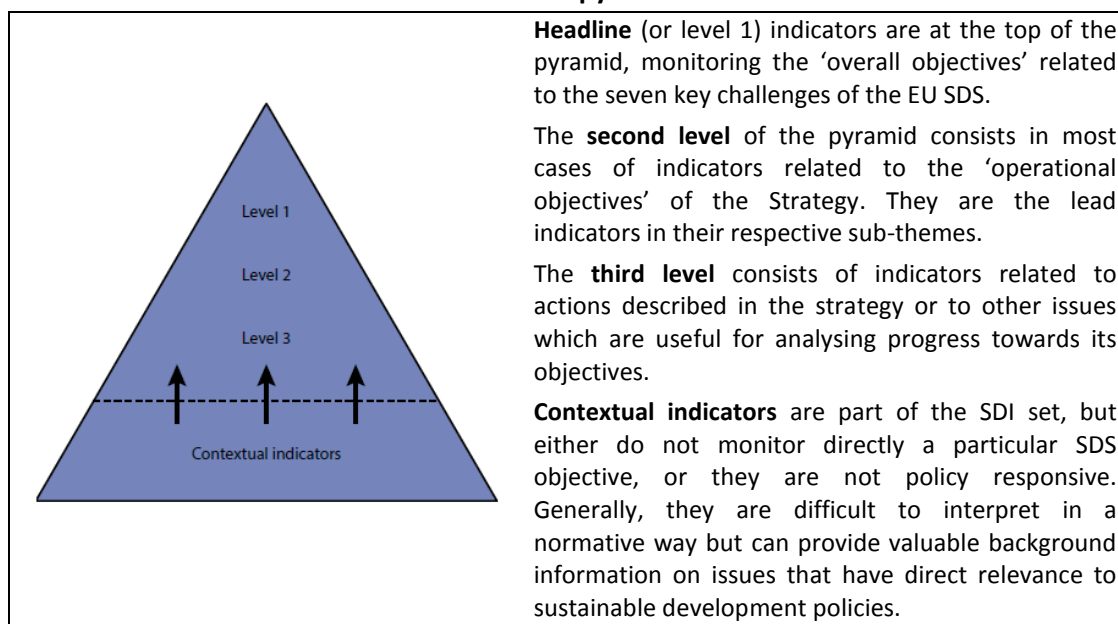The set of EU SDIs is structured as a three-story pyramid, distinguishing between three levels of indicators. This approach not only reflects the structure of the EU SDS (overall objectives,

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[19] The 2015 Eurostat Monitoring Report is currently under preparation.
[20] The current set of indicators is available on the Eurostat website at:
http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/sustainabledevelopment

operational objectives, actions), but also responds to different kinds of user needs. Each theme is further divided into sub-themes and includes three levels of indicators. The main body of the renewed EU SDS from 2006 is built around seven key challenges, with corresponding operational objectives and targets as well as associated actions and measures. In addition, a number of key objectives and policy guiding principles serve as a basis for the strategy. Each of the seven key challenges of the renewed EU SDS is represented by a theme together with the additional inclusion of a theme on 'socioeconomic development' which focuses on the key objective of economic prosperity, and a theme on 'good governance' related to the guiding principles of the EU SDS and other crosscutting issues.

Box 3.2 EU SD Indicators pyramid structure

Headline (or level 1) indicators are at the top of the pyramid, monitoring the 'overall objectives' related to the seven key challenges of the EU SDS.

The **second level** of the pyramid consists in most cases of indicators related to the 'operational objectives' of the Strategy. They are the lead indicators in their respective sub-themes.

The **third level** consists of indicators related to actions described in the strategy or to other issues which are useful for analysing progress towards its objectives.

Contextual indicators are part of the SDI set, but either do not monitor directly a particular SDS objective, or they are not policy responsive. Generally, they are difficult to interpret in a normative way but can provide valuable background information on issues that have direct relevance to sustainable development policies.

