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The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Governance *for* SD principles, approaches and examples in Europe

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Contents

Introduction	4
1 The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.....	5
1.1 The 2030 Agenda: latest developments and the SDGs	5
1.2 The road from Rio+20.....	6
1.3 The 2030 Agenda architecture: the Outcome Document.....	10
1.4 Media reactions to the SDGs.....	17
2 Governance <i>for</i> SD: concepts, approaches and principles.....	19
2.1 Sustainable Development and Governance.....	19
2.2 Governance <i>for</i> SD Principles	23
3 Governance <i>for</i> SD architecture at UN, EU and National levels.....	28
3.1 The UN and the 2030 Agenda	28
3.2 The EU's SD governance architecture	33
3.3 Governance <i>for</i> SD in European countries: latest developments in NSDSs	41
4 National activities on Post-2015 and SDGs in Europe	53
4.1 Linking existing structures and mechanisms.....	53
4.2 Future outlook for implementation	55
5 Conclusions.....	58
5.1 The adoption of a new agenda for sustainable development for the next 15 years	58
5.2 'Governance for SD'	58
5.3 Fit for Purpose?	60

Introduction

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations General Assembly on 25-27 September 2015 in New York has given new impetus to the sustainable development (SD) agenda. In order to promote the transition towards a socio-economic system characterized by greater sustainability for all, a new governance architecture, based on the principles of the approach known as ‘Governance for SD’, is needed to guide this change. What constitutes this governance architecture, however, warrants further discussion.

The aim of this Quarterly Report is to put into context the current debate concerning what characteristics a governance architecture that promotes the SDGs should incorporate. **Chapter 1** will put the SDGs into historical context by describing the road that has led up to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. **Chapter 2** will then describe the concept of ‘**Governance for Sustainable Development**’ with reference to the academic debates and policy practices that have shaped it over time. A taxonomy of ‘governance for SD’ principles will be provided as guideline for the reader to understand how governance structures and processes can support and facilitate this new impetus towards a more sustainable future. **Chapter 3** will then investigate how the principles of ‘Governance for Sustainable Development’ are taken up in the new 2030 Agenda architecture at the international level with a closer look at the sustainable development goals (SDGs). It will also describe the current situation in Europe and EU Member States with the perspective of ‘governance for SD’. **Chapter 4** summarises an analysis on drivers for change in National Sustainable Development Strategies and innovative approaches in Finland and France. The report finally concludes with thoughts on the main topics treated in the Quarterly Report,

1 The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Chapter 1 puts the SDGs into historical context by describing the road that has led up to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

1.1 The 2030 Agenda: latest developments and the SDGs

The United Nations Sustainable Development Summit, which took place from 25-27 September 2015, formally adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This Summit was convened as a high-level plenary meeting of the 70th UN General Assembly (UNGA). Previous to this event, the Outcome Document, “**Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**”, was agreed upon by consensus on 2 August 2015 after months of intergovernmental negotiations, which were convened from January to August 2015:

- **19-21 January 2015:** Stocktaking;
- **17-20 February 2015:** Declaration;
- **23-27 March 2015:** Sustainable Development Goals and targets;
- **21-24 April 2015:** Means of Implementation and Global Partnership for Sustainable Development;
- **18-22 May 2015:** Follow up and review;
- **22-25 June 2015:** Intergovernmental negotiations on the Outcome Document;
- **20-24 July 2015:** Intergovernmental negotiations on the Outcome Document;
- **27-31 July 2015:** Intergovernmental negotiations on the Outcome Document.

The adopted 2030 Agenda contains **17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** (see following Fig.1.1), accompanied by **169 targets**.



Fig.1.1 List of adopted SDGs¹

- 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 lifelong 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

1.2 The road from Rio+20

The 2030 Agenda, the SDGs and targets are the result of over two years of intensive public consultation and engagement with civil society and other stakeholders around the world.

The process with the aim of developing a set of SDGs has been initiated in the Rio+20 Outcome Document. Several **work streams** were established in the form of “an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process” (paragraph 248 of the Rio+20 Outcome Document): (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.

The main work stream has been the **formation of a 30-member Open Working Group (OWG)**. After thirteen rounds of meetings and negotiations, which took place between September 2013 and July 2014 (Fig.1.2), the OWG presented its proposal for the SDGs.

¹ Adopted from the [Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform](#)

Fig.1.2 OWG sessions²

Session	Date	Main Topics
OWG 1	14-15 March 2013	(a) Introduction by the Secretariat of the initial input of the Secretary-General to the Open Working Group (A/67/634), and (b) General discussion and interactive discussion on the sustainable development goals
OWG 2	17-19 April 2013	(a) Conceptualizing the sustainable development goals; and (b) Poverty eradication
OWG 3	22-24 May 2013	(a) Food security and nutrition, sustainable agriculture, desertification, land degradation and drought; and (b) Water and sanitation
OWG 4	17-19 June 2013	(a) Employment and decent work for all, social protection, youth, education and culture; and (b) Health, population dynamics
OWG 5	25-27 November 2013	(a) Sustained and inclusive economic growth, macroeconomic policy questions (including international trade, international financial system and external debt sustainability), infrastructure development and industrialization; (b) Energy
OWG 6	9-13 December 2013	(a) Means of implementation (finance, science and technology, knowledge-sharing and capacity building); (b) Global partnership for achieving sustainable development; (c) Needs of countries in special situations, African countries, Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Land Locked Developing Countries (LLDCs), and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) as well as specific challenges facing the middle income countries; and (d) Human rights, the right to development, global governance
OWG 7	6-10 January 2014	(a) Sustainable cities and human settlements, sustainable transport; (b) Sustainable consumption and production (including chemicals and waste); and (c) Climate change and disaster risk reduction.
OWG 8	3-7 February 2014	(a) Oceans and seas, forests, biodiversity; (b) Promoting equality, including social equity, gender equality and women's empowerment; and (c) Conflict prevention, post-conflict peacebuilding and promotion of durable peace, rule of law and governance
OWG 9	3-5 March 2014	(a) Presentation of document consolidating discussions, main areas and topics of the first eight OWG sessions; (b) Starting point for the consensus building phase, and for the identification of SDGs and related targets
OWG 10	31 March - 4 April 2014	Cluster 1 - Poverty eradication - Promote equality Cluster 2 - Gender equality and women's empowerment - Education - Employment and decent work for all - Health and population dynamics Cluster 3 - Water and sanitation - Sustainable agriculture, food security, and nutrition Cluster 4 - Economic growth - Industrialization - Infrastructure - Energy Cluster 5 - Sustainable cities and human settlements - Promote Sustainable Consumption and Production - Climate Cluster 6 - Conservation and sustainable use of marine resources, oceans and seas - Ecosystems and biodiversity Cluster 7 - Means of implementation/Global partnership for sustainable development Cluster 8 - Peaceful and non-violent societies, rule of law and capable institutions
OWG 11	5-9 May 2014	- Sixteen Focus areas discussed with the help of a revised working document - Chapeau
OWG 12	16-20 June 2014	- First Zero Draft of SDGs is presented - 17 focus areas in total: one new focus area is added to the discussion 'Reduce inequality within and among countries'
OWG 13	14-18 July 2014	- Consolidated Zero Draft of SDGs and targets is produced and published on the 19 th of July 2014

² Adapted from [Beyond2015](#)

The OWG was established by decision 67/555 of the General Assembly³ on 22 January 2013. Member States used an innovative, constituency-based system of representation in which most of the seats in the OWG were shared by several countries. In the first eight sessions, the OWG performed a stock-taking exercise; at the 9th session (March 2014), the group started considering elements for a goals and targets framework. The following sessions started producing focused texts on SDGs and targets, which then culminated in a **'zero draft' proposal** that was published and adopted on July 19, 2014. This 'zero draft' was presented in its final report to the UNGA by September 2014⁴.

In the following figures (Fig.1.3 and Fig.1.4), we present a focused timeline of the 2030 Agenda framework preparation and a graphical presentation that we hope will facilitate a better understanding of the whole process: the main meetings and key milestones are highlighted.

Fig.1.3 Timeline for the preparation⁵

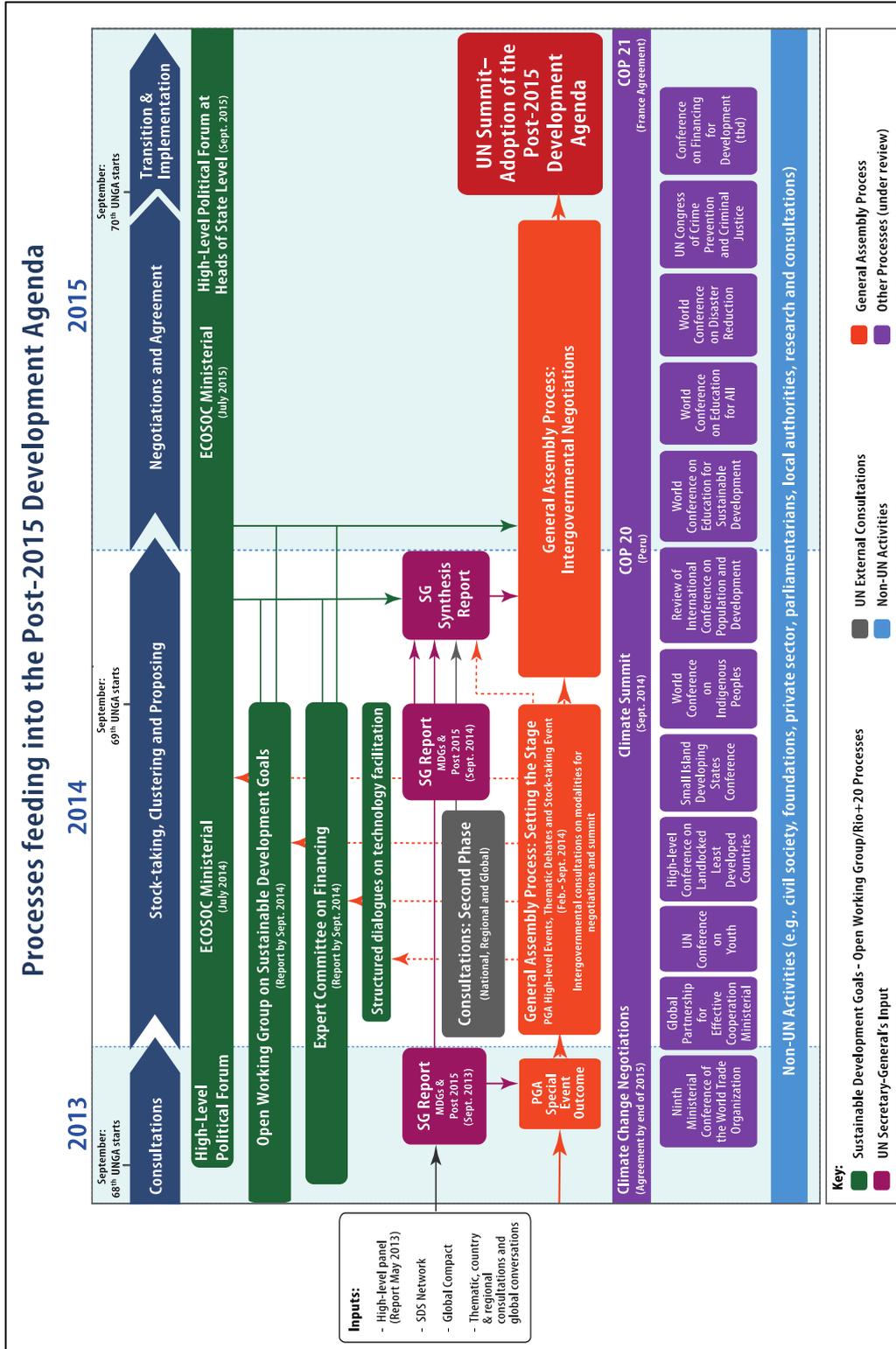
Date	UN event
2000	World leaders adopt the Millennium Declaration , a shared vision
September 2010	MDG Summit, UN Member States take first steps towards advancing the 'Post-2015 Development Agenda'. Secretary-General releases report Keeping the promise : a forward-looking review to promote an agreed action agenda to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015
June 2012	Rio+20 , governments commit to the promotion of a sustainable future, and mandate an intergovernmental Open Working Group to form a set of Sustainable Development Goals
2012-2013	UNDG identifies 11 Global Thematic Consultations, which together with 87 national consultations and the MyWorld Public Survey, engage 1.3m people in visualising new goals
March 2013 – June 2013	First four sessions of the OWG on SDGs
May 2013	SG-appointed High Level Panel of Eminent Persons releases post-2015 report, " A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development "
June 2013	UN Global Compact releases report to Secretary-General on post-2015
September 2013	Sustainable Development Solutions Network releases report to Secretary-General
September 2013	UNDG releases report based on consultations/public survey, " A Million Voices: The World We Want "
September 2013	SG hosts ' MDG success: Accelerating Action and Partnering for Impact ', showcasing multistakeholder partnerships as a model for the Post-2015 Agenda
September 2013	SG presents report on the MDGs and the Post-2015 Agenda at the UNGA, " A Life of Dignity for All "
September 2013	General Assembly adopts the Outcome Document of the Special Event on MDGs.
November 2013 - February 2014	Second four sessions of OWG on SDGs
February - June 2014	The President of the 68th session of the UNGA, John Ashe, organises six multi-stakeholders events to advance consensus on the post-2015 Agenda
March - July 2014	The OWG on SDGs moves into negotiation phase
2014	The UNDG organises a second round of consultations among stakeholders focusing on the means of implementation of a post-2015 Agenda
By September 2014	OWG on SDGs to report back to UNGA with proposals for a set of SDGs
By end of 2014	SG to synthesise all inputs to the post-2015 process in a final report
End of 2014 – September 2015	Intergovernmental negotiations to begin on a successor framework to MDGs
25-27 September 2015	High-level summit to adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

³ Please refer to decision [A/67/L.48/rev.1](#)

⁴ <http://www.fao.org/post-2015-mdg/background/en/>

⁵ Adapted from [FAO](#)

Fig.1.4 The Post-2015 Development Agenda⁶



⁶ Adapted from [Beyond 2015](#)

1.3 The 2030 Agenda architecture: the Outcome Document

The adopted Outcome Document "[Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development](#)" is presented in the form of a 'Declaration', preceded by a 'Preamble', in which the main intentions are shortly outlined, together with the main areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet (see Fig.1.5). We provide an overview⁷ of the Outcome Document in following pages as a guide to help the reader to orientate himself in the text.

Fig.1.5: A preamble for humanity and the planet⁸

<p>People We are determined to end poverty and hunger, in all their forms and dimensions, and to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment.</p> <p>Planet We are determined to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations.</p> <p>Prosperity We are determined to ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature.</p> <p>Peace We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.</p> <p>Partnership We are determined to mobilize the means required to implement this Agenda through a revitalised Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity, focussed in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people.</p>
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The Declaration contains **91 paragraphs**, divided into **14 sections**:

- 1) Introduction (§1-6)
- 2) Our vision (§7-9)
- 3) Our shared principles and commitments (§10-13)
- 4) Our world today (§14-17)
- 5) The new Agenda (§18-38)
- 6) Means of Implementation (§39-46)
- 7) Follow-up and review (§47-48)
- 8) A call for action to change our world (§49-53)
- 9) Sustainable Development Goals and Targets (§54-59)
- 10) Means of implementation and the Global Partnership (§60-71)
- 11) Follow-up and review (§72-77)
- 12) National level (§78-79)
- 13) Regional level (§80-81)
- 14) Global level (§82-91)

⁷ Please note that the ESDN Office has added emphasis to the quotes from the Outcome Document to highlight key messages

⁸ UNGA (2015) '[Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)'

Introduction (§1-6)

In the Introduction, paragraph 2 conveys one of the main messages that can be drawn from the reading of the whole Outcome Document: it's a **sense of urgency** and a **need for a transformation towards sustainable development**. For instance, it is argued that *“we have adopted a **historic decision** on a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Goals and targets”*.

