Overview of the State of Implementation of the 2030 Agenda on the National Level in Europe

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Methodology: What did we actually do?

- Developed a questionnaire that covered 10 governance topics:
  - **1) National Level Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs; 2) Leadership and Good Leadership Qualities in Effectively Implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs; 3) Horizontal Policy Integration; 4)Vertical Policy Integration;** 5) Governance Innovations and Shortcomings; 6) Evaluation and Monitoring; 7) Participation; 8) Future Generations; 9) European Policy Cooperation; and 10) Reality Check on Implementation

- Survey sent to 32 ESDN National Focal Points
  - 26 Surveys were completed by NFPs
  - Remaining 6 were completed using information from VNRs, other public reports, and ESDN country profiles

- Identified trends throughout the governance topics

National Level Implementation: Dedicated NSDS

○ 30 countries provided information on this topic
  ○ 3 countries do not have a NSDS
  ○ 5 are planning to incorporate the SDGs into a strategic document (NSDS, Action Plan, etc.)
○ **22 countries** have strategic documents that take the SDGs into account

3 trends that were found among these 22 countries:

1) **14 countries** reported having a **dedicated NSDS** that is directly linked to the SDGs
2) **5 countries have governmental action plans** that address the implementation of the SDGs.
3) **3 countries** make use of **sectoral policies**, plans and strategies to align government plans with the SDGs.

90% of European countries are taking the SDGs very seriously and trying to implement them into their national contexts through the use of NSDSs, action plans or sectoral strategies, or at least are planning to do so.

Comprehensiveness of Strategic Documents

2 trends that were found among these 22 countries:

1) 13 of the 22 countries (59%): **have strategic documents that address all 17 SDGs**
2) Remaining 9 countries (41%): **have established national priorities** and have aligned those national priorities to the SDGs.

Active Involvement of National Parliaments

○ From the 26 answers, **2 National Focal Points said that their national parliament was not involved in the implementation of the SDGs. 1 National Focal Point said that it was planned to involve parliament in the implementation of the SDGs**

5 trends were identified regarding the active involvement of parliaments:

1) In 3 countries: parliaments were **only marginally involved**
2) In 2 countries: the parliament was **involved and consulted in the adoption of the NSDS.**
3) In 2 countries: the parliament is **involved with the SDGs through discussions on the budget.**
4) In 6 countries: parliament is involved **in the implementation of the SDGs through governmental reports**
5) In 9 countries: the parliament is involved through **parliamentary committees, councils, networks and commissions that discuss the SDGs**

Slightly more than 50% of countries have national parliaments that are involved in the implementation of the SDGs, which leaves room for improvement within Europe on parliament's involvement.

Crucial Achievements

○ <u>25 National Focal Points</u> answered this question and provided their impressions regarding their country's three, and sometimes even more, main achievements, which helps to depict the direction in which Europe, in general, is moving

9 main trends were identified:

1) 20 out of 25 countries: **anchoring of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda within the government's programs and the government's coordination mechanisms**
2) 9 out of 25 countries: **anchoring the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs within the stakeholder community**
3) 8 out of 25 countries: **awareness raising**
4) 7 out of 25 countries: **progress made towards reaching individual SDGs and their related targets**
5) 5 out of 25 countries: **stocktaking (e.g. VNR)**
6) 4 of the 25 countries: **aligned budgets or finance**
7) 3 out of 25 countries: **indicators**
8) 2 out of the 25 countries: **sub-national coordination**
9) 2 out of the 25 countries: **ranking**

Nearly 80% of the countries surveyed thought it was a huge achievement that the 2030 Agenda provided a means to anchor sustainable development in the government. Not only has it helped governments align targets with respect to the SDGs, but also government cooperation and coordination mechanisms have been improved or developed in many countries, which has enhanced policy integration overall

Leadership and Good Leadership Qualities

Ministries Responsible for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs

7 trends have been identified in terms of responsible ministries:

1) 11 of the 32 countries: **Ministries of Environment or Ministries of Sustainability