Source: Eurostat (2013)

The most recent changes to the indicator set were related to the adoption of the **Europe 2020 Strategy** and its eight headline indicators, which have been integrated into the SDI framework in the themes 'socioeconomic development', 'social inclusion' and 'climate change and energy'. Thus, over the course of several revisions, some changes have been made to reflect trends in EU policies related to sustainable development, although the overall framework has proved sufficiently robust to remain unaltered.The workshop.

3.2 An overview of monitoring and review processes in European countries

The information for this overview is based on the country profiles section at the ESDN website that brings together information on European countries' national SD strategy processes. The last update of the country profiles took place in July 2013 and resulted in the Quarterly Report, entitle

"**National Sustainable Development Strategies in Europe 2013: Taking stock and exploring new developments**"[21]. Two sections have been considered for the overview we present below:

1) **Indicators and Monitoring**: This category of the country profiles gives an overview of SDI monitoring across Europe. Setting objectives and measuring progress in achieving them with SD indicators (SDIs) are two closely related features that are typical for serious strategic management approaches in general, and for virtually all SD strategies in Europe in particular.

2) **Evaluation and Review**: This category of the country profiles gives an overview of the evaluation and review approaches applied in the context of SD strategies in Europe. It focuses on qualitative evaluations and reviews that assess the quality of SD strategy processes, policy instruments used, stakeholders involved and outcomes achieved.

3.2.1 Monitoring processes in the context of National SD Strategies in Europe[22]

Monitoring is an assessment activity, usually **based on a set of quantitative indicators**. The higher and stronger the link between indicators and policy objectives in the NSDSs, the more measurable are the deliveries of the strategy. In our context, monitoring processes, therefore, use indicators to keep track of the situation in time of national strategies, sectoral policies, objectives and goals on SD. This section outlines shortly the status quo in development and revision of the set of indicators, and their utilization in the NSDS review process.

Most European countries have developed a set of SD indicators together with the development of their NSDSs. The number of SD indicators ranges from a small number, like 15 key indicators in France or 17 indicators in Norway, to the largest number of indicators found in Italy and Hungary with 150 and 155 indicators, respectively. However, the majority of countries use between 70 and 100 indicators, with an average of 80 indicators (e.g. Austria with 82). Germany and Finland use 38 and 34 indicators, respectively. Additionally, various countries make use of headline indicators (e.g. Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Sweden), mainly for communication purposes.

In most countries, the National Statistical Offices are responsible for the development and monitoring of SD indicators (e.g. Estonia, France, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland). In other countries, different bodies have this responsibility, for instance, Belgium (Task Force on SD of the Federal Planning Bureau), Cyprus (Inter-Governmental Committee), or Denmark (Environment Protection Agency)

The monitoring reports on SDIs show the status and progress of SD within the countries. The monitoring processes vary among countries, however, based on timing and on institutional capacities. Only a few countries have developed regular SDI monitoring cycles. These monitoring cycles are usually done on a yearly basis (e.g. Italy, Montenegro, Slovenia) or are performed bi-annually (e.g. Austria, Estonia, Germany, Latvia). There are also countries that have monitoring

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[21] Pisano, U., K. Lepuschitz and G. Berger (2013) National Sustainable Development Strategies in Europe 2013: Taking stock and exploring new developments. ESDN Quarterly Report N.29 July 2013. Available at: http://www.sd-network.eu/quarterly%20reports/report%20files/pdf/2013-July-National_Sustainable_Development_Strategies_in_Europe_2013.pdf

[22] This section also considers the study produced by the ESDN in 2007: ESDN (2007) Objectives and Indicators of Sustainable Development in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of European Coherence. Quarterly Report December 2007, available at: http://www.sd-network.eu/?k=quarterly%20reports&report_id=7

processes that do not appear to be either regular or fixed reporting mechanisms (e.g. Czech Republic). Anyway, a notable experience is from Switzerland:

> In **Switzerland**, the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (SFSO), the Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE) and the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) joined forces to create the MONET measurement system. With about 75 indicators, this monitoring tool facilitates regular reporting on the status and progress of SD throughout Switzerland. The MONET system was revised in 2009 and is now more in line with the themes of the European Union's SD indicators system. The revised system now has 75 indicators (instead of 130), twelve of which are new.