However, it is paragraph 5 that appears to be the most significant: it actually comprises several key points and messages that are then deepened and reflected throughout the whole Outcome Document.

*5. This is an Agenda of **unprecedented scope and significance**. It is **accepted by all countries** and is **applicable to all**, taking into account **different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities**. These are **universal goals and targets** which **involve the entire world**, developed and developing countries alike. They are **integrated and indivisible** and **balance the three dimensions of sustainable development**.*

We have highlighted the parts that convey these key messages:

- 1) the **sense of urgency** and **need for transformation**;
- 2) the **global and universal nature** of the agenda and of the goals and targets to be applicable to all countries;
- 3) the **need to take into account different national realities**, capacities and levels of development and respect national policies and priorities;
- 4) the search for **integration** among all goals and targets that need to be seen as one and **indivisible**; and
- 5) the intention to make sure that the **three dimensions of sustainable development are balanced**, where not a single one of them is too prevailing over the others.

Our vision (§7-9)

In this section, the Declaration sets out *“a supremely ambitious and transformational **vision**”* for the world in the years to come. Sustainable development principles are envisaged in an aspirational way, where the three dimensions of SD – economic development, social equity and environmental protection – are explored in their many facets and where *eradication of poverty and hunger* take centre stage as in the whole Outcome Document. Two key messages appear particularly worth mentioning in paragraph 9 that closes this section:

- First, a **‘governance for SD’** dimension is put forward at a very early stage in the Outcome Document where the envisaged world is seen as a world in which *“**democracy, good governance and the rule of law** as well as an **enabling environment at national and international levels**, are essential for sustainable development”*;
- Secondly, a recurrent message throughout the whole document that strives for a *“sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth”* seems at least controversial, if not contradictory of a sustainable development: **sustained economic growth** has been criticised from many parties in the last 40 years⁹ as actually being unfavourable for continuous human well-being and, thus undermine many efforts towards a more comprehensive sustainable development.

⁹ To cite only a few, see for instance discussions connected to the Limits to Growth arguments by Meadows et al., the Ecological Economics debates that recognise how the economy is embedded in nature, and how economic processes are actually biological, physical, and chemical processes and transformations (i.e. the Steady State Economics by Herman Daly; the Degrowth arguments and movement; Peter Victor's Managing without Growth; Tim Jackson's Prosperity without Growth), etc.

Our shared principles and commitments (§10-13)

The third section reaffirms previous principles (i.e. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Rio Declaration on Environment and Development), commitments (i.e. Millennium Declaration) and previous conferences and summits (i.e. United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development known as Rio+20).

The need for a “**new approach**” is again highlighted and a definition of SD, where all its features are connected and interdependent - is provided in paragraph 13:

*“(…) Sustainable development recognizes that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, combatting inequality within and among countries, preserving the planet, creating sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and fostering social inclusion are **linked to each other** and are **interdependent**”.*

Our World Today (§14-17)

In this section, after a description of the critical challenges of our time, paragraph 16 and, especially, paragraph 17 are key sections of the Outcome Document, as they relate the 2030 Agenda to the Millennium Development Goals. For instance, paragraph 16 ends with these words: *“The new Agenda builds on the Millennium Development Goals and seeks to complete what these did not achieve, particularly in reaching the most vulnerable”.*

In this regard, paragraph 17 is even more crucial as it affirms that the scope of the new Agenda goes **far beyond the MDGs** especially recognising all the **links, deep interconnections** and **cross-cutting elements across the SDGs** and targets that form a new **integrated approach**.

The New Agenda (§18-38)

This section is quite extensive as it covers not only 21 paragraphs (§18-38), but also treats many priorities, principles and areas of the 2030 Agenda, such as:

- gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (§20);
- ending poverty (§24);
- providing inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels (§25);
- extending life expectancy and achieving universal health coverage and access to quality health care (§26);
- changing unsustainable consumption and production patterns (§28);
- migration (§29);
- trade (§30);
- peace and security, and equal access to justice (§35);
- fostering inter-cultural understanding (§36);
- sports (§37).

Without going into too much detail, we want to highlight several key points that should be kept in mind:

First, the **new integrated approach** and **indivisibility of the SDGs and targets** is again highlighted.

Second, a timeline for the SDGs and targets is provided as they “*will come into effect on **1 January 2016** and will guide the decisions we take over the **next fifteen years**”.*

Third, the issue of **sovereignty** is, again, strongly underlined in paragraphs 21 and 22. Here we see a crucial link with the well-known principle of **common but differentiated responsibilities** (principle 7 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development):

- §21 affirms for instance that the implementation of the Agenda will be *“taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities”*, and *“will respect national policy space (...) while remaining consistent with relevant international rules and commitments”*.
- §22 also points out how *“each country faces specific challenges in its pursuit of sustainable development (...)”*.

Fourth, three linkages with other crucial processes at the UN level are outlined. These linkages are very important, because they will be considered in the context of the 2030 Agenda implementation:

- On Climate change: paragraphs 31 and 32 link the 2030 Agenda to the processes at UN level, led by the **UNFCCC**, and seen as *“the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change”* and directly refers to the **COP21 conference** in Paris in December 2015 by underscoring *“the commitment of all States to work for an ambitious and universal climate agreement”*;
- On Biodiversity: paragraph 33 looks forward to **COP13 of the Convention on Biological Diversity** (in Mexico in 2016) and admits that *“social and economic development depends on the sustainable management of our planet’s natural resources”*;
- On Sustainable Urban Development and Management: paragraph 34 links the 2030 Agenda to the **United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development** in 2016 in Quito, Ecuador (known also as UN-Habitat III).

Means of Implementation (§39-46)

This section affirms several important messages, especially in terms of **implementation, governance and financing**.

With respect to **implementation**, a key role is given to the concept and practice of a **Global Partnership** as it *“will facilitate an intensive global engagement (...) bringing together Governments, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations system and other actors and mobilizing all available resources”* (§39). Also, it is said that the *“means of implementation targets under Goal 17 and under each SDG are key to realising our Agenda and are of equal importance with the other Goals and targets”* (§40).

A crucial link is drawn with the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Addis Ababa from 13-16 July 2015: §40 welcomes the endorsement by the UN General Assembly of the so-called **“Addis Ababa Action Agenda”**, which is seen as an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Mobilisation of financial resources, public finance – both domestic and international – and international financial institutions are considered crucial to support the implementation of the Agenda, especially with respect to developing countries. Additionally, a strong point is made towards capacity building and transfer of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries.

With respect to **governance**, an essential role is firstly given to **national parliaments** (§45) but it also recognised that *“each country has a primary responsibility for its own economic and social development”*; furthermore, *“governments and public institutions will also work closely on implementation with regional and local authorities, sub-regional institutions, international institutions, academia, philanthropic organisations, volunteer groups and others”* (§45).

Follow-up and Review (§47-48)

The two paragraphs in this section deal with **follow-up and review mechanisms**, and responsibility is given to national governments. An important role at the global level with regards to overseeing these mechanisms is assigned to the High Level Political Forum under the auspices of the General Assembly and to the Economic and Social Council.

Indicators are, therefore, mentioned and being developed that will assist this work, as well as the development of broader measures of progress that would complement gross domestic product (GDP).

A call for action to change our world (§49-53)

This section is probably where the sense of urgency we described above is most visible, such as in paragraph 50 and 53:

50. “Today we are also taking a decision of **great historic significance**. We resolve to build a better future for all people, including the millions who have been denied the chance to lead decent, dignified and rewarding lives and to achieve their full human potential. **We can be the first generation to succeed in ending poverty; just as we may be the last to have a chance of saving the planet.** The world will be a better place in 2030 if we succeed in our objectives”.

53. “**The future of humanity and of our planet lies in our hands.** It lies **also in the hands of today’s younger generation who will pass the torch to future generations.** We have mapped the road to sustainable development; it will be for all of us to ensure that the journey is successful and its gains irreversible”.

Sustainable Development Goals and targets (§54-59)¹⁰

This section contains six paragraphs describing common features of the SDGs and targets, and includes the actual **17 SDGs and 169 targets** agreed by an inclusive process of intergovernmental negotiations and based on the Proposal of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals¹¹.

In this context, the most illuminating of these paragraphs is §55 that comprises several key characteristics and messages. It affirms that the SDGs and targets are:

- **Integrated and indivisible,**
- **Global in nature and universally applicable,**
- **Taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development, and**
- **Respecting national policies and priorities.**

Targets are then defined as “**aspirational and global, with each government setting its own national targets guided by the global level of ambition but taking into account national circumstances**”.

From a governance standpoint, §55 also states that: “*Each government will also decide how these aspirational and global targets should be incorporated in national planning processes, policies and strategies. It is important to recognize the link between sustainable development and other relevant ongoing processes in the economic, social and environmental fields*”.

Means of implementation and the Global Partnership (§60-71)

¹⁰ This section contains the 17 SDGs and all the 169 related targets.

¹¹ Contained in A 68/970 ‘Report of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals’ (see also A 68/970 Add. 1).

This section, with its 12 paragraphs (§60-71), deepens and expands what is said in the above analysed declaration's section on the means of implementation. In this context, a very strong call is made towards "**nationally owned sustainable development strategies**" that will need to be supported by "**integrated national financing frameworks**": NSDSs will be, therefore, "**at the heart of our efforts**" as §63 affirms. It also highlights the importance to "**pursuing policy coherence and an enabling environment for sustainable development at all levels and by all actors, and to reinvigorating the global partnership for sustainable development**".

Many further topics are treated in this section, such as for instance the private sector (§67), international trade (§68), and debt sustainability (§69).

Particularly interesting is the launch of the so-called **Technology Facilitation Mechanism**, established by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) to support the SDGs (§70). It will be based on a **multi-stakeholder collaboration** between Member States, civil society, private sector, scientific community, United Nations entities and other stakeholders, and it will be composed of:

- a **United Nations Interagency Task Team on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs**,
- a **collaborative Multistakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs**,
- an **on-line platform**.

Follow-up and review at the different levels (§72-91)

This last section comprises the last 20 paragraphs and focuses again on those follow-up and review processes that will be crucial for the functioning and implementation of the new 2030 Agenda. In this context, §74 describes thoroughly the principles that will guide such processes (see Fig.1.6).

Fig.1.6: Principles for SDGs Follow-up and review processes

1. They will be **voluntary and country-led**, will **take into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and will respect policy space and priorities**. As **national ownership** is key to achieving sustainable development, the outcome from national level processes will be the foundation for reviews at regional and global levels, given that the global review will be primarily based on national official data sources;
2. They will **track progress in implementing** the universal Goals and targets, including the means of implementation, in all countries **in a manner, which respects their universal, integrated and interrelated nature and the three dimensions of sustainable development**;
3. They will **maintain a longer-term orientation, identify achievements, challenges, gaps and critical success factors and support countries in making informed policy choices**. They will help mobilize the necessary means of implementation and partnerships, support the identification of solutions and best practices and promote coordination and effectiveness of the international development system;
4. They will be **open, inclusive, participatory and transparent** for all people and will support the reporting by all relevant stakeholders;
5. They will be **people-centred, gender-sensitive, respect human rights** and have a particular **focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthest behind**;
6. They will **build on existing platforms and processes**, where these exist, **avoid duplication** and **respond to national circumstances, capacities, needs and priorities**. They will **evolve over time**, taking into account emerging issues and the development of new methodologies, and will minimize the reporting burden on national administrations;
7. They will be **rigorous and based on evidence, informed by country-led evaluations and data**

which is high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts;

8. They will **require enhanced capacity-building support for developing countries**, including the **strengthening of national data systems and evaluation programs**, particularly in African countries, LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs and middle-income countries;
9. They will **benefit from the active support of the UN system and other multilateral institutions**.

Also particularly relevant is §75 as it describes the development and use of a global indicator set that will monitor the SDGs and related targets. Such a global indicators framework will be:

- 1) developed by the Inter Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators;
- 2) agreed by the UN Statistical Commission by **March 2016**, and
- 3) adopted thereafter by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

This framework will be *“simple yet robust, address all SDGs and targets including for means of implementation, and preserve the political balance, integration and ambition contained therein”*. Last but not least, this set of global indicators will be complemented by *“indicators at the regional and national levels which will be developed by member states, in addition to the outcomes of work undertaken for the development of the baselines for those targets where national and global baseline data does not yet exist”*.

Another key paragraph is §77 as it commits to *“fully engage in conducting regular and inclusive reviews of progress at sub-national, national, regional and global levels”*. In this regard, already **existing networks of follow-up and review institutions and mechanisms as seen as crucial**. Moreover, §77 affirms that *“national reports will allow assessments of progress and identify challenges at the regional and global level. Along with regional dialogues and global reviews, they will inform recommendations for follow-up at various levels”*.

On the national level, §78 encourages *“all member states to develop as soon as practicable ambitious national responses to the overall implementation of this Agenda. These can support the transition to the SDGs and build on existing planning instruments, such as national development and sustainable development strategies, as appropriate”*.

At the regional level, §80 sees such processes as *“useful opportunities for peer learning, including through voluntary reviews, sharing of best practices and discussion on shared targets”* and welcomes *“cooperation of regional and sub-regional commissions and organizations”*.

At the global level, §82-90 describe the roles and functions of the main actors involved in this respect. It is worth noticing that the **UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)** will have a *“central role in overseeing a network of follow-up and review processes at the global level, working coherently with the General Assembly, ECOSOC and other relevant organs and forums”*.

Also important is the establishment of an **Annual SDG Progress Report** (see §83) that will inform the HLPF and will be prepared by the Secretary-General in cooperation with UN System, based on the global indicator framework and data produced by national statistical systems and information collected at the regional level.

Paragraph 91 concludes the Declaration by saying: “We reaffirm our unwavering commitment to achieving this Agenda and utilizing it to the full to transform our world for the better by 2030”.

1.4 Media reactions to the SDGs

The Outcome Document, ‘Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’, was officially adopted in the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York City at 11:46am local time on the 25 September 2015.¹² This so-called ‘Sustainable Development Summit’ was covered extensively in the international media. In the international media, the Sustainable Development Goals were overshadowed by the state of the civil war in Syria and possible US and Russian involvement, as well as by the refugee challenge in Europe. In the immediate aftermath of the adoption of the Outcome Document, there was a somewhat alarming lack of popular excitement.

Overall, the Sustainable Development Goals were received as a continuation of the global development agenda to end extreme poverty. The international press was critical of the scope of goals and targets, but also acknowledged the immense opportunity that the international agreement on the SDGs represents. For instance, the *New York Times*¹³ suggested in its opinion pages that “**The U.N. should have picked fewer and more targeted goals**”, yet also argued SDGs could be the potential impetus for drastic changes in policies not only in the developing, but also the developed world: “Fifteen years ago, the Millennium Development Goals showed that setting ambitious targets helps rally government officials, individuals and businesses toward a common cause. This time around, leaders everywhere will need to **adopt creative and aggressive policies** to boost a world economy that now seems stuck in neutral.” *The Guardian* focussed on the universal application of goals as well by stating that: “So, in a sense, **we are all developing nations** from now on. That’s a refreshing and positive message....There is hope the SDGs will be a **catalyst for wealthier countries to do some long overdue introspection of the state of their societies and their impact on the world around them.**”¹⁴

Other media outlets also stressed the **difference to the MDGs**. The *Washington Post*¹⁵ argued that the “top-down approach” of the MDGs, devised by the staff of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, focussed “more on wealthy nations helping poorer ones”. The SDGs are different. Although *the Economist*¹⁶ has previously condemned the SDGs as “a mess”, “unfeasibly expensive”, “narrow” and “a distraction” from focussing on the eradication of extreme poverty, more recently, it described the SDGs as a **positive move towards a more collaborative approach to development**. It described the SDGs as “going **beyond aid**”¹⁷ in the sense that rather than they promote sustainable development in all countries rather than solely focussing on financial contributions from developed countries to promote the creation of social safety nets in poorer developing countries.