3.2.2   Review processes in the context of National SD Strategies in Europe

This section gives an overview of the evaluation and review approaches applied in the context of SD strategies in Europe. It focuses on **qualitative evaluations and reviews** that assess the quality of SD strategy processes, policy instruments used and stakeholders involved.

NSDSs are not only strategic documents but also foster strategic processes. As NSDS processes constantly need to adapt to new situations and challenges, the evaluation of these policy processes and the achievement of the NSDS targets is important and has been introduced in almost all European countries.

The review processes of NSDSs can take **three forms**: **internal reviews**, **external reviews** and **peer reviews**.

Internal reviews are conducted within the government ministries by an internal body responsible for the review process. Usually, this depends on the country's institutional setting and on the particular institution charged with SD tasks. However, in many of the countries, review processes take the form of progress reports (e.g. Austria, Czech Republic, France), which seem to be the most diffused form of evaluation and review among European countries. In other countries, evaluation and review is undertaken within the horizontal mechanisms and inter-ministerial bodies also responsible for coordinating the preparation and implementation of NSDSs (e.g. Estonia, Luxembourg, Switzerland).

The internal review process can be classified according to **timing**. Some countries have a **bi-annual review process** that culminates with the publication of a so-called progress report (e.g. Austria, Luxembourg, Latvia, Lithuania). Some others perform **annual reviews or annual progress reports** (e.g. France, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland). Several countries have a less tight schedule that does not display regularity or is represented by a **one-off exercise** (e.g. Poland, Spain). Germany has a four-year review process cycle. Also, for the Austrian ÖSTRAT (the Austrian joint national strategy addressing both the federal and regional levels), evaluation is intended to be done every four years. In Croatia, the Environmental Status Report, which includes an evaluation of the realization of NSDS goals is carried out every four years as well. In Iceland, the NSDS is also revised every four years.

> In **Belgium**, the timing of the internal review is specifically decided to support and allow the integration of lessons learned into the design of the subsequent Federal Plan for SD (FPSD). The 2010 Federal Act on SD puts forward two distinct provisions for internal review:
> * The report by the members of the Interdepartmental Commission on Sustainable

> Development (ICSD), which contains information on the implementation of the measures through which the administrative unit they represent aims to contribute to the objectives of the Federal Plan (FPSD), is to be completed at least 18 months prior to the agreed completion date of the FPSD.
> - The Federal Report on Sustainable Development, drafted by the Task Force on Sustainable Development (TFSD) of the Federal Planning Bureau (FPB), is divided into two parts: a status and evaluation report and a foresight report looking at future developments. The status and evaluation report needs to be published at least 15 months prior to the completion date of the FP.

Not many European countries undertake an **external review**. Two options are usually employed: Either the responsible institution for the NSDS review process commissions a **private consultant** (e.g. Switzerland, Finland) or the task is given to **independent researchers** (e.g. Austria). A very important case can be found in the Finnish experience:

> In **Finland**, a comprehensive national assessment of sustainable development was completed in December 2009: The main objective of the assessment was to evaluate the implementation of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of 2006 and assess the importance and impacts of sustainable development in Finnish policies and administrative practices, as well as give a picture on the state of sustainable development in Finland. The assessment was conducted as an external evaluation (undertaken by Ramboll Management Consulting), and discussed in the meeting of the Finnish National Commission for SD in December 2009. The report has been translated into English and is available on the internet.
>
> An assessment of the national model and work of the FNCSD was carried out in 2012 by Gaia Consulting, an external consultant. Based on this assessment and the work of the Finnish National Commission on SD, a new strategy process was launched in 2012.

Peer reviews have been conducted in four countries: France (2005), Norway (2007), the Netherlands (2007), and twice in Germany (2009, 2013). The idea behind the peer reviews of NSDSs is to identify and share good practices in a process of mutual learning where, usually, other countries are taken as peers in the process. The peer review of an NSDS is voluntary and is undertaken upon the initiative of the country concerned. The peer reviews are intended to address all three SD pillars and the peer-reviewed country is free to choose to undertake a review of the whole NSDS or focus on one or more specific issues.

> **France** was the first EU Member State that organized a peer review process to evaluate the implementation of the NSDS with the inclusion of four peer countries (Belgium, Ghana, Mauritius and the UK). The peer review report was issued in 2005.
>
> In **Norway**, as part of the process of developing the new strategy, the Norwegian Ministry of Finance initiated a peer review of the Norwegian NSDS. It was conducted by a group of Swedish experts, with support from a representative from Uganda on trade and aid. The group delivered its report "A Peer Review of Norway's Policy for Sustainable Development" in 2007.
>
> In **The Netherlands**, the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs initiated a peer review of the Dutch NSDS, which was partially financed by the European Commission. Germany, Finland and South Africa were selected as peer countries. From each peer country, four experts were invited to the peer review team, representing the government, business, science and NGOs. During the peer review process, several activities were undertaken, including a scoping meeting and interviews with Dutch stakeholders. The final peer review report was presented to the Minister of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment on 21 June 2007 and includes 46 recommendations

> for a new SD framework.
>
> In **Germany**, in 2009 and 2013, the German Federal Government mandated Björn Stigson, the (former) President of the World Business Council for SD, and a group of peers (from Sweden, Finland, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and USA as well as from India, Canada, South Africa and South Korea) to conduct the Peer Reviews of Germany's SD policies. Both reports acknowledged Germany's potential key position to spearhead the transition to a more sustainable development and came up with a set of clear recommendations addressing politics, the parliament, the business community and civil society. The German Council for Sustainable Development facilitated both reviewing processes.

3.3 Key messages from ESDN Case Studies No.20 + 21

3.3.1 Integrating SDGs into national SD policy frameworks and governance structures – activities in 4 selected EU Member States

In the context of the work undertaken by the ESDN Office on the SDGs policy framework in Europe that started with the ESDN Conference 2014[23], and the ESDN Quarterly Report No. 35[24], the ESDN Case study No.20, "Integrating SDGs into national SD policy frameworks and governance structures – activities in 4 selected EU Member States", outlines the international background of SDGs and highlight its importance at the national level. It, therefore, portrays what has been happening and planned until now in selected EU Member States and to what extent the international framework on SDGs is exerting an impact on national SD policy structures.

Four countries - **Belgium**, **Germany**, **Latvia** and **Slovenia** - were selected to analyse what SDGs related activities have been undertaken so far on the national level. Based on a survey on national SDGs activities, conducted between November 2014 and January 2015, telephone interviews were undertaken with representatives of these four EU Member States to find out how they took up the challenge of integrating SDG topics into the national SD policy framework and in the existing SD governance mechanisms. Whereas the precedent survey was about SDGs related activities, the telephone interviews of May 2015 extended their scope on the complementation of SDGs contents in national policy documents and objectives, the appropriate institutional set-up for SDGs, and already undertaken and future activities to integrate SDGs in the national policy agenda.

All our interview partners from the four selected Member States are working towards the implementation of SD at the national level and highlighted that their respective countries have already designed activities of how to integrate the SDGs agenda in the national policy framework. However, they are all at different stages: whereas Germany and Belgium are already in the middle of the preparation processes and consider how to institutionalize the SDGs in their country, Latvia and Slovenia are still dealing with content approaches finding out what gaps they are facing in their national objectives with regard to the SDGs. Especially our Latvian interview

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[23] 'A renewed policy framework for sustainable development – The international SD agenda and its impact on Europe', Rome/Italy, 6-7 November 2014

[24] 'The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their impact on the European SD governance framework', on January 2015

partner argued that they want to take the next steps regarding the integration of SDGs only after the final decision is taken in September 2015.

What is similar to all countries is that SDGs-related activities and initiatives have, so far, revolved around the organisation of events, meetings and workshops, but also on dialogues with stakeholders to exchange views and broaden the participation towards the post-2015 agenda process.

The survey and interview results show that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs will have a central role in transferring the SDGs agenda to the national level in all countries. Furthermore, all four countries intend to use existing structures and governance mechanisms (including coordination and consultation mechanisms) for the implementation of SDGs. Within this context, all interviewees agreed that the first reference point of aligning SDGs with national goals was the NSDS and that they intend to use the NSDS for the SDGs implementation.