The world media also stressed that this ambitious agenda **will require sustained political will** to become a reality. The Guardian, for instance, recalls that “beyond the fanfare there was a quieter

¹² For detailed coverage of the entire United Nations Sustainable Development Summit see the [Summit website](#), [Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform](#) or the [iisd website](#)

¹³ The New York Times (28 September, 2015) ‘[An Ambitious Development Agenda from the U.N.](#)’

¹⁴ The Guardian (25 September, 2015) ‘[The sustainable development goals: we’re all developing countries now](#)’

¹⁵ The Washington Post (21 September, 2015) ‘[No poverty, hunger in 15 years? UN sets sweeping new goals](#)’

¹⁶ The Economist (18 March) ‘[The 169 commandments](#)’

¹⁷ The Economist (19 September) ‘[The Sustainable Development Goals: beyond handouts](#)’

recognition that without adequate financing, strong data collection and the political will to implement the goals, 2030 will not deliver the transformative agenda desired.”¹⁸ Approaches to governance will play a major role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In a speech on the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, the US President, Barack Obama, stressed that **“development is threatened by bad governance”**.¹⁹ How governance towards the implementation of the SDGs is addressed in the 2030 Agenda will be further elaborated in this report. A first assessment by an Aljazeera opinion piece is promising: “The lack of a common definition of governance complicates ambitious global attempts toward political development, but the United Nations’ SDGs treat this diversity of opinions as a strength. Instead of imposing specific targets and the means to achieve them, the SDGs will rely on local governments and civil societies to forge their own paths toward nationally relevant targets.”²⁰

¹⁸ The Guardian (25 September, 2015) [‘Global goals received with rapture in New York – now comes the hard part’](#)

¹⁹ Aljazeera (28 September, 2015) [‘Obama: Bad governments cannot meet UN goals’](#)

²⁰ Aljazeera (25 September, 2015) [‘The most sustainable development goal’](#)

2 Governance for SD: concepts, approaches and principles

Chapter 2 describes the concept of **'Governance for Sustainable Development'** and presents a taxonomy of 'governance for SD' principles developed as guideline for the reader to understand how governance structures and processes can support and facilitate this new impetus towards a more sustainable future.

2.1 Sustainable Development and Governance

'Sustainable development' and 'governance' are two complex but ultimately **interrelated** concepts. Therefore, this section first briefly outlines these two key concepts, and then describes what is meant by 'governance for SD'. In order to make 'governance for SD' more concrete and relate it to practical policy-making, we use a **four-principle taxonomy** in which we describe the rationale and key characteristics behind each principle of governance for SD. This provides the basis for the analysis we are undertaking in the next chapter on sustainable development policy strategies and examples of policy delivery on the international, European and national level.

Sustainable development

Sustainable development is the normative objective to pursue a development trajectory that is viable in the long-term by balancing economic, environmental and social needs. Prominently defined in the Brundtland Report of 1987, sustainable development is still mainly referred to as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"²¹. Central to meeting these needs is finding a way to balance and integrate three central policy dimensions: economic, social and environmental²². Debates concerning the acknowledgement of planetary boundaries^{23, 24}, limits or tipping points of activities that would cause irreversible changes in the earth's ecosystem have been, since a few years, added to the defining characteristics of sustainable development. The planetary boundary notion is already evident in the Brundtland report when it states that "sustainable development requires the promotion of values that encourage consumption standards that are within the bounds of the ecological possible and to which all can reasonably aspire"²⁵. Although sustainable development is characterised by competing and evolving visions of how to adequately balance three policy dimensions, there is a general consensus that this will require systemic changes in socio-economic relationships and their impacts on the environment. Balancing the need for environmental protection, economic well-being and social equity through an effective and integrated approach across different institutions and at different levels is a central challenge for the achievement of sustainable development. Therefore, a fourth dimension of sustainable development is the need for **'good governance'**. This is seen both in policy documents and the academic literature as a tool of policy design implementation and, thus, an intrinsic component of a sustainable vision itself. Central

²¹ United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) ['Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future'](#), page 43.

²² Baker, S. (Ed.) (2012) *Politics of Sustainable Development*, Routledge.

²³ Meadowcroft, J (2013) Reaching the limits? Developed country engagement with sustainable development in a challenging conjuncture' *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, volume 31, pages 988 – 1002, Page 991

²⁴ Rockström, J., Steffen, W. L., Noone, K., Persson, Å., Chapin III, F. S., Lambin, E., ... & Foley, J. (2009). Planetary boundaries: exploring the safe operating space for humanity.

Biermann, F. (2012). Planetary boundaries and earth system governance: Exploring the links. *Ecological Economics*, 81, 4-9.

²⁵ United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) ['Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future'](#), page 44

elements of ‘good governance’ have been described by various international and European institutions, such as the [World Bank](#), the [International Monetary Fund](#), the [United Nations](#), the [OECD](#) and the [European Union](#), particularly in the White Paper on Governance²⁶. As such, ‘good governance’ is inherently linked to sustainable development, as is outlined by the United Nations General Assembly in 2012:

“Democracy, good governance and the rule of law at the national and international levels, as well as an enabling environment, are essential for sustainable development including sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development, environmental protection and the eradication of poverty and hunger”²⁷

The sustainable development concept and particular objectives, as well as the proposed mechanisms to steer towards these objectives, have historically emerged through multiple international conferences and agreements. For a timeline detailing the most significant milestones for sustainable development please refer to figure 2.1. ‘Milestones for Sustainable Development’ below. We can witness a shift from treating the conservation of the human environment separately, to an integration of environmental, social and economic concerns in the 1992 ‘Rio Summit’, and successive international conferences.

Fig.2.1 Milestones for Sustainable Development²⁸

1972	United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) in Stockholm
1980	World Conservation Strategy
1982	UN World Charter for Nature
1987	Brundtland Report ‘Our Common Future’
1988	International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
1992	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) ‘Earth Summit’ in Rio de Janeiro Agenda 21 action program: Rio Declaration on Environment and Development; United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); forest management statement; Creation of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD)
1994	International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo
1995	World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen
1996	United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) ‘City Summit’ in Istanbul
2000	Millennium Summit of the United Nations in New York Millennium Declaration : Eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set for 2015
2002	World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg
2006	EU Sustainable Development Strategy
2012	UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) ‘Rio+20 Summit’ ‘Future We Want’ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaffirms commitment to Sustainable Development • Post-2015 Development Agenda: proposal to develop Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
2014	17 SDGs proposed by the OWG
2015	‘Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’ due to be in the United National Sustainable Development Summit 25-27 September 2015 in New York

Governance

Governance refers to the **process of governing**, the managing, steering and guiding of public affairs by governing procedures and institutions in a democratic manner, especially in relation to public policy decision-making²⁹. In contrast to government, the institutional authority over a particular

²⁶ European Commission (2001) [‘European Governance White Paper’](#), COM(2001) 428

²⁷ United Nations General Assembly (2012) [‘Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 10 September 2012’](#), A/RES/66/289

²⁸ For a more detailed timeline including key publications please refer to [‘Sustainable Development Timeline’](#) by the iisd

²⁹ Baker, S. (2009) In Pursuit of Sustainable Development: A Governance Perspective, Paper presented at the 8th International Conference of the European Society for Ecological Economics (ESEE), Ljubljana, Slovenia, 29 June – 2 July 2009

territory, governance is a more “encompassing phenomenon” that “embraces governmental institutions, but ... also subsumes informal, non-governmental mechanisms”³⁰.

The **changing relationship between state and society** that is characterized by the rising importance of business and civil society actors in the policy processes is central to this concept. On the one side, governance is an **empirical** phenomenon since the 1980s where characterised by a shift in public organisation whereby state governments increasingly collaborate with private and voluntary actors and organisations to manage and deliver services³¹. On the other side, governance is an abstract **theory**³² to conceptualize the interactions of governing. Meuleman (2008) suggests a broad definition: “Governance is the totality of interactions, in which government, other public bodies, private sector and civil society participate, aiming at solving societal problems or creating societal opportunities”³³. To conceptualise these processes, there are three ideal types of governance: hierarchy, market and network³⁴ (see figure 2.2. on ‘Ideal Types of Governance’). In reality, these governance relationships are hybrid forms in which the contradicting internal logics of the ideal types of governance compete. An example of such hybrid forms, displaying characteristics of these three ideal types, are public-private partnerships, in which hierarchic government bureaucracies coexist with market mechanism and collaborative relationships between different actors. In this sense, theories of governance attempt to conceptualize an empirical shift from hierarchical state bureaucracies towards a greater role of market and networks of different actors and stakeholders.

Fig. 2.2 Ideal Types of Governance³⁵

Form of governance	Internal logic and characteristic	Role of the government	Typical output
Hierarchical	Authority, legality, accountability, compliance to rules and control procedures	Government rules society	Laws, regulations. Control procedures. Reports, decisions, compliance
Market	Price-mechanisms, efficiency, competitive advantage, performance contracts, deregulation	Government delivers services to society	Services, products, contracts, out-sourcing
Network	Co-operation and co-production of services between government and societal actors; trust, mutual learning and deliberation	Government is a partner in network society	Consensus, agreements, covenants

Due to its focus on the operationalization of the 2030 Agenda, this Quarterly Report takes a broad view on **governance** as the **steering requirements in terms of institutional procedures and**

Jordan, A. (2008) ‘The governance of sustainable development: taking stock and looking forwards’, Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy, 26:17-33

Lafferty, W.M. (2004) “Introduction: form and function in governance for sustainable development”, in Lafferty W.M. (ed) Governance for Sustainable Development: The Challenge of Adapting Form to Function, Edward Elgar, 2004, pp. 1-31.

³⁰ Rosenau, J. N., & Czempiel, E. O. (Eds.). (1992). Governance without government: order and change in world politics (Vol. 4). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sand, I. J. (1998). Understanding the new forms of governance: mutually interdependent, reflexive, destabilised and competing institutions. European Law Journal, 4(3), 271-293.

³¹ Bevir, M. (2012). Governance: A very short introduction (Vol. 333). Oxford University Press. page 2

³² For different uses of the term governance please see Rhodes, R. A. (1997). Understanding governance: policy networks, governance, reflexivity and accountability. Open University Press.

Stoker, G. (1998). Governance as theory: five propositions. International social science journal, 50(155), 17-28.

³³ Meuleman, L. (2008). Public management and the metagovernance of hierarchies, networks and markets: the feasibility of designing and managing governance style combinations. Springer Science & Business Media. Page 11

³⁴ Bevir, M. (2012). Governance: A very short introduction (Vol. 333). Oxford University Press.

Treib, O., Bähr, H., & Falkner, G. (2007). Modes of governance: towards a conceptual clarification. Journal of European public policy, 14(1), 1-20.

³⁵ Meuleman, L. (2008). Public management and the metagovernance of hierarchies, networks and markets: the feasibility of designing and managing governance style combinations. Springer Science & Business Media. Page 12.

cooperation between different actors to overcome collective action problems and implement effective measures to pursue a particular goal. This follows the broad definition of governance stipulated by Jordan (2008) as “the patterns that emerge from the governing activities of social, political and administrative actors”³⁶. The governance concept is central to the attempt to conceptualize how different social, economic and political actors relate to each other in a complex environment across various scales, from local to global. Considering the complexity of sustainable development discussed above, the governance concept becomes essential to make sense of efforts to achieve a sustainable development vision. In particular, hybrid forms of governance ‘across state-market-community divisions’³⁷ will be key to addressing complex global issues like sustainable development³⁸. However, the **state and international organisations continue to play a central role** in the management of these complex relationships with other actors. For instance, French (2002) argues that the challenge of reconciling sustainable development and globalisation reaffirms the important role of states and international bodies in maintaining a strong role in public governance³⁹. Foremost, this is the case since governance activities of the state play a central role in promoting socio-technical transitions and improving adaptive capacity to better balance economic, environmental and social needs⁴⁰. Thus, lobbying activities towards central public authorities, the EU and the United Nations are still vital to exerting influence over critical policy decisions.

‘Governance for SD’

‘Governance for SD’ is a normative concept that focusses on **steering policy towards achieving the objectives of sustainable development**. As clearly indicated by the word ‘for’ it is **prescriptive** of steering requirements, in terms of processes and cooperation between different actors, that are needed to pursue this normative and continuously evolving objective. Meadowcroft (2007) defines ‘governance for SD’ as the “processes of socio-political governance oriented towards the attainment of sustainable development. It encompasses public debate, political decision-making, policy formation and implementation, and complex interactions among public authorities, private business and civil society – in so far as these relate to steering societal development along more sustainable lines”⁴¹. In short, ‘governance for SD’ encompasses the **steering requirements and mechanisms** that enable the formulation of concerted and adaptive policies that foster the cooperation of diverse actors in delivering sustainable development.

Challenges for ‘Governance for SD’

‘Governance for SD’ faces clear **challenges** inherent in the complexity of the sustainable development concept⁴². Setting short-term goals to reach the overarching objectives of sustainable

³⁶ Kooiman J (Ed.), 1993 Modern Governance (Sage, Newbury Park, CA) page 2

³⁷ Lemos, M. C., & Agrawal, A. (2006). Environmental governance. *Annu. Rev. Environ. Resour.*, 31, 297-325.

³⁸ For multi-level perspectives on socio-technical transitions please refer to Elzen, B., Geels, F. W., & Green, K. (Eds.). (2004). *System innovation and the transition to sustainability: theory, evidence and policy*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Geels, F. W. (2002). Technological transitions as evolutionary reconfiguration processes: a multi-level perspective and a case-study. *Research policy*, 31(8), 1257-1274.

Loorbach, D. (2010). Transition management for sustainable development: a prescriptive, complexity-based governance framework. *Governance*, 23(1), 161-183.

³⁹ French, D. A. (2002). The Role of the State and International Organizations in Reconciling Sustainable Development and Globalization. *International Environmental Agreements*, 2(2), 135-150.

⁴⁰ Smith, A., Stirling, A., & Berkhout, F. (2005). The governance of sustainable socio-technical transitions. *Research policy*, 34(10), 1491-1510.

⁴¹ Meadowcroft, J. (2007b) Who is in Charge here? Governance for Sustainable Development in a Complex World, *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning*, 9/3-4, pp. 299-314:299

⁴² For more information on how this plays out in Agenda 21 see Bomberg, E., Bressers, H. T. A., Fernandez, S. A., Jorgens, H., Lundqvist, L. J., Meadowcroft, J., & O’Toole Jr, L. J. (2006). *Governance for sustainable development: the challenge of adapting form to function*. W. M. Lafferty (Ed.). Edward Elgar Publishing.

socio-economic **relationships requires a clear understanding of complex causal relationships and systemic processes** that is often lacking. Moreover, environmental problems linked to unsustainable socio-economic relations highlight the difficulty to **overcome collective action problems, path dependence and technological lock-in**⁴³. Climate change, for instance, is a classic example of a collective action problem; cases in which the rational self-interested actions of different stakeholders create a situation that is detrimental for all and thus constitutes a “tragedy of the commons”⁴⁴. The path-dependence to continue along current institutional arrangements, patterns of consumption and established practices is further exemplified by the lock-in of established technologies that benefit from increasing returns of scale and existing infrastructure, for instance in the transport sector⁴⁵.

The holistic approach taken by sustainable development in focussing on social, economic and environmental concerns further increases the **complexity of trade-offs** between different objectives. Meadowcroft (2007), for instance, calls for an **interactive / reflective form of governance**. He suggests that, in order to address these challenges, a continuous re-evaluation of what constitutes sustainable development and how this could be achieved needs to take place. The governance for SD should thus have “a dynamic posture, oriented to exploiting the diffusion of power to promote adjustment of the development trajectory”⁴⁶. This puts emphasis on the importance of reflexivity and learning, participation of different stakeholders, and horizontal and vertical integration. In order to conceptualize which governance characteristics will be especially critical to the promotion of sustainable development, this report focuses on a **taxonomy of four ‘governance for SD principles’** explained in more detail below.