All our interview partners outlined the following important next steps in regard to harmonizing the SDGs agenda with the national one:

- Work towards coherence in terms of time horizons of national goals, documents and the SDGs; and
- Complement national SD objectives with SDGs.

In conclusion, it is important to note that the selected countries **intend to link SDGs mechanisms to NSDSs and other existing structures, and maintain already established processes**. However, the approach and the focus of SDGs topics vary among the countries as well as the extent of their preparatory activities.

3.3.2   Monitoring Sustainable Development - Experiences and recommendations for monitoring Sustainable Development Goals

The ESDN Case Study No. 21, "Monitoring Sustainable Development - Experiences and recommendations for monitoring Sustainable Development Goals", shows that **experiences and expertise of different stakeholders** could provide valuable insights into the success factors of SD monitoring frameworks and their influence on policy-making. Therefore, it investigates the long-standing experience of **Eurostat**, the institution charged with monitoring SD in Europe since the adoption of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS) in 2006, and the FP7-funded **research project** 'Policy Influence of Indicators' (POINT).

The main approach that Eurostat uses to monitor sustainable development is the monitoring reports of the EU SDS[25] through a set of **Sustainable Development Indicators (SDIs)**. The monitoring report provided by Eurostat thus constitutes the key document by which the implementation of the EU SDS is followed-up and, consequently, **informs EU policy**.

The Eurostat monitoring reports represent a prime example of a policy-based framework. This means that indicators are derived from particular policy objectives. This ensures that the indicators are **policy-relevant**. The SDGs also constitute clear policy objectives for the EU, thus

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[25] Monitoring reports available for download at http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi/publications

making a similar monitoring system plausible. However, sustainable development is inherently complex and which objectives are given priority is a political decision. Consequently, the selection of indicators also has far reaching political implications.

The experience of Eurostat has important implications for the design of a monitoring framework for SDGs. Similar to the EU SDS and Europe 2020 objectives, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals will act as a basis for structuring the monitoring process. However, countries are given much greater freedom as to which goals to prioritize. Furthermore, there is a greater diversity of development stages and **country-specific challenges** on the global compared to the EU level.

Secondly, the case study looked into the experience of research with monitoring SD. In fact, indicators and monitoring have been in the focus of many research projects and thus can provide insights that are extremely valuable for setting up a monitoring framework for SDGs. This case study explored one of these research projects in particular and with more detail:

The **POINT Project**[26] - **'Policy Influence of Indicators'** - is a research project that undertook a variety of studies to explore the **influence and use of indicators on policy-making**. The project started in April 2008 and ended in spring 2011. In public policy, indicators are utilized to monitor policy performance, create greater accountability, and promote policy learning. The POINT project had the aim of filling knowledge gaps about the role of indictors in policy-making and of examining whether, how and under which circumstances indicators influence policy-making[27]. One of the concrete cases that were investigated was the case of **National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDSs)**.

The POINT project focussed on the **use and influence of indicators** on the formulation, implementation and adaption of policies. This included twelve separate studies of different indicators related to sustainability that were synthesized in a final report[28].

The findings of the POINT project highlight key challenges for the design of a monitoring framework that has meaningful impacts in terms of making progress visible and influencing policy. The POINT project made a list of recommendations that are of high relevance for the SDG process:

- In terms of **policy processes**: Indicator producers should pay attention to the possible strategic uses of an indicator in the political process in advancing certain framings of a problem and closing down others. The selection of indicators should be **transparent, understandable and forward-looking**;

- In terms of **Indicator influence**: Indicator producers should not prioritize one of these roles – instrumental, conceptual and political. Furthermore, **inclusion/ engagement/ participation** of different stakeholders plays a central role in ensuring that the indicator is adequate to exert influence on the target audience and foster social learning.

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[26] For more information please refer to the POINT project website http://www.point-eufp7.info/
[27] For a short summary of the project see
http://static1.1.sqspcdn.com/static/f/602222/7217376/1275763722990/Point_Flyer1.pdf?token=jB51ZUY%2FKLadk KBirOSljbT6gLo%3D
[28] POINT. 2008. Deliverable 15: A Synthesis of Findings of the POINT Project, available at
http://static1.1.sqspcdn.com/static/f/602222/11716484/1302736662387/POINT_synthesis_deliverable+15.pdf?tok en=QlG0wt%2Fggaz7xAlJFNDOw0sgqQM%3D

- In terms of **Practical Effectiveness**: To have an instrumental role in particular, an indicator must be **relevant**, **scientifically justifiable**, **measureable**, **reflect national particularities**, and have a **procedure in place to validate** indicators that can then be used to inform policy.
- In terms of **Future Research Needs**: The role of indicators in (multi-level) governance processes; potential of evaluation and foresight techniques (ex ante assessments, impact assessments and scenario building); and opportunities for social leaning and collaborative analysis of various actor groups.

The experiences of Eurostat with the EU SDS monitoring report and the insights from the POINT research project show some interesting implications for the development of the monitoring framework for the SDGs. It seems promising that the suggested criteria for robust SDG Indictors provided by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) are compatible with the experiences explored in this case study. Both experiences, the Eurostat monitoring report and the different case studies in the POINT project, suggest that **communication** should be a more central concern for the design of the monitoring framework. This has implications for the **different roles** indicators play in policy-making. Specific attention has to be paid to how indicators can be designed and utilized in a way that they act equally as an **instrumental tool to measure progress**, a **conceptual tool to make SD more tangible**, and finally, also be a **political tool to rally support for the SDGs**.

4 Results from the 12th ESDN Workshop

In this fourth chapter, we offer a summary with the key results of the 12th ESDN Workshop; please find a full documentation of the workshop on the ESDN website. The workshop, "**Monitoring and reviewing sustainable development goals (SDGs) in Europe: current debates in EU Member States and on the European level**", took place in Brussels on 16 June 2015. In total, **75 participants** (EU, national and sub-national policy-makers; international organizations; national SD councils; statistical institutes; researchers; and CSOs) **from 18 countries** took part in the event. The workshop was organized by the ESDN in cooperation with the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The objectives of the workshop were as follows:

a) **Explore the following pressing questions for European countries:**
- Which national challenges have already been identified, tackled, and solved? Which mechanisms have already been realized, foreseen, or debated?
- Which risks, opportunities and barriers have been acknowledged?
- Which fields for bilateral or European cooperation on these topics are of interest?

b) **Provide recommendations for national and EU policy-makers** on issues related to SDGs monitoring and review processes particularly relevant in terms of governance for SD, such as the interaction and coherence between the various levels or the SDGs translation from the global level to the regional (EU), national and subnational level;

c) **Explore concepts and ways for practical implementation of SDGs monitoring and review processes** at European and national levels; and

d) **Reflect on ideas and practical experiences** among European countries.

The aim of the workshop was to bring together policy-makers from different countries and various stakeholders to provide an impetus for the discussion concerning the monitoring and reviewing process of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will be launched by the United Nationals General Assembly in September 2015. Moreover, it was the aim of the workshop to share different national experiences with integrating the SDGs into existing National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS). Furthermore, the workshop aimed to discuss the role of the European Union (EU) in a possible regional monitoring and reviewing process, as well as the role of the European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN) in facilitating this.

The objectives of the workshop were addressed in the following 4 sessions:

Session 1:   **Monitoring and review processes for SDGs**

Session 2:   **National experiences with SD monitoring and review: links to SDGs implementation**

Session 3:   **Linking SDGs monitoring and reviewing to European and National SD policy strategies**

Session 4:   **The role of policy actor networks for SDGs monitoring and reviewing**

In the Opening Session, **SDGs were portrayed as an opportunity to rethink the European approach to SD** and what this would mean in policy terms for the European Commission. Then, it was emphasised that Vice-president Timmermans regards **SD as a broad concept, a vision that is larger than the Europe 2020 Strategy and that must be mainstreamed in all work areas of the Commission**. The Commission itself is currently in the **process of mapping the SDGs in relation to current EU policies and initiatives** to encourage policy-makers to familiarize themselves with the SDGs that are relevant in their specific policy areas, to identify gaps, to facilitate the **integration of the SDGs into different strategies,** and to prepare and enable the Commission to define the next steps to be taken in the political decision-making process. Furthermore, **Eurostat was identified as the central actor in monitoring the progress of implementation of SDGs in Europe**. The **ESDN was mentioned as an important network** in providing a space for exchange in this context.