2.2 Governance for SD Principles

The challenges for ‘governance for SD’ discussed previously indicate that promoting sustainable development will require coordination between different political levels, policy areas and a multitude of stakeholders in the formulation of objectives, policies and implementation efforts. The development and implementation of SD related policies take place in a **multi-actor, multi-level and multi-sector** context that has to be addressed through governance for SD⁴⁷. Furthermore, the nature of the sustainable development concept calls for great attention to the continuous **learning and adaption** of policies and need for political commitment to pursue long-term goal in an active and adaptive manner⁴⁸.

⁴³ Meadowcroft, J; Langhelle, O and Rudd, A (2012) *Governance, Democracy and Sustainable Development: Moving Beyond the Impasse*, Edward Elgar Publishing Limited: Cheltenham, p6-7

⁴⁴ Hardin, G. (1968). The tragedy of the commons. *Science*, 162(3859), 1243-1248.

⁴⁵ Levin, K., Cashore, B., Bernstein, S., & Auld, G. (2007, February). Playing it forward: Path dependency, progressive incrementalism, and the ‘Super Wicked’ problem of global climate change. In *International studies association 48th annual convention*, February (Vol. 28).

⁴⁶ Meadowcroft, J. (2007) ‘Who is in Charge here? Governance for Sustainable Development in a Complex World’, *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning*, 9(3/4): 299-314 page 308

⁴⁷ Niestroy, I. (2014a) ‘Governance for Sustainable Development: How to Support the Implementation of SDGs?’ in *Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) (ed): ASEF Outlook Report 2014/2015 – Facts and Perspective. Volume 1*): *Perspective on Sustainable Development*, p. 154-168, available at <http://www.asef.org/images/docs/ASEM%20Outlook%202015%20Vol%20II.pdf>

Niestroy, I. (2014b): *Sustainable Development Goals at the Subnational Level: Roles and good practices for subnational governments*. SDplanNet Briefing Note May 2014, available at http://www.iisd.org/sites/default/files/publications/sdplannet_sub_national_roles.pdf

Meulemann, L & Niestroy, I (2015) ‘Common But Differentiated Governance: A Metagovernance Approach to Make the SDGs Work’, *Sustainability*, 7(9)

⁴⁸ Steurer, R. (2010): *Sustainable Development as an integrative governance reform agenda: Principles and challenges*, in: Steurer, R. & Trattning, R. (eds.) (2010): *Nachhaltigkeit regieren: Eine Bilanz zu Governance-Prinzipien und –Praktiken* [Governing Sustainability: Taking stock of governance principles and practices]. München, Oekom, 33-54

The **steering requirements of ‘governance for SD’** have historically evolved throughout various international conferences and agreements since the ‘Rio Conference’ in 1992 (see figure 2.1. ‘Milestones for Sustainable Development’ above). [Agenda 21](#)⁴⁹, the Outcome Document of the Rio Conference 1992⁵⁰, made reference to integrating environmental and development concerns⁵¹ in decision-making (chapter 8); improving policy coherence between jurisdictions (chapter 8, 38f); strengthening the role of different stakeholder groups such as local authorities, workers or businesses (Section III); facilitating a long-term strategic perspective (esp. chapter 8); and achieving all this by utilizing different types of information and knowledge for decision-making (chapter 35 and 40). Similarly, the [UN World Summit](#) in Johannesburg 2002 (Rio +10) reiterated that governance is essential for the implementation of sustainable development objectives⁵². Furthermore, it detailed governance objectives for SD, such as (1) the integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of policy-making in a balanced manner; (2) strengthening coherence, coordination and monitoring; enhancing participation and effective involvement of civil society and other relevant stakeholders; and (3) strengthening educational, scientific and informational initiatives for sustainable development at all political levels.

Fig.2.3. Overview of governance for SD principles

Governance for SD principles	Rationale	Operationalization of principle
LONG-TERM PRINCIPLE	Governance for SD calls for long-term visioning and respective short-term action to pursue intra- and intergenerational equity	<u>Long-term strategies</u> that incorporate intra- and intergenerational impacts; and <u>short-term policies and targets</u> to manage short-term necessities without compromising the long-term vision
INTEGRATION PRINCIPLE	Governance for SD calls for coordination and integration of economic, social and environmental policies across and between different levels of governance	<u>Mechanisms of vertical integration</u> that promote policy integration across multiple political-administrative levels, coordination between EU, national and sub-national activities
		<u>Mechanisms of horizontal integration</u> that support and foster policy integration between the different ministries and administrative bodies on the respective political level for the delivery of SD policies
		<u>Integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development:</u> social equity, economic development and environment protection
PARTICIPATION PRINCIPLE	Governance for SD calls for the incorporation of stakeholders into the decision-making process	<u>Participatory arrangements</u> of different stakeholders, such as civil society organizations, business, academia, etc. in the policy-making process in order to integrate different types of knowledges
REFLEXIVITY PRINCIPLE	Governance for SD calls for reflexive processes based on continuous reflection and policy learning cycles	Effective <u>indicators and monitoring</u> systems and practices
		Effective <u>evaluation and review</u> practices that enable continuous and adaptive learning

⁴⁹ United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992) ‘Agenda 21’, Rio De Janeiro, Brazil

⁵⁰ Steurer, R. (2010): Sustainable Development as an integrative governance reform agenda: Principles and challenges, in: Steurer, R. & Trattning, R. (eds.) (2010): Nachhaltigkeit regieren: Eine Bilanz zu Governance-Prinzipien und –Praktiken [Governing Sustainability: Taking stock of governance principles and practices]. München, Oekom, 33-54

Jänicke, M. (2006): The “Rio Model” of Environmental Governance – A general Evaluation. FFU-report 03-2006.

⁵¹ United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992) ‘Agenda 21’, Rio De Janeiro, Brazil

⁵² United Nations (2002) ‘Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development’, Johannesburg, South Africa

Long-term principle

Intergenerational justice is inherent to the sustainable development concept. Already the Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, the outcome of the 1972 Stockholm Conference, stated that “to defend and improve the human environment for present and future generations has become an imperative goal for mankind a goal to be pursued together with, and in harmony with, the established and fundamental goals of peace and of worldwide economic and social development.”⁵³ Furthermore, the World Conservation Strategy (1980) stresses that we “must take account of the needs of future generations”⁵⁴. Similarly, Agenda 21 (1992) called for national sustainable development strategies with the aim to “ensure socially responsible economic development while protecting the resource base and the environment for the benefit of future generations.”⁵⁵ Most recently, this has been reaffirmed in ‘The Future We Want’ adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2012, which confirms the “commitment to sustainable development and to ensuring the promotion of an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for our planet and for present and future generations”⁵⁶

These key documents clearly put a strong emphasis on a **long-term perspective** that takes into account the needs of future generations. Efforts to commit to **short-term actions** to achieve a sustainable long-term vision of intra- and intergenerational equity face inherent uncertainty as well as short-termism fostered by electoral cycles. A system of governance should enable long-term decision-making and commitment to common goals, while opening pathways of flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances. Governance for SD thus calls for long-term strategies that incorporate intra- and intergenerational issues as well as short-term policies and targets to manage short-term necessities towards that long-term vision.

However, the dichotomy between a long-term vision and the short-term needs and requirements of society creates immediate societal pressures on politicians. For instance, the economic and financial crisis 2008, the Greek bail-out, and the current refugee challenge call for urgent political responses. These issues dominate election campaigns and make it a challenge to form long-term visions and strategies in an environment of short-term political fixes, party politics, and changing governments. Furthermore, this raises issues in terms of accountability and legitimacy since many open questions remain: Who’s future vision are we steering towards? How this vision is created, debated and articulated? How are future scenarios conceptualized? Is 2030 really long-term enough or do we need a vision for at least 2050? How does this vision evolve over time to adapt to changes in public opinion, available technologies and geo-political concerns? Are day-to-day politics, media hype, and individual stakeholder interests ultimately more powerful in policy-making than long-term visions for future generations?

Integration principle

The coordination, integration and balancing of economic, social and environmental policies across and between different levels of governance is a central feature of governance *for* SD. Kemp, Parto and Gibson (2005) make the point that it is the interconnected and complex nature of sustainable development that makes it “essentially about the effective integration of social, economic and

⁵³ UN (1972) Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, para 6

⁵⁴ IUCN-UNEP-WWF (1980) ‘World Conservation Strategy’, foreword

⁵⁵ United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992) ‘Agenda 21’, Rio De Janeiro, Brazil, para 8.7

⁵⁶ United Nations General Assembly (2012) ‘The Future We Want’, resolution 66/288

considerations at all scales from local to global, over the long haul”⁵⁷. This need for integration of the different dimensions between different institutions at different levels is also clearly stated in the internationally agreed policy documents. Cooperation between different countries and levels of governance was a central theme in Agenda 21⁵⁸. Similarly, the ‘Rio+20 Summit’ concluded that “the institutional framework for sustainable development should integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced manner and enhance implementation by, inter alia, strengthening coherence and coordination, avoiding duplication of efforts and reviewing progress in implementing sustainable development.”⁵⁹

Thus, the integration of social, economic and environmental aspects throughout different governing institutions at the international, national, regional and local level is key for achieving sustainable development. This will firstly require **mechanisms of vertical integration** that promote policy integration across multiple political-administrative and levels and coordination between EU, national and sub-national activities. Secondly, **mechanisms of horizontal integration** are needed that support and foster policy integration between the different ministries and administrative bodies on the respective levels for delivering SD policies.

Improving horizontal integration in administrative settings that are traditionally organised in different ministerial departments will be a challenge (i.e. ‘silo thinking’, ‘departmentalisation’). Incentivising individuals in public administrations to work across silos with other departments and the relevant stakeholders will be a central issue. Different problem definitions and sector-specific language will have to be overcome. A key question will be: How do we establish spaces for exchange between ministries and how to resource these spaces for exchange financially and in terms of capacity? How do we foster an ethos of institutional learning in the current and new generation of civil servants?

Efforts to enhance the level of vertical integration in Europe will have to take into account the many institutional differences in terms of competences of various administrative levels. It will be a challenge to formulate a common agenda and, furthermore, share competences, responsibility and implementation responsibilities of this agenda. However, different approaches towards the promotion of sustainable development in different countries could also prove to be an opportunity for innovation and testing which approaches are most effective under changing circumstances.

Participation principle

The participation of different stakeholders in decision-making processes has been a central principle of sustainable development since the concept emerged. The ambiguity of the SD concept and its goals, and the need to adapt to changing circumstances calls for a constant redefinition and reinterpretation of SD principles. Jordan (2008) argues that in the absence of a “centrally determined blueprint for sustainable development, its practical meaning will necessarily have to emerge out of an interactive process of **societal dialogue and reflection**. If this is the case, systems of governance will be needed to guide and steer these collective discussions towards a satisfactory level of consensus....resolve conflicts and to arrive at coordinated policies”⁶⁰. Sustainable

⁵⁷ Kemp, R., Pasto, S and Gibson, R (2005) ‘Governance for sustainable development: moving from theory to practice’, International Journal of Sustainable Development, 8(1/2):12-30

⁵⁸ United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992) ‘Agenda 21’, Rio De Janeiro, Brazil, para 8.10

⁵⁹ United Nations General Assembly (2012) ‘The Future We Want’, resolution 66/288, para 75

⁶⁰ Jordan, A. (2008) ‘The governance of sustainable development: taking stock and looking forwards’, Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy, 26:17-33

development thus calls for decision-making that has an adaptive and participatory character to account for changes and uncertainty, harness different types of knowledge, and foster cooperation and shared objectives. Participation has been a central component of various policy documents. For instance, Agenda 21 put great emphasis on local community participation as a means of implementation⁶¹. The Rio+20 Outcome Document, ‘The Future We Want’, stresses its aim to ‘enhance the participation and effective engagement of civil society and other relevant stakeholders in the relevant international forums and, in this regard, promote transparency and broad public participation and partnerships to implement sustainable development’⁶². Participatory arrangements of different stakeholders, such as civil society organizations, business, and academia in the policy-making process will thus be a central steering tool for sustainable development governance. However, it remains uncertain how to achieve effective participation. Questions that will need to be addressed include: Who decides who the relevant stakeholders are? How do we create spaces for these stakeholders to meaningfully interact? At what time in the decision-making process and at what level are stakeholders involved? How much knowledge and expertise is required to make a meaningful contribution to a complex issues like sustainable development and how do stakeholders gain access to information and evidence? How to we prevent stakeholder groups with more time and resources from hitchhiking the agenda? How do we reimburse voluntary civil society representatives time and travel cost to balance the financial weight of established industrial lobby groups? Even if these challenges are addressed, the problem remains that the organisation and time effort needed to facilitate a constructive debate could prolong decision-making processes and delay action.

Reflexivity principle

Finally, ‘governance for SD’ calls for reflexive processes based on **continuous reflection and policy learning**. As discussed above, technological, social and environmental changes warrant an adaptive process in which policies, strategies and institutional arrangements are evaluated and adapted to effectively address the challenges of a changing environment and to foster innovation⁶³. The Outcome Document of the 2012 Rio+20 Conference, ‘The Future We Want’, puts a strong emphasis on monitoring different areas of sustainable development, from capacity building efforts to environmental indicators. To enable problem-specific processes of policy learning, effective indicators, monitoring systems and practices need to be in place to form the basis for effective evaluation and review practices that enable continuous and adaptive learning.

Establishing effective monitoring, evaluation and review frameworks will be a challenge⁶⁴. The ability to foster reflexive processes depends on how much reliable data and evidence is available to assess progress. Analysis will further require knowledge and technical expertise, for instance, in areas such as renewable energy that will constitute a challenge for policy makers. More importantly, we have to face the question of how to establish and sustain a ‘learning approach’ in our administrations and public authorities, and ingrain an attitude to learn from failures in the organisational culture of our institutions.

⁶¹ United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992) ‘Agenda 21’, Rio De Janeiro, Brazil, para 14.40, b

⁶² United Nations General Assembly (2012) ‘The Future We Want’, resolution 66/288, para 76, h

⁶³ For more detailed information on transition management see Kemp, R., & Loorbach, D. (2003, November). Governance for sustainability through transition management. In Open Meeting of Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change Research Community, Montreal, Canada (pp. 16-18).

Geels, F. W. (2011). The multi-level perspective on sustainability transitions: Responses to seven criticisms. *Environmental innovation and societal transitions*, 1(1), 24-40.

⁶⁴ For more information please refer to [ESDN Quarterly Report 37 The European context for monitoring and reviewing SDGs](#)

3 Governance for SD architecture at UN, EU and National levels

Chapter 3 investigates how the principles of ‘Governance for Sustainable Development’ are taken up in the new 2030 Agenda architecture at the international level with a closer look at the sustainable development goals (SDGs). It also describes very briefly the current situation in Europe and EU Member States in terms of ‘governance for SD’.

3.1 The UN and the 2030 Agenda

Governance for SD principles have emerged from multiple policy documents of the UN system that together form a proposed ‘UN architecture for SD governance’. At this historic moment, the newly adopted [Outcome Document](#) for the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will frame how we address sustainable development in the near future.

The ‘Rio+20 Summit’ has been followed by the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the accompanying processes of the [Third Financing for Development Conference](#) (13-16 July 2015) in Addis Ababa and the [COP 21](#) (7-8 December 2015) in Paris. The Finance for Development Conference assembled high-level political representatives, such as Heads of State and Government, and Ministers of Finance, Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation, as well as all relevant institutional stakeholders, non-governmental organizations and business sector representatives. The Conference resulted in a negotiated outcome which provides “A new global framework for financing sustainable development that aligns all financing flows and policies with economic, social and environmental priorities” and “A comprehensive set of policy actions ... over 100 concrete measures”⁶⁵ of Member States to support sustainable development and innovation. This provides guidance on financing mechanisms and reaffirms a strong commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that in turn lay out holistic vision of promoting sustainable development through different goals and targets.