In **Session 1**, the focus was devoted to the **current discussion of developing an effective monitoring and review process for the SDGs**. A crucial topic explored was related to the importance of a global indicator framework as a tool to inform the global political discussion, design a structure for the development agenda, and provide information for the communication and advocacy campaigns. Moreover, it was stressed that all levels of governance (global, European, national, and sub-national) are essential for the effective implementation of SDGs, and that effectively monitoring and reviewing is necessary if the SDGs are to become a real inspiration and dynamic for change towards sustainability at all levels. The need for a review process to be **regular**, **multi-level and involving relevant actors and stakeholders** was, therefore, emphasised and linked to the potential role of institutional arrangements, such as **national SD Councils**, **ombudsmen,** and **increased parliamentary oversight**. Particularly recommended was the need to **prioritize goals with transformational potential**, paying particular attention to **long-term and systemic approaches**, institutionalising arrangements for implementation and monitoring, and focussing on capacity building of different stakeholders.

Session 2 focussed on national experiences with SD monitoring and review and the implications this has for the implementation of SDGs. **Monitoring and reviewing the implementation** of goals were especially highlighted (i) as a *political tool* to enhance transparency and accountability, and create opportunities for stakeholder engagement; (ii) as a *management tool* to adapt goals to the national context and improve mutual learning and feedback; and (iii) as a *platform to share governance experiences* of substantive changes. Through an ***interactive group work***, participants discussed on the key issues presented during the first part of the workshop, reflected on the key question "**How to design an active and effective link between SDGs/SD objectives and monitoring/review work?**", and produced a number of **recommendations** that were collected, discussed and clustered in two main blocks: (1) Clear targets adapted to respective political level and context; (2) Accountability, ownership and communication. Please find the two clusters of recommendations in the following two boxes.

Clear targets adapted to respective political level and context

- Monitoring should drive agenda-setting at different levels (e.g. EU, national) and for different stakeholders;
- Monitor all targets and translate them to the national context for a political follow-up;
- Use SDGs as structure for national sustainable development strategies;
- SDG strategy based on all 17 goals, broken down to EU level, with targets measurable and indicators that measure the distance to targets;
- Avoid cherry-picking: systematic and comprehensive analysis of all SDGs in all countries, also looking at "difficult" systemic issues;
- Maintain an outwards focus to supporting partner countries, while at the same time deliver a targeted and integrated/balanced approach to goal and target implementation that reflects the national context.

Accountability, ownership and communication

- Involve stakeholders, communicate comparable indicators and make them fun! (e.g. have school children work with these goals);
- Design an evolving framework as regards institutions, data sources, etc., in order to allow for accountability towards the public;
- Defining/identifying differentiated ownership for different SDGs (ministries, societal actors);
- There will not be an active and effective link without effectively tackling individual and collective cynicism within political systems and addressing this through political and public thinking ;
- Monitoring data and qualitative interpretation with stakeholders to explore impact of goals;
- Institutional arrangement and accountability systems (e.g. link between initiatives and impacts).

Session 3 focused more specifically on how the monitoring and review mechanisms of SDGs can be linked to European and national SD strategies, and participants reflected on the question **"How could SDG monitoring / reviewing influence and improve SD policy strategy processes in Europe?"** and then were asked to debate on **"the role of the ESDN to support this?"**. The results of such discussions and group works are as follows:

- Align, enhance and harmonise policy objectives across sectors and countries towards SD
  - ✓ *ESDN as an informal, effective contact platform for exchange best practices;*
- Bridging the North-South divide, integrate national and EU SD strategies with international/ development cooperation policies to enable systemic change
  - ✓ *foster the collective SD search and learn process via peer reviews (EU MS) coordinated by the ESDN;*
- Ideal ESDN Conference focussed in indicators, best practices and peer review
  - ✓ *ESDN key to good practice, peer review, outreach and contribution to the Europe 2030 strategy;*
- Revisit EU 2020 Strategy and ensure cross-dimensional integration
  - ✓ *ESDN could foster governance innovations and bottom up societal activities through ESDW;*
- Monitoring / indicators bring flesh to the bones, it makes SD visible and concrete;
- Closing the loop – monitoring feeds back into review of strategy implementation and main-streaming;
- Common monitoring standards might lead to better vertical and horizontal integration