A recent UNEP discussion paper on the governance for sustainable development⁶⁶ highlights the governance related challenges of the 2030 Agenda as follows (highlights by the authors):

*“Planning for the long-term: The core of sustainable development is meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. There is thus a **need to develop institutions that promote inter-generational equity**. However, the governing institutions, and thus political incentives, in **most states emphasise and encourage a short-term approach**. As the High Level Panel on Global Sustainability put it, ‘there are few incentives to put [sustainable development] into practice when our policies, politics and institutions disproportionately reward the short-term.’*

*“Integrating the different dimensions of sustainable development policy: Sustainable human development requires finding synergies and coherence between what have been largely separate goals under the MDGs. However, **planning institutions and processes in most countries still work along sectoral lines**. Balancing the needs of environmental protection and development, in particular, has proved difficult.*

*“Innovation and collaboration: It is widely argued that **hierarchical, government-driven approaches to development are unsuitable for the complex, multi-sectoral challenges of sustainable development**. The explosive growth in the use of ICTs in the south, notably mobile phones, is also rapidly **opening up new forms of engagement between citizen, state and the private sector** and new forms of monitoring and evaluation. These developments put a high premium on the capacity of the public sector to innovate and collaborate with people and businesses - skills many government institutions often lack.”*

⁶⁶ UNEP (2014) ‘[Governance for Sustainable Development - Integrating Governance in the Post-2015 Development Framework](#)’, Discussion Paper March 2014

The [United Nations Summit to adopt the Post-2015 Agenda](#) (25-27 September 2015) in New York was convened at a high-level plenary of the United Nations General Assembly to formally adopt the previously negotiated **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. The adopted Outcome Document '[Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)' contains two SDGs related to governance (Goal 16 and 17) and various sub-goals and targets:

- **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*

Goal 16 reaffirms the commitment to 'good governance' in terms of providing 'justice for all' and goes a step further to addressing the 'integration principle' by aiming at 'effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels'. Goal 17, on the means of implementation, addresses different governance for SD principles that will be described in more detail below.

The section below will elaborate how each 'governance for SD' principle, identified in chapter 2.2. of this report, is articulated in the document '[Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)'.

LONG-TERM PRINCIPLE: Governance for SD calls for **long-term visioning and short-term action** to pursue **intergenerational equity**

The Outcome Documents clearly refers to the **long-term objective** of fulfilling the needs of future generations. Already in the preamble, the document states that "*we are determined to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations*". The long-term aim to benefit future generation is a strong theme throughout the document. For instance, in the section 'A call for action to change our world', the document eloquently states that "*the future of humanity and of our planet lies in our hands. It lies also in the hands of today's younger generation who will pass the torch to **future generations**. We have mapped the road to sustainable development; it will be for all of us to ensure that the journey is successful and its gains irreversible*" (§53).

While taking an '**indeterminate long-term view**' (until 2030), the SDGs have **clear targets** to be achieved by 2030. These goals and their corresponding targets give the impetus for urgent action. The SDGs have the potential of being a framework for reforming and reaffirming national and regional sustainable development strategies and initiating short-term policies to reach the targets set for 2030.

INTEGRATION PRINCIPLE: Governance for SD calls for **coordination and integration** of economic, social and environmental policies across and between different levels of governance

The Outcome Document acknowledges that there are "*deep interconnections and many **cross-cutting** elements across the new Goals and targets*" (§17) that have to be addressed through an integrated approach. This cross-cutting nature of the SDGs itself highlights the need to exploit synergies and overcome silos between different ministries and departments. This need for greater **horizontal integration** is addressed in the section 'Policy and institutional coherence'. It calls for an effort to enhance "*global macroeconomic stability, including through policy coordination and policy coherence*" (17.13) and "*policy coherence for sustainable development*" (17.14). How this will be

operationalized will depend on how Member States decide to take up the recommendations and aspirations of the document in their national policies and institutional reforms. This is specified in paragraph 55, which states that:

*“The SDGs and targets are integrated and indivisible, global in nature and universally applicable, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities. Targets are defined as aspirational and global, with each government setting its **own national targets guided by the global level of ambition but taking into account national circumstances**. Each government will also decide how these aspirational and global targets should be incorporated in national planning processes, policies and strategies. It is important to recognize the link between sustainable development and other relevant ongoing processes in the economic, social and environmental fields.” (§55)*

This strongly suggests that the national governance level will be highly important for framing and carrying out approaches and policies that promote the SDGs. Thus, **national sustainable development strategies and policies** will play a central role in the implementation process.

Evidently, the adopted 2030 Agenda document frames the dialogue and cooperation between different levels of governance on the international, regional, national and subnational level, as it is a legal document agreed upon by UN Member States and thus constitutes an accepted shared language and objectives. This could substantially streamline efforts to promote sustainable development at different levels, as institutions could be made more aware that they are working for a common goal and investigate possible synergies.

The document makes specific reference to the efforts for **implementation and follow-up at the global, regional and national level**. Greater cooperation on the regional level could be a substantial element of implementing the SDGs globally. Figure 3.1. below on ‘Levels of SDG implementation’ details the specific references to the different levels in the Outcome Document. This shows that the **national level will play the most substantial role** in implementation and financing. The document also states that **regional and subregional frameworks can “facilitate the effective translation of sustainable development policies into concrete action at national level”** (§21). This shows that the regional level has a supporting/facilitating function in the formulation of policies and strategies, but that the national level remains the key level of implementation, while action at the regional and international level would focus in the transfer of technologies and best practices. In terms of follow-up and review, national governments also have the ‘primary responsibility’. At the regional level, the Outcome Document envisions *“voluntary reviews, sharing of best practices and discussion on shared targets”*. If, how, and with whom national states engage in this manner remains a decision of the different Member States. At the global level, a High Level Political Forum will be tasked with overseeing these national follow-up and review processes as well as with a thematic review of the SDGs.

Fig. 3.1. Levels of SDG implementation⁶⁷

	Global	Regional	National
IMPLEMENTATION	<p>“The scale and ambition of the new Agenda requires a revitalized Global Partnership to ensure its implementation. (...) It will facilitate an intensive global engagement in support of implementation of all the Goals and targets, bringing together Governments, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations system and other actors and mobilizing all available resources.” (§39)</p> <p>“international public finance plays an important role in complementing the efforts of countries to mobilize public resources domestically.” (§43)</p>	<p>“We acknowledge also the importance of the regional and sub-regional dimensions: regional and sub-regional frameworks can facilitate the effective translation of sustainable development policies into concrete action at national level” (§21)</p> <p>“Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation and enhance knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms” (§17.6)</p>	<p>“each country has primary responsibility for its own economic and social development.” (§41)</p> <p>“public policies and the mobilization and effective use of domestic resources, underscored by the principle of national ownership, are central to our common pursuit of sustainable development” (§66)</p> <p>“Cohesive nationally owned sustainable development strategies, supported by integrated national financing frameworks, will be at the heart of our efforts. (...) At the same time, national development efforts need to be supported by an enabling international economic environment, including coherent and mutually supporting world trade, monetary and financial systems, and strengthened and enhanced global economic governance.” (§63)</p> <p>“Member States to develop as soon as practicable ambitious national responses to the overall implementation of this Agenda. These can support the transition to the Sustainable Development Goals and build on existing planning instruments, such as national development and sustainable development strategies” (§78)</p> <p>“Public finance, both domestic and international, will play a vital role in providing essential services and public goods and in catalysing other sources of finance.” §41</p> <p>“role of national parliaments through their enactment of legislation and adoption of budgets and their role in ensuring accountability for the effective implementation of our commitments.” (§45)</p> <p>“Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the Sustainable Development Goals” (§17.9)</p>
FOLLOW-UP	<p>“The high-level political forum will have a central role in overseeing a network of follow-up and review processes at the global level (...) It will facilitate sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, and provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations for follow-up. It will promote system-wide coherence and coordination of sustainable development policies” (§82)</p> <p>“Thematic reviews of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, including cross-cutting issues, will also take place at the high-level political forum.” (§85)</p>	<p>“Follow-up and review at the regional and sub-regional levels can, as appropriate, provide useful opportunities for peer learning, including through voluntary reviews, sharing of best practices and discussion on shared targets. (...) Inclusive regional processes will draw on national-level reviews and contribute to follow-up and review at the global level” (§80)</p> <p>“Recognizing the importance of building on existing follow-up and review mechanisms at the regional level and allowing adequate policy space, we encourage all Member States to identify the most suitable regional forum in which to engage.” (§81)</p>	<p>“Governments have the primary responsibility for follow-up and review, at the national, regional and global levels” (§47)</p> <p>“We also encourage Member States to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels which are country-led and country-driven. Such reviews should draw on contributions from indigenous peoples, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders, in line with national circumstances, policies and priorities. “ (§79)</p>

PARTICIPATION PRINCIPLE: Governance *for* SD calls for the incorporation of **stakeholders** into the decision-making process

The formulation of the SDGs itself was characterized by a particular effort to engage with **different stakeholders** and enhance the process through extensive public consultations. As described in paragraph 6 of the Outcome Document, the current goals and targets are the result of “*over two years of intensive public consultation and engagement with civil society and other stakeholders*”

⁶⁷ All quotes from UNGA (2015) ‘Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’, A/69/L.85

around the world, which paid particular attention to the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable”(§6).

This emphasis on participation is also inherent in the document itself. **Participation** is a central topic in the different SDGs, as for instance SDG 6, ‘Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all’ has the sub goal 6.b that reads *“Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management”*. Another example is goal 16 to ‘Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels’ also has clear references to participation: *“Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance”* (16.8).

Furthermore, the document puts emphasis on **multi-stakeholder partnerships** as a way to engage with and enhance cooperation between different stakeholders. This is described in target 17.16: *“Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries”*. The rationale for a call to involve different stakeholders is **sharing of knowledge, co-creation of new knowledge and providing adequate finance**. Furthermore, partnerships between different stakeholder groups are also seen as an **effective tool of implementation** and this *“public, public-private and civil society partnerships”* (target 17.17) are encouraged.

Finally, the document also commits itself to **participation in the follow-up and review process**: *“The HLPF will support participation in follow-up and review processes by the major groups and other relevant stakeholders in line with Resolution 67/290. We call on these actors to report on their contribution to the implementation of the Agenda”* (§89). Stakeholder participation is thus seen as positive at all stages of the policy process, from the formulation of objectives and policies, to implementation, and monitoring and reviewing.

REFLEXIVITY PRINCIPLE: Governance for SD calls for **reflexive processes** based on continuous reflection and policy learning cycles

The Outcome Document also has a detailed section on ‘Follow-up and Review’ that could be the basis for a reflexive policy learning process. The document states, *“we commit to engage in systematic follow-up and review of implementation of this Agenda over the next fifteen years. A robust, voluntary, effective, participatory, transparent and integrated follow-up and review framework will make a vital contribution to implementation and will help countries to maximize and track progress in implementing this Agenda in order to ensure that no one is left behind”* (§72). This system aims to enable the pursuit of a long-term vision, will operate on a national, regional and global level, and have participation elements also focussing on the science-policy interface. As such, this incorporates the principles of sustainable development, integration and participation discussed above. Furthermore, a **global indicator framework** will be developed to complement indicators at national and regional level. This global indicator framework will be developed by the Inter Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators and will be agreed by the UN Statistical Commission by March 2016 (§75).

At the regional and sub-regional levels in particular, there is a great focus on **policy learning**. The document states that *“follow-up and review at the regional and sub-regional levels can, as appropriate, provide useful opportunities for **peer learning**, including through **voluntary reviews, sharing of best practices and discussion on shared targets**. We welcome in this respect the cooperation of regional and sub-regional commissions and organizations. Inclusive regional processes will draw on national-level reviews and contribute to follow-up and review at the global level, including at the High Level Political Forum on sustainable development (HLPF)”* (§80).

3.2 The EU’s SD governance architecture

In this chapter, our main intention is to briefly introduce the **current governance architecture** present in Europe with relation to sustainable development strategy processes and policies. Two major **European policy strategies** are mainly relating to SD: the **renewed EU SDS** (2006) and the **Europe 2020 Strategy** (2010)⁶⁸. Although a new EU Commission has recently started a new cycle, these two strategies still remain the reference governance framework for SD in Europe.

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;*
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**.

⁶⁸ The next two sections are mainly based on a previous study we undertook in 2011. Please refer to: Pisano, U., G. Berger, A. Endl and M. Sedlacko (2011) Sustainable development governance & policies in the light of major EU policy strategies and international developments. ESDN Quarterly Report September 2011. Available at: http://www.sd-network.eu/quarterly%20reports/report%20files/pdf/2011-September-SD_governance_and_policies.pdf

Fig.2.1: The EU SDS in brief

Strategy	Renewed in 2006 based on the first EU SDS (Gothenburg, 2001)
Aim	Achieve SD, quality of life and well-being in Europe in the long-term
Objectives	<p>7 key challenges:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Climate change and clean energy 2. Sustainable transport 3. Sustainable consumption & production 4. Conservation and management of natural resources 5. Public Health 6. Social inclusion, demography and migration 7. Global poverty and sustainable development challenges <p>2 cross-cutting policies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. education and training; b. research and development
Governance cycle	Every two years
Main documents for implementation at the national level	National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDSs)
Ministries responsible at the national level	Ministries of the Environment (in most cases)

Source: Pisano et al., 2011

In terms of **policy steering and governance**, the EU SDS of 2006 includes certain key elements. Firstly, it includes **10 policy guiding principles**, ranging from open and democratic society, involvement of citizens, policy coherence and governance, policy integration to the precautionary principle (EU SDS, 2006, pp. 4-5). A section on ‘better policy making’ defines an approach “based on better regulation and on the principle that *sustainable development is to be integrated into policy-making at all levels*. This requires all levels of government to support, and to cooperate with, each other, taking into account the different institutional settings, cultures and specific circumstances in Member States” (EU SDS, 2006, p. 6).

The EU SDS also suggests a **range of policy instruments** to be applied for successfully reaching its objectives. The strategy mentions: (a) *economic instruments* should be used to promote market transparency and prices that reflect the real economic, social and environmental costs of products and services (getting prices right); (b) *shift taxation from labour to resource and energy consumption* and/or pollution; (c) *elimination of subsidies* that have considerable negative effects on the environment and are incompatible with sustainable development; (d) co-ordinate to achieve synergies with *co-financing mechanisms*, such as, for instance, cohesion policy and rural development; and (e) mainstreaming sustainable development *information, awareness raising, and communication activities* and continue (EU SDS, 2006, pp. 24-25).

As for the **implementation and follow-up**, the EU SDS outlined a number of steps (EU SDS, 2006, pp. 26-29):

Firstly, *progress report* on EU SDS implementation by the Commission every second year. However, only two such progress reports were published, one in 2007 and one in 2009. Only the first one included reports on achievements from each Member State; the second one was a shorter without reporting on country specific achievements.

Secondly, an important input for the progress reports were the *Eurostat Monitoring Reports on the EU SDS*, based on the European SD indicator set. These indicator reports have been regularly published every two years since 2007, the last one in September 2015.

Thirdly, an *SDS Coordinators Group* was established, comprising national government representatives from each Member State, to provide “necessary input on progress at national level in accordance with National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDSs)”. The Coordinators Group, however, had only two meetings: One in November 2006 on the mandate of the Group and the main tasks of the coordinators, and one in February 2007 about the organisation of the national progress reporting (see also ESDN Quarterly Report, December 2008).

Fourthly, all EU Member States should design their *NSDSs* by June 2007 and future revisions should take into account EU SDS objectives. All EU Member States developed their NSDSs, so this goal was achieved. However, while some have managed to establish a very active process with dedicated institutions; others continue to officially have an NSDS in place, but activities are scarce; and again others have replaced the traditional policy strategy approach by different SD steering mechanisms (e.g. UK and the Netherlands). More details on NSDSs can be found in the next sub-chapter.

Fifthly, *voluntary peer reviews* were suggested by the European Commission and funding for their execution was secured. However, only a handful of countries has so far undertaken peer reviews on their NSDS process, e.g. Germany, France and the Netherlands. The only country that has continued to use peer reviews as assessment tool of their NSDS efforts is Germany (they have done two so far, in 2008, and 2012; the next one is planned for 2016).

Finally, Member States were encouraged to *make use of existing networks, like the ESDN or EEAC*, to exchange information, good policies and practices. Both networks are still existing and very successfully providing a platform and space for exchange and learning.

The very last paragraph in the EU SDS mentioned that “at the latest by 2011, the European Council will decide when a *comprehensive review of the EU SDS* needs to be launched” (EU SDS, 2006, p. 29). This comprehensive reviews has never materialized. The latest development in terms of the EU SDS is that Karl Falkenberg, former Director-General of DG Environment, in his new role as Senior Adviser for Sustainable Development at the EU’s in-house think-tank, the European Political Strategy Centre (EPSC), will deliver a *report on the EU SDS in July 2016*.

The Europe 2020 Strategy (EU SDS)

Adopted in 2010, the Europe 2020 Strategy ‘**A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth**’ outlines three “mutually reinforcing priorities” (EC, 2010, p.3)⁶⁹ 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:

- I. 75% of the population aged 20-64 should be employed;
- II. 3% of the EU's GDP should be invested in R&D;
- III. the "20/20/20" climate and energy targets should be met (including an increase to 30% of emissions reduction *if the conditions are right*);

⁶⁹ 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>

- IV. the share of early school leavers should be under 10% and at least 40% of the younger generation should have a tertiary degree;
- V. 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. To reach these targets, seven Flagship Initiatives have already been put in place (see **Fig.3.2**).

Fig.3.2: The Europe 2020 Strategy in brief

Strategy	Published March 2010; adopted June 2010
Aim	Achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth
Objectives	<p>5 headline targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment: 75% of the population aged 20-64 should be employed • R&D / innovation: 3% of the EU's GDP should be invested in R&D • Climate change / energy: the "20/20/20" climate/energy targets should be met (including an increase to 30% of emissions reduction if the conditions are right) • Education: the share of early school leavers should be under 10% and at least 40% of the younger generation should have a tertiary degree • Poverty / social exclusion: 20 million less people should be at risk of poverty <p>To reach these targets, 7 flagship initiatives are in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Innovation Union</i> • <i>Youth on the move</i> • <i>A digital agenda for Europe</i> • <i>Resource efficient Europe</i> • <i>An industrial policy for the globalisation era</i> • <i>An agenda for new skills and jobs</i> • <i>European platform against poverty</i>
Governance cycle	Every year
Main documents for implementation at the national level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stability / convergence programmes • National reform programmes
Ministries responsible at the national level	Ministries of Economic Affairs and/or Ministries of Finance (in most cases)

Source: Pisano et al., 2011

In terms of **governance**, the Europe 2020 Strategy is organised around a thematic approach and more focused country surveillance:

1. **The thematic approach** focuses on the themes identified combining priorities and headline targets with the main instrument being the Europe2020 programme and its seven flagship initiatives;
2. **Country reporting** to help Member States to define and implement exit strategies, restore macroeconomic stability, identify national bottlenecks and return their economies to sustainable growth and public finances.

The **reporting** of Europe 2020 and the Stability and Growth Pact evaluation has to be done *simultaneously*, while keeping the instruments separate and maintaining the integrity of the Pact. This means proposing the annual stability or convergence programmes and streamlined reform programmes simultaneously:

- **Stability / convergence programmes**⁷⁰ aim to ensure more rigorous budgetary discipline through surveillance and coordination of budgetary policies. In line with the *European Semester*, they are designed to coordinate economic policy-making in EU Member States. The programmes are submitted simultaneously with the National Reform Programmes (NRPs) in April of each year, before governments adopt their national budgets for the following year. They contain important information on **public finances and fiscal policy**;
- **National Reform Programmes (NRPs)** are the key delivery tool for Europe 2020 and are produced by national governments in April of each year (usually coordinated and prepared by Economic and Finance Ministries), along with stability / convergence programmes. NRPs contain national targets relating to the Europe 2020 headline targets and explain how national governments intend to meet them and overcome obstacles to growth. They also set out what measures will be taken, when, by whom and with what budget implications.

[Ten "Europe 2020 Integrated Guidelines"](#) set out the **framework** for the Europe 2020 Strategy and for the reforms at the Member States level with the aim of ensuring that national and EU-level policies contribute to fully achieve the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy.

The "[European semester](#)" represents the new **European governance architecture** since [September 2010](#). Through this six-month cycle, EU and Eurozone countries coordinate ex-ante their budgetary and economic policies in line with both the Stability and Growth Pact and the Europe 2020 Strategy⁷¹. It provides policy orientations covering fiscal, macroeconomic structural reform and growth enhancing areas, and advises on linkages between them.

In December 2013, the Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a General Union Environment Action Programme to 2020 "Living well, within the limits of our planet" (7th EAP) required the EU and its Member States to integrate environmental and climate-related considerations into the European Semester, to monitor the implementation of the relevant elements of the 7th EAP as part of it, and assess the appropriateness of the inclusion of a lead indicator and target in this process⁷². Coherently, the so-called '[Greening the European Semester](#)' initiative represents an opportunity to show that the environment was part of the solution to the economic and financial crisis, and conversely that macroeconomic instruments could also act in support also of environmental objectives. It has therefore the intention to ensure that macroeconomic policies are sustainable, not only economically and socially, but also environmentally.

At the moment, as announced in its [communication in March 2014](#), the Commission is launching a review, starting with a public consultation. The public consultation was open from 5 May to 31 October 2014 with the aim was to collect experience from stakeholders to in order to draw the lessons from the first years of implementation of the strategy and to feed into the review. The Commission will take the [results of the public consultation](#) into account in further reflections on how the Europe 2020 strategy should be taken forward. In addition to the outcome of the public consultation, the Commission will also consider the contributions received from the European Parliament, the Council, national Parliaments, the European Economic and Social Committee and the

⁷⁰ Under the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP), *stability programmes* are produced annually by Eurozone countries; other EU countries produce *convergence programmes*.

⁷¹ For a more detailed description of the process, please see: Pisano et al. (2011) Sustainable development governance & policies in the light of major EU policy strategies and international developments. ESDN Quarterly Report September 2011.

⁷² Council conclusions on Greening the European semester and the Europe 2020 Strategy - Mid-term review. 28 October 2014.

Committee of the Regions. In line with the Commission's work programme for 2015, the Commission will present proposals for the review of the Europe 2020 strategy before the end of the year.

Fig.3.3: Responsible institutions and roles in the Europe 2020 Strategy

<p>European Council: The European Council is <i>responsible for steering</i> the strategy through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual overall assessments of progress at EU and national level at its spring meeting. It takes stock of the overall macroeconomic situation and progress towards the 5 EU-wide headline targets as well as the flagship initiatives; • Horizontal policy guidance for the EU and the Eurozone as a whole on the basis of the Annual Growth Survey presented by the Commission. It issues guidance at EU level covering fiscal, macroeconomic, structural reform and growth-enhancing policy areas; • Discussion of economic developments and priorities for the strategy; • Endorsement of country specific recommendations, on the basis of a proposal by the Commission (at its June meeting). <p>Council of the EU ministers: The Council of the EU (formed by national ministers responsible for the relevant policy areas) has the main tasks of monitoring and peer review while discussing implementation of the NRPs in their area of competence and the progress towards targets and flagship initiatives.</p> <p>European Commission: The European Commission annually monitors the situation on the basis of a set of indicators showing overall progress towards the objective of smart, green and inclusive economy delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. It issues a yearly report on the delivery of the Europe 2020 Strategy, policy recommendations or warnings, policy proposals to attain the objectives of the strategy, and a specific assessment of progress achieved within the euro-area.</p> <p>European Parliament: The European Parliament plays an important role in the strategy, not only as co-legislator but also as a driving force for mobilising citizens and national parliaments. Each year before the Spring European Council, the European Parliament may present a resolution assessing the Europe 2020 strategy as an input for discussions.</p> <p>European Economic and Social Committee: The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) enables the participation of national social partners and civil society in the practical implementation of the Europe2020 Strategy. It focuses on co-ownership of national societal forces in Europe2020 and on mobilising trans-border networks.</p> <p>Committee of the Regions: Since territorial cohesion is at the heart of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Committee of the Regions (CoR) gives support for and policy input to the implementation of the strategy: in this context, the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform of the CoR is a tool for the local and regional authorities in the Member States to have a say in the policy process.</p> <p>European Investment Bank and European Investment Fund: These two institutions play a central role in developing new financing instruments to respond to business needs. This can be done in partnership with the many public initiatives and schemes already in place at national level.</p> <p>National, regional and local authorities: All national, regional and local authorities should implement the strategy, closely associating parliaments, as well as social partners and representatives of civil society, contributing to the elaboration of NRPs as well as to its implementation.</p>
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Source: Pisano et al., 2011

[The EU and the 2030 Agenda](#)

On 26 May 2015, the Council of the European Union published its Council conclusions on the 2030 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 2030 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. 3.4 EU's vision documents on the 2030 Agenda

<p>Commission Communications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p>Council Conclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
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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 2030 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 **8 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 2030 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 2030 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 2030 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 conducive 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 2030 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**.

3.3 Governance for SD in European countries: latest developments in NSDSs

In June 2013, the ESDN Office wrote a discussion paper⁷³ for the ESDN Conference 2013, held in Vienna, in which we undertook a stock-taking exercise by providing a comparative overview of NSDS processes in 26 European countries and presenting the recent developments in 21 EU Member States and 5 other European countries (Norway, Switzerland, Montenegro, Croatia, and Iceland). In this sub-chapter, we provide a short update of the NSDS processes in Europe. We used data that we received in this 2-year period (2013-2015) through the ESDN website, especially thanks to inputs

⁷³ http://www.sd-network.eu/pdf/conferences/2013_vienna/ESDN%20Conference%202013_Discussion%20Paper_FINAL.pdf

from the ESDN Members, the country profiles, and the quarterly ESDN Newsletters. In particular, we present the status quo and recent developments in the following aspects of the NSDS processes:

1. Basic information about SD strategies;
2. Mechanisms of vertical integration;
3. Mechanisms of horizontal integration;
4. Evaluation and review;
5. Indicators and monitoring;
6. Participation.

In a world-wide comparison, European countries are considered to be the leading examples in NSDS formulation and in the practice of strategy-making and implementation of actions for sustainable development (UNOSD, 2012; Meadowcroft, 2007). This is also not only true at the national levels but also at European level (with the presence of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy) and “more and more at the subnational and local levels” (UNOSD, 2012, p.9). In addition, the work of the [ESDN \(European Sustainable Development Network\)](#) and of the [EEAC network \(European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils\)](#) needs to be acknowledged in terms of knowledge and best practices sharing as well as of research and reporting. Most European countries have at least ten years of experience in dealing with policy strategies for sustainable development.

Between 2013 and 2015, although with very little strategic input and steering from the EU level, several European countries have been active in several NSDS processes. For instance, from 30 May to 5 June 2015, the first European Sustainable Development Week (ESDW) took place this year. This very successful European-wide initiative aimed to stimulate and make visible activities, projects and events that promote sustainable development by registering activities on a common platform (www.esdw.eu) to take place during the week: in total, 4116 activities took place in 29 European countries.

Basic information and latest developments in NSDSs processes

All 26 countries we included in our overview have a strategic SD policy planning tool in place. In total, 23 countries out of the 26 included in this overview have developed a National SD Strategy (NSDS) as a single policy strategy document.

Fig. 3.5 Countries included in the overview



However, NSDSs come in various types and differ from each other in terms of structure, focus and pages. What most have in common, though, is that they formulate a vision for SD, include objectives on the three dimensions of SD (economy, social issues, environment), and describe a governance process for implementing the strategy, including monitoring and evaluation schemes. The width of these strategic documents range between few pages, such as in United Kingdom with a 7 pages document, to the longest strategy being the German NSDS with 252 pages. However, the majority of European countries have strategies that range between 50 and 100 pages (e.g. Portugal with 51 pages, Sweden with 98 pages).

NSDS documents vary from **classical versions** (e.g. Germany, Finland), to **documents with different titles such as ‘federal plan’** (e.g. Belgium), **‘framework’ strategies** (e.g. Czech Republic, Hungary), **‘national plan’** (e.g. Luxembourg), **general ‘development strategy’ in which SD is part of a larger policy strategy** (e.g. Slovenia), **‘sustainability agenda’** (e.g. The Netherlands), and a **‘government vision’** (e.g. United Kingdom). A stand-out example is the **Austrian ÖSTRAT**, a strategy adopted by and applicable at the national and regional level.

As mentioned, three countries do not follow a “classic” approach to NSDS but chose different forms. In **Slovenia**, SD is part of a larger and comprehensive national development policy strategy. In the **Netherlands**, instead of a classical NSDS, the “Sustainability Agenda: A Green Growth Strategy for the Netherlands” is a much shorter and straightforward document that sets out the government’s ambitions to make society more sustainable mainly focusing on so-called Focal Points - or five priority areas (Raw materials and production chains; Sustainable use of land and water; Food; Climate and energy; Mobility; Cross-cutting actions) - and respective Actions. In the **United**

Kingdom's 'Government Vision' (2011), for instance, building on the principles that underpinned the UK's 2005 SD strategy, ministers have agreed on an approach for mainstreaming SD which in broad terms consists of providing 1) ministerial leadership and oversight, 2) leading by example, 3) embedding SD into individual policies, and 4) transparent and independent scrutiny.

Between 2013-2015, NSDSs were renewed, or are in the process of being renewed, in four countries: Finland, **France**, **Hungary** and **Switzerland**.

Officially accepted in December 2013, **Finland** has a new National Sustainable Development Strategy, entitled "The Finland we want by 2050 - Society's commitment to sustainable development". This document represents a real innovation in terms of NSDSs. Along with the revision of the strategy, a national concept "Society's Commitment to Sustainability" has been launched. Society's Commitment to Sustainability has been prepared by a wide-ranging strategy group. Through the commitments, the government and the administration, in collaboration with various societal actors, pledge to promote sustainable development in all their work and operations.

In **France**, the French Council of Ministers in February 2015 adopted the new "National Strategy of Ecological Transition towards Sustainable Development" (SNTEDD) 2015-2020. Building on the momentum of the energy transition law for green growth, the SNTEDD 2015-2020 replaces the National Sustainable Development Strategy 2010-2013 by setting France on a new path to sustainable development. Organized in 9 cross-cutting goals instead of sectorial challenges, the SNTEDD 2015-2020 designs a 2020 vision, delivers tools to transform the economic and social model and aims to create ownership among all stakeholders with a envisioned system of voluntary commitments.

In **Hungary**, in March 2013, the Hungarian Parliament adopted the new National Framework Strategy on Sustainable Development in Hungary for the period 2012-24. This document functions as a long term concept in the system of public policy decision preparation and decision making. It draws up a framework with goals and priorities, supporting decision making, enhancing the creation of a goal-asset-deadline-financial resources system within public policy strategies or plans aimed at underpinning the transition towards sustainability. The Framework Strategy intends to promote a common national understanding of sustainability, which is understood as not only a political and governance issue, but each individual, family, enterprise, civil organization should live by such values, make such daily decisions and take such initiatives that ensure the achievement of sustainable society. After two years of existence, the national SD strategy is currently going under its bi-annual review process.

In **Switzerland**, a new NSDS is under discussion to guide SD policies and process for the period 2016-2019: it will be adopted in early 2016.

Vertical integration in the context of National SD Strategies in Europe

For vertical policy integration mechanisms, we present the way countries deal with the challenge of **coordinating and integrating SD strategies and policies across different levels of governance**, from the European via the national and regional to the local levels.

The NSDSs are in most countries a policy strategy only binding for the national government. A notable exception is Austria, the only country in Europe that has adopted a federal SD strategy (the so-called ÖSTRAT), that is binding both for the national and the regional level. A similar path is foreseen for Belgium that intends to develop an NSDS - currently under negotiation - as a common strategy of the national and regional levels, which will be applicable for the national as well as sub-national levels with a strong cooperation between the different political levels.