> ✓   *ESDN as a forum for the exchange of best practices*
> - SDGs monitoring and review can be influential only of focused on targets and times lines, and indicators are based on a clear concept of (strong) sustainability;
> - Set the stage: create accountability, momentum for change, enhance coherence and political will
>   ✓   *ESDN as platform for information, exchange of best practice and ideas for EU institutions*.

The final session of the workshop, **Session 4**, focused on the role a policy actor networks, such as the ESDN, in the monitoring and reviewing framework for SDGs, considering also multi-level and multi-regional reviewing. Through a panel discussion several issues were raised. The three main events in 2015 were mentioned: the Finance for Development Conference, the UN Sustainable Development Summit, and the COP 21 in Paris. Strong interlinks between these events were sought and it was argued that the outcomes of these events could form the 'new architecture' for tackling SD in the future. Thus, the idea of including civil society actors into the governance system for the monitoring and reviewing mechanisms of the SDGs was recommended. Consequently it was emphasised how the SDGs could shape the global development agenda in the form of a '**charter for the future**'. Further, four main elements were stressed: (1) the *SDGs as potential milestone for sustainability*, a charter for a sustainable future that incorporates tasks at the national, global and regional level; (2) *universality* as a key element of the SDGs as well as active participation of stakeholders at all levels and from all sectors in the agenda's implementation; (3) the *importance of the EU level* as an essential connection line between global and national levels; and (4*) ESDN as a space* for facilitating exchange of good practices and experiences, investigating thematic issues and enhancing the coherence between EU, national and subnational policy making; but also as a forum for enhancing policy integration, exchanging of good practice, creating a lean and intelligent peer learning process, and outreach to other stakeholders.

In conclusion, it was suggested that the SDGs implementation in Europe needed a committed European Commission, committed Member States, and the active participation of stakeholders. Furthermore, SD strategy processes in Europe were emphasised for their potential to steer the SDG implementation, although there is an urgent need for these strategies to be communicated better and to engage more actors.

5   Reflecting on the Post-2015 Agenda

1) A 'Charter for the future': SDGs as a window of opportunity for SD in the 21st century

The Post-2015 Agenda and the SDGs present a 'window of opportunity for SD in the 21st century' and could be understood as 'charter for the future' with universal goals that apply to all political levels and all actors alike.

2) Developing a governance architecture for effective implementation

Although Post-2015 and the SDGs are on the policy radar and several activities have been started in the EU and the Member States (e.g. mapping of current SD policies, strategies and indicators and how they relate to the SDGs), a governance architecture for effective implementation is still to be designed.

3) Designing an active link between SDGs and monitoring/review

Design an active link between SDGs and monitoring/review work is important and should include (a) clear targets adapted to the respective political level and context, and (b) accountability, ownership and communication on SD goals and objectives.

4) Align, enhance and harmonize SD policy objectives across sectors and political levels

SD policy objectives need to be aligned, enhanced and harmonized across sectors at the different political levels, and the results of SD monitoring should be applied in SD strategy implementation and renewal.

5) ESDN as an informal and effective space to exchange, learn and support

The role of the ESDN in Post-2015 and SDG implementation could be to utilize its long-term experiences in providing an informal and effective space for exchanging information and best practices, to support the multi-level governance between the EU and Member States levels, and to potentially support a (peer) review process.

The ESDN will continue elaborating on the Post-2015 Agenda and SDGs topic and the role of the EU, Member States and various stakeholder groups in the ESDN Conference 2015, entitled "Implementation of the Post-2015 Agenda at the EU and national level: Designing effective governance architectures and strategic frameworks". The conference will be organized in cooperation with the Luxembourg EU Presidency and takes place on 8-9 October 2015 in Luxembourg.

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