In general, **three main mechanisms** exist for vertical policy integration. First of all, many countries (16 out of 26) have made use of *consultation activities* as elements of vertical policy integration, generally in the form of workshops or seminars (e.g. Finland), roundtables discussions (e.g. Austria), meetings (e.g. Germany), dialogues (e.g. Denmark), forums (e.g. Estonia) and online activities (e.g. Hungary). In these consultation activities, sub-national levels are usually either given advice how to implement certain parts of the NSDS or asked to provide information for the national level on regional processes and/or data. Secondly, several countries (10 out of 26) have started diverse *mechanisms to increase cooperation and coordination* (both formally and informally) among different levels and as support for implementation (e.g. Austria, Finland, Germany, Switzerland). Through these mechanisms, a better coordination of activities and implementation mechanisms between the different levels of government is envisaged. Thirdly, many countries established processes for *awareness raising and for experience and information exchange* (e.g. Hungary, Lithuania). This last mechanism is the weakest among the three in terms of coordination for actual implementation.

Several countries were also able to **institutionalise some of these mechanisms** through the formation of councils, commissions, or other bodies. Notable experiences are highlighted below:

In **Switzerland**, vertical integration mechanisms are relatively strong. Linkages between the federal, regional (cantons) and local levels of governance are managed within the framework of the 'Sustainable Development Forum'. The Forum was set up in 2001 as an initiative of the Federal Office for Spatial Development. Forum events involve representatives from cantons and cities and take place twice a year. The Forum is dedicated to exchanging information on current SD projects and plans, starting up new SD projects, monitoring, and on promoting participation possibilities. Another important goal of the SD Forum is the joint development of national targets for LA 21 projects.

In **Germany**, as the NSDS it is the strategy of the national government only, the NSDS is not binding for the federal countries for their strategies. Nevertheless, a stronger cooperation between the national level and the Regions for NSDS implementation has developed. The *Länder* (federal states) are involved in the formulation process of concrete measures based on the NSDS. They participated in the consultation process to the progress reports 2008 and 2012.

In **Latvia**, the National Development Council (NDC) serves as a coordinator between the national and sub-national level in the NSDS process. The sub-national levels (government authorities and regional planning institutions) are members of the NDC, which is also chaired by the Prime Minister.

In **Finland**, in order to improve the coordination of SD policies between the national and sub-national levels, the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development (FNCSO) established a new sub-committee on regionally and locally sustainable development in June 2007. The sub-committee was mandated to promote SD in regional and local administrations as well as in their cooperation with each other and with the national government. As a special task, the sub-committee is designed to contribute to the implementation of the NSDS and take initiatives on the national SD policy process. Generally, the sub-committee held about four meetings every year. Moreover, several working groups were established.

Horizontal integration in the context of National SD Strategies in Europe

Horizontal integration refers to the **collaboration between the different ministries and administrative bodies on the national level** for the delivery of SD policies.

Generally, European countries have developed various forms of inter-ministerial and cross-departmental mechanisms for coordinating the implementation of NSDSs objectives. The format of these mechanisms varies from **inter-ministerial working groups** (e.g. Estonia), **commissions** (e.g. Belgium) **committees** (e.g. Committee for a Sustainable Austria, or Committee of State Secretaries', in Germany) or **networks** (e.g. inter-ministerial network secretariat in Finland).

Institutional structure

In terms of institutional structure, horizontal mechanisms can be categorized in three groups. First, ***inter-ministerial bodies at the political level***: in this case, the inter-ministerial body is chaired by politicians or high-level administrators (e.g. Austria, Germany). A notable example is Germany.

In **Germany**, since 2000, the State Secretaries' Committee on Sustainable Development exists as a high-ranking coordinating and monitoring body for sustainability. It decides about the strategy and its further development (subject to later formal approval of the cabinet), and keeps a close eye on implementation of the strategy. This Committee consists of state secretaries (representatives of the minister, top level of civil servants) from all ministries. It is chaired by the Head of the Federal Chancellery, which serves as the main leader in the national SD process. The responsibility lies not with one ministry but the Chancellery itself is in charge for the topic. This mechanism is considered as a ***key success factor for SD in Germany***. It prevented classical conflicts between ministries and ensured that quantitative objects have been met. The Chancellery has not only a coordination role, but is also steering the process and providing important inputs to the relevant ministries.

A second group of horizontal mechanisms is formed by ***inter-ministerial bodies at the administrative level***: participants are mainly representatives of the national administration (ministries) under the lead of the Ministry of Environment (e.g. Finland, France, Luxembourg). An interesting experience with such a body exists in Finland:

In **Finland**, the work of the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development (FNCSO) is outlined and prepared by an Inter-ministerial Secretariat, which **operates as a network and convenes 8-10 times a year**. The Secretariat consists of about 20 members from different ministries, each taking the lead in preparing themes within their area of expertise. The FNCSO's Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General come from the Ministry of the Environment.

The third category is described by **hybrid regimes**: in this format, the processes of horizontal policy coordination (politicians and administrators) are enriched by participation and consultation processes of societal stakeholders like NGOs, business, academia, or civil society (e.g. Czech Republic, Hungary). A noteworthy example is for instance Czech Republic:

In **Czech Republic**, the Governmental Council for Sustainable Development is responsible for coordinating SD policy-making among the central administrative authorities on an inter-departmental basis. Representatives of all ministries and of main stakeholders participate in the different bodies of the Council-committees and working groups.

Monitoring processes in the context of National SD Strategies in Europe⁷⁴

Monitoring is an assessment activity, usually **based on a set of quantitative indicators**. 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.

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

⁷⁴ 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

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.

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.

Participation processes in the context of National SD Strategies in Europe

Participation refers to the **inclusion of a wide range of societal actors**, including governments, businesses, trade unions, NGOs, academics and civil society, in the process of developing, reviewing and discussing National Sustainable Development Strategies. It covers participatory and consultation processes, institutions and bodies involved, and different forms of cooperation between various actors and stakeholder groups.

Implementation

In practice, the implementation of participation processes in the various countries is **very diverse** in terms of the involvement of stakeholders and responsible institutions drawn in in the process of developing and discussing NSDS. Approaches differ among countries, ranging from discussion, consultation and participatory processes (e.g. in the form of platforms). Also, responsible institutions involved in the participation practice vary between different countries from ministries to independent bodies, such as advisory councils or agencies. Even though the implementation of participation mechanisms is carried out differently by countries, they all display **common functions by providing space for debate, consultation and information exchange**.

Similarities

When developing NSDSs, all countries share the common practice of bringing in contributions from across government ministries, diverse stakeholders from various sectors and a wide range of interest groups. Furthermore, all countries intend to broaden the involvement of stakeholder groups and civil society to **strengthen the ownership of NSDSs**.

Mechanisms

The differences in terms of practice of involvement manifest themselves in the **various mechanisms and tools** to engage more societal stakeholders in policy-making processes. For instance, some countries have **established institution(s)** for the development of NSDSs, which are dealing with SD issues and serve as main platform for public participation. Examples are shown in the following table:

Country	Year of versions
Austria	SD Strategy Group
Belgium	Interdepartmental Commission on SD, Federal Council for SD
Croatia	Council for Physical Planning, Environmental Protection and SD Council
Czech Republic	Governmental Council for SD
Germany	Federal Chancellery, Parliamentary Advisory Council on SD, The German Council for SD
Luxembourg	High Council for SD
Sweden	Advisory Commission on SD
The Netherlands	Council for the Environment and Infrastructure

These institutions or boards serve as consultative bodies acting as reflection, advisory boards, and discussion and consultancy bodies regarding SD issues. They organize meetings, conferences, workshops, which aim to facilitate broad public discussion and access of information on SD topics. For instance, several countries have a **National Council on SD (NCSD)**, which is a multi-stakeholder mechanism to ensure participation of various stakeholders in policy-making (e.g. Finland, France, Germany, Estonia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Poland and Slovenia). In this regard, the German case is very interesting.

In **Germany**, the **German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE)** was established by the German Government in April 2000. Its members are appointed by the chancellor. Currently, it is composed of 15 members, coming from various social groups, business as well as of science and research. Its mission is to advise the German government on all matters relating to sustainable development and to contribute towards the further development of the NSDS. At the same time the Council is an important stakeholder in the public dialogue on sustainability. A Statement of the RNE was published as a chapter in the progress reports 2008 and 2012.

Other countries (e.g. Switzerland) make use of **platforms and consultation mechanisms** to involve stakeholders by submitting the draft strategy and take comments into consideration. *Hungary* distributes emails with requests of participation to professionals, organizations, governmental and civil spheres who are then meeting up in a series of panel discussion. *Iceland's* strategy is reviewed by a cross-ministerial committee at a national environmental assembly which is then open to discussion for public administration, municipalities and NGOs. *Italy* is carrying out consultation rounds in meetings involving approximately 140 authorities and organizations. Similarly, *Spain* organizes public participation for the NSDS in form of the Conference on SD. Another example to mention is *Latvia*, which has established regional forums and a national forum, involving about 1000 participants, in order to discuss SD priorities. A noteworthy example comes from United Kingdom:

In the **United Kingdom**, there is a unique method to involve stakeholders, especially all government departments. Its goal is to increase transparency through publishing all government departments' business plans and reports on their embedding of sustainable development. Stakeholders are involved by the Government's Sustainable Development news website – *SD Scene* – the monthly e-newsletter which is sent to 8000 subscribers each month. The vision of mainstreaming sustainable development across the

government is pursued by interactive elements, making use of user comments, SD Scene Twitter feed and online surveys. Hereby, the SD Scene serves as main stakeholder engagement tool, which is complemented by meetings and direct engagement.

Functions and aims

The main common targets of participation mechanisms shared by all countries are the creation of an **information exchange platform** for stakeholders comprising mutual cooperation, consultation, broad public discussion and access to information on SD topics. Yet, the facilitation of a forum for discussion, analysis and dialogue shall aim at increasing the ownership of NSDSs, further stimulating broader discussion on SD not only on a policy, but also society level. Every country pursues its aims in terms of participation on different foci. For instance, an interesting example is to be found in Finland:

In **Finland**, the NCSD fulfils its functions by organizing thematic seminars, awareness raising and education activities, holding regular meetings where various topics are discussed and recommendations to the government presented and installing evaluation sub-committees or external consultant which review government programmes.

4 National activities on Post-2015 and SDGs in Europe

In the run up to the official adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in late September 2015, multiple European countries have been preparing to address the goals at the national level. This has been the focus of a survey carried out by the ESDN Office from November to January 2015 concerning the planned implementation and relevant governance mechanisms of the SDGs⁷⁵, and multiple presentations held by national representatives at the 12th ESDN Workshop, “Monitoring and reviewing sustainable development goals (SDGs) in Europe: current debates in EU Member States and on the European level” in June 2015 in Brussels.⁷⁶ Below, we summarize the information on national activities in preparation for the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs from both sources mentioned above.

4.1 Linking existing structures and mechanisms

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs by the United Nations has resulted in discussions on how this can be best addressed at the **national level**. With the scheduled implementation phase beginning in January 2016, now is the time to make key decisions on the steps ahead. Activities and initiatives in European countries have so far focussed primarily on the organisation of events, meeting and workshops for individuals in the public administration, and stakeholder dialogues and consultations. This section gives some examples on current action being taken.

There seems to be a strong trend to address the SDGs through **existing structures and mechanisms**. National positions on SDGs have been the focus of meetings in national ministries, for instance in Belgium and Austria, or the Secretary of State Committees in Germany. On the other side, a new working group within the Interdepartmental Commission for SD, and led by a representative of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, was created in Belgium with the aim of stimulating in-depth discussions among experts, prepare proposals at the administrative level, analyse reports.

Participatory processes also played a key role in the preparation process for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. For instance, in Switzerland a stakeholder dialogue on the Swiss position on the SDGs has been carried out via an online platform (www.post2015.ch) as well as a stakeholder-dialogue process, including 150 organizations and 27 workshops, reflected on the different topics of sustainable development. Already in September 2014, a dialogue workshop with civil society was carried out by the German Federal Ministry for Environment and Building and the Federal Ministry for International Cooperation.

Several countries have already started to **align the national sustainable development strategies (NSDS) and associated monitoring and review processes** with the SDGs:

For instance, in **Germany** the National Council for Sustainable Development was tasked with proposing amendments to the goals, targets and indicators of the German NSDS in line with expected results of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. The NSDS will thus continue to be the essential framework for the national implementation of the post-2030 agenda. Although most

⁷⁵ For a detailed review of the survey please refer to [ESDN Quarterly Report N 35 'The Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\) and their impact on the European SD governance framework: Preparing for the post-2015 agenda'](#)
[ESDN Case Study N 20 'Integrating SDGs into national SD policy frameworks and governance structures – activities in 4 selected EU Member States'](#)

⁷⁶ For a detailed the agenda, discussion paper and workshop report please refer to the [ESDN Website](#)

objectives of the NSDS already address the SDGs, the German Council for SD has identified a need to address the issues of poverty, water, and the protection of the marine environment. In Germany, the existing monitoring and review processes form a strong base for the monitoring and review of SDG implementation, but will have to be adapted. Moreover, a series of consultations are taking place at the moment as part of the NSDS Report 2016 that will propose new indicators, goals and targets, as well as a new structure for the progress report of the NSDS, along the lines of the 17 SDGs. The final decision on the progress report is due to be taken in autumn 2015.

Switzerland has made an active effort to incorporate the SDGs into the new National SD Strategy (2016-2019). As such, it includes the development of tangible mid-term goals (2030) based on the SDGs relevant to the Swiss context. In this process, the long-term future vision, which has been explored in stakeholder dialogues, is translated into specific goal to be achieved by 2030, as well as a specific action plan for the next 4 years in the form of the Swiss NSDS 2016-2019. Key objectives of the NSDS 2016-2019 are as follows: (i) avoid having different tracks for SDGs and the national policy for SD; (ii) define clear goals/targets for SD in Switzerland; (iii) make a contribution to achieve the SDGs on the global level; (iv) make sure the NSDS is as aligned with the future SDG system as much as possible in terms of monitoring and reviewing; (v) improve the measurement of SD through indicators; (vi) focus of the action plan on goals/targets for which the need for action is high; and (vii) create an aid to orientation for other actors. A transition period throughout 2016-17 is needed to fully align their NSDS with the SDGs. A total of 8-10 key policy fields have already been linked to the 17 SDGs, but a full structural integration has not yet taken place. This full integration will only start in 2018, after which there will be a 4-year policy cycle of the strategy that includes a review process aligned with the SDG review process but including additional indicators that account for country specific issues. The monitoring and reviewing process for NSDS and SDGs will this be linked, but include slightly different indicator sets. At the moment, this is being addressed by adapting the national SD indicator system of Switzerland, MONET, to the SDG indicators to create the system MONET+.

The current debate in **Estonia** on how to take into account the SDGs during the process leading up to the planned renewal of SD indicators planned in autumn 2015 highlights some challenges in integrating NSDS and SDGs. Sustainable Estonia 21 (2005), the NSDS of Estonia, remains a highly relevant policy document. Its main goals are (i) viability of the Estonian cultural space; (ii) growth of welfare; (iii) coherent society; and (iv) ecological balance. The content and goals of this national strategy were negotiated with stakeholders and the monitoring and evaluation system has specific indicators and a specific reporting frequency. Currently, it is being determined if the SDGs can be addressed within this system. This includes an analysis of the current NSDS and its implementation from the SDGs perspective and a decision if the current NSDS will be reviewed. Furthermore, possibilities of merging NSDS and SDG monitoring processes and the associated indicator sets are also under discussion.

The example of **Belgium** presented at the 12th ESDN Workshop highlights possible future activities and challenges to be considered in the national implementation of the SDGs: The adoption of the 2030 Agenda creates a need to translate political commitments in Belgium into SD strategies in a way that is coherent with the new UN framework. This suggests that the NSDS has to be updated in terms of plans, indicators and monitoring, accountability and review processes. However, a challenge for this is the timing of national action plans with the international output of the 2030

Agenda. In addition to strategic issues focussing on the integration of SDGs into policies, operational issues, such as inter-ministerial cooperation, persist and need to be taken into account. This could present an opportunity for an improvement of the SD governance framework in Belgium that reviews existing and well-functioning structures and processes, by paying particular attention to greater coherence by linking with other departmental structures. For determining how to best implement the SDGs in the future and to improve societal ownership and accountability of this process, the effective stakeholder engagement will play a key role. Thus, in Belgium there is the ambition to address the SDGs through improved cooperation, coordination and participatory mechanisms.

The adoption of the SDGs at the 70th UN General Assembly in late September 2015 will most likely trigger and increase national activities. At this point in time countries need to discuss how they are going to address the implementation and monitoring of SDGs through national activities. The future outlook of SDG implementation activities and mechanisms at the national level remains uncertain as of now. However, the increased attention to SD issues due to the commitments of countries to the UN 2030 Agenda shows immense potential. In particular, discussions concerning the review or renewal of NSDS to address the SDGs are a positive development.

4.2 Future outlook for implementation

The implementation of the SDGs constitutes a challenge and an opportunity for countries in Europe. A recent report of the **Stakeholder Forum** '[Universal Sustainable Development Goals: Understanding the Transformational Challenge for Developed Countries](#)' suggests that in **developed countries**, special attention has to be paid to the **goals that require radical transformation of the economies and societies** of these countries; in particular there are goals concerning sustainable economies (goal 8); sustainable consumption and production (goal 12); sustainable energy (goal 7) and; climate change (goal 13).⁷⁷

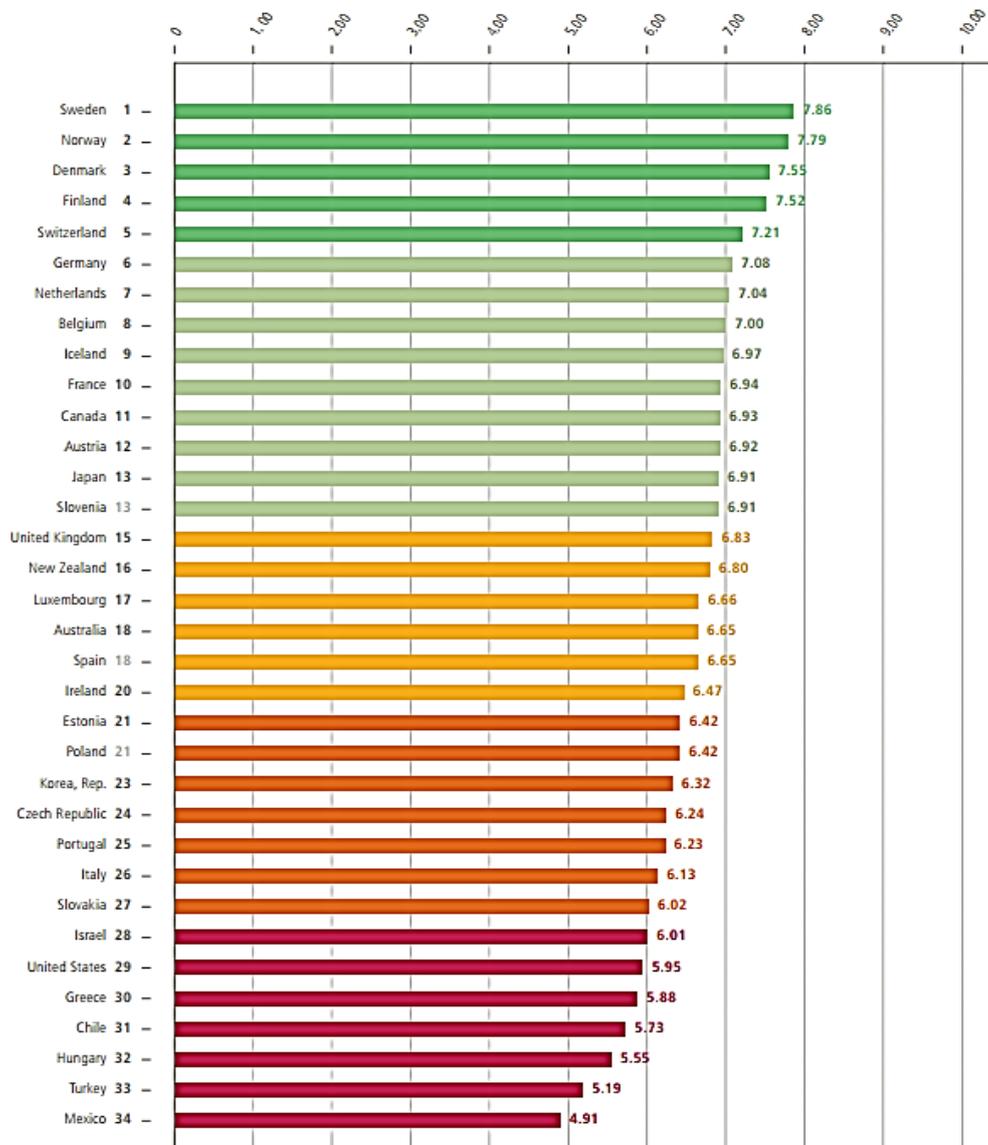
In a recent report, entitled '[Sustainable Development Goals: Are rich countries ready?](#)⁷⁸', the **Bertelsmann Stiftung** carried out a **benchmarking exercise of high-income countries in respect to the implantation of the SDGs** and found that the capacity to meet the SDGs varies greatly between OECD countries (see Figure 4.1 below). None of the investigated countries performs outstandingly in every goal. This suggests that **all states will have to adopt targeted policies that fit their country-specific challenges to implement the SDGs**. The stress-test carried out in the report highlighted that especially Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland and Switzerland could be considered "ready for the SDGs". The report refers to these countries as the "fit five" and argues that these are in a good position to foster the promotion of sustainable development, although even these they have significant deficiencies in respect to certain goals. The SDGs that will require the highest level of domestic reforms in high income countries are those calling for a more inclusive economic model (goal 8 and 10) and the promotion of more sustainable consumption and production patterns (goal 12). The report highlights that concrete policies in areas such as social inequality, renewable resources, waste and the overexploitation of resources are needed to implement the SDGs. It further

⁷⁷ For more details see Stakeholder Forum (2015) '[Universal Sustainable Development Goals. Understanding the Transformational Challenge for Developed Countries](#)'

⁷⁸ Kroll, C. (2015) '[Sustainable Development Goals: Are rich countries ready?](#)', Bertelsmann Stiftung

suggests that **facilitating peer learning through the sharing of best practices** could be a pivotal way to address these challenges.

Fig. 4.1 The world's first SDG index⁷⁹



A forthcoming report by the European network of European and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC) on 'Implementation of the SDGs in the EU'⁸⁰ builds on these studies and Eurostat reporting to focus more specifically on the European Union. The report highlights that in order to implement the SDGs in the EU, significant action on the national level is needed (emphasis added):

*"In each country the detailed SDGs and targets will require many **specific measures to deliver them within the framework of a well-integrated national strategies and delivery plans.** Progress will need to be monitored comprehensively, regularly and diligently. The implementation machinery required will need to be robust, forceful and accountable."*

⁷⁹ Kroll, C. (2015) '[Sustainable Development Goals: Are rich countries ready?](#)', Bertelsmann Stiftung, page 4

⁸⁰ EEAC (forthcoming) Implementation of the SDGs in the EU: An opportunity to strengthen the EU Sustainable Development Strategy and policies, chapter by Derek Osborn, President Stakeholder Forum

Furthermore, the report argues that action on the EU level to complement this national effort will be essential:

*“In Europe several of the goals will clearly **require action at EU level as well as at national level**, or will make better progress if they are driven forward together in a **co-operative** European effort. Therefore the action that needs to be taken at Member State level will need to be **complemented** by a new European effort to advance sustainability.”*

Interestingly, the report highlights four particularly crucial factors that could promote a successful response to the SDGs in Europe:

- *The creation of an **over-arching European framework or strategy** with full support from political leaders and from stakeholders and society at large to establish priorities and drive action;*
- ***Ambitious programmes** for transformational change in relation to the key goals for which business as usual will not be sufficient to deliver the 2030 results needed;*
- *Continuing engagement with all the **critical stakeholders** in society as partners and co-producers of the sustainability transformation.*
- *A rigorous process of **monitoring** of progress and review of the adequacy of the strategy and policies, with corrective measures taken wherever progress seems to be flagging.*

Moreover, the forthcoming report has some **concrete suggestions** including: (i) a **revision** of the Europe 2020 Strategy and European Sustainable Development Strategy in which the revised EU 2020 Strategy would constitute benchmarks for the mid-term and the EU SDS would represent a long term objective in line with the 2030 Agenda; (ii) **flagship programmes** linked to the SDGs in key transformative areas, for instance sustainable consumption, climate change and energy, and a green economy among others; (iii) a more active review and adjustment of strategies and processes on the basis of monitoring and review mechanisms through strengthening of the sustainability agenda in the **Semester process** and; (iv) improved stakeholder engagement at all levels supported by a ‘**new European Sustainability Forum**’, a wider alliance of stakeholders concerned with sustainable development that engages with the Commission and other European institutions at regular intervals.

5 Conclusions

5.1 The adoption of a new agenda for sustainable development for the next 15 years

World leaders agreed on a new agenda for sustainable development for the next 15 years. The United Nations Sustainable Development Summit formally adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development included in the Outcome Document, “**Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**”. The UN SD Summit took place from 25-27 September 2015 as part of the 70th session of the UN General Assembly. The **2030 Agenda for SD**, the **17 SDGs** and **169 targets** are the result of more than two years of intensive public consultation and engagement with civil society and other stakeholders around the world. The adopted Outcome Document “[Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development](#)” is presented in the form of a ‘**Declaration**’, preceded by a ‘**Preamble**’, in which the main intentions are shortly outlined, together with the main areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet. Among the several important messages, we highlighted in our analysis the following key messages that stand out:

- 1) the **sense of urgency** and **need for transformation** and **for a new approach**;
- 2) the **global and universal nature** of the agenda and of the goals and targets to be applicable to all countries;
- 3) the **need to take into account different national realities**, capacities and levels of development and respect national policies and priorities;
- 4) the search for **integration** among all goals and targets that need to be seen as one and **indivisible**; and
- 5) the intention to make sure that the **three dimensions of sustainable development are balanced**, where not a single one of them is too prevailing over the others.

The international press was critical of the scope of goals and targets, but also acknowledged the immense opportunity that the international agreement on the SDGs represents. Overall, the Sustainable Development Goals were received as a continuation of the global development agenda to end extreme poverty.

5.2 ‘Governance for SD’

‘Sustainable development’ and ‘governance’ are two complex, but ultimately **interrelated** concepts. During the course of the report, we briefly outlined these two key concepts, and then described the concept of ‘**governance for SD**’. In order to make it more concrete and relate it to practical policy-making, we used a **four-principle taxonomy** in which we described the rationale and key characteristics behind each principle of governance *for SD* (see Fig. 5.1 below). In short, ‘governance *for SD*’ encompasses the **steering requirements and mechanisms that enable the formulation of concerted and adaptive policies that foster the cooperation of diverse actors in delivering sustainable development**.

‘Governance *for SD*’ faces clear **challenges** inherent in the complexity of the sustainable development concept. Setting short-term goals to reach the overarching objectives of sustainable socio-economic relationships requires a **clear understanding of complex causal relationships and systemic processes** that is often lacking. Moreover, environmental problems linked to unsustainable

socio-economic relations highlight the **difficulty to overcome collective action problems, path dependence and technological lock-in**. The holistic approach of the sustainable development concept by focussing on social, economic and environmental concerns further increases the **complexity of trade-offs** between different objectives. Also, the development and implementation of SD related policies take place in a **multi-actor, multi-level and multi-sector** context that has to be addressed through governance for SD.

Fig.5.1 Taxonomy of Governance for SD principles

Governance for SD principles	Rationale	Operationalization of principle
LONG-TERM PRINCIPLE	Governance for SD calls for long-term visioning and respective short-term action to pursue <i>intra-</i> and <i>intergenerational equity</i>	<u>Long-term strategies</u> that incorporate intra- and intergenerational impacts; and <u>short-term policies and targets</u> to manage short-term necessities without compromising the long-term vision
INTEGRATION PRINCIPLE	Governance for SD calls for coordination and integration of economic, social and environmental policies across and between different levels of governance	<u>Mechanisms of vertical integration</u> that promote policy integration across multiple political-administrative levels, coordination between EU, national and sub-national activities
		<u>Mechanisms of horizontal integration</u> that support and foster policy integration between the different ministries and administrative bodies on the respective political level for the delivery of SD policies
		<u>Integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development</u> : social equity, economic development and environment protection
PARTICIPATION PRINCIPLE	Governance for SD calls for the incorporation of stakeholders into the decision-making process	<u>Participatory arrangements</u> of different stakeholders, such as civil society organizations, business, academia, etc. in the policy-making process in order to integrate different types of knowledges
REFLEXIVITY PRINCIPLE	Governance for SD calls for reflexive processes based on continuous reflection and policy learning cycles	Effective <u>indicators and monitoring</u> systems and practices
		Effective <u>evaluation and review</u> practices that enable continuous and adaptive learning

We then undertook an analysis of the UN outcome document and explored those principles we described for the concept of governance for SD. **Main messages** are as follows:

1. The Outcome Documents clearly refers to the **long-term objective** of fulfilling the needs of future generations. At the same time, the SDGs have **clear targets** to be achieved by 2030. These goals and their corresponding targets give the impetus for urgent action. The SDGs have the potential of being a framework for reforming and reaffirming national and regional sustainable development strategies and initiating short-term policies to reach the targets set for 2030;
2. The Outcome Document acknowledges that there are “*deep interconnections and many cross-cutting elements across the new Goals and targets*” that have to be addressed through an integrated approach. This cross-cutting nature of the SDGs itself highlights the need to exploit synergies and overcome silos between different ministries and departments, and therefore the need for greater **horizontal** and **vertical integration**. National governments will be highly important for framing and carrying out approaches and policies that promote

the SDGs. Thus, **national sustainable development strategies and policies** will play a central role in the implementation process;

3. The formulation of the SDGs itself was characterized by a particular effort to engage with **different stakeholders** and enhance the process through extensive public consultations. This emphasis on participation is also inherent in the document itself. **Participation** is a central topic in the different SDGs. Furthermore, the document puts emphasis on **multi-stakeholder partnerships** as a way to engage with and enhance cooperation between different stakeholders;
4. The Outcome Document also has a detailed section on 'Follow-up and Review' that could be the basis for a **reflexive policy learning process**. Furthermore, a **global indicator framework** will be developed to complement indicators at national and regional level. This global indicator framework will be developed by the Inter Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators and will be agreed by the UN Statistical Commission by March 2016.

5.3 Fit for Purpose?

In 2006, the EU SDS has been a strong push for change towards SD by requiring each EU Member States to develop its own National SD strategy. It also led to the creation of an SDS coordinators group to support and boost such strategies and the exchange between the EU and Member States level. Moreover, such an effort from the European level created anyway a momentum for SD policymaking and offered a framework for reference to national and subnational strategy processes and policies. However, even without much steering from the European level, many EU Member States (and other European countries) have been very active in their respective NSDS processes, and some of them have been trying out new and very interesting approaches to SD policymaking, not only in terms of strategies and frameworks for policies.

Overall, sustainable development still is a fundamental principle of our European Union, as introduced in the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997 as a core objective of the European Union. In 2001, the European Union adopted its Sustainable Development Strategy in Gothenburg. In 2002, the external dimension of the strategy was added by the European Council in Barcelona and the European Union was active in supporting the conclusions of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. Strong doubts remain on the ability of the Europe 2020 Strategy to guarantee this role.

Some key questions remain, especially with regards to the new 2030 Agenda for SD: How could and should a 'European' framework strategy for sustainable development look like? How can the EU maintain its leading role when it comes to fostering SD objectives and respect the rights of present and future generations? What governance architecture and steering mechanism are required to ultimately deliver the 2030 Agenda objectives on the European and national level?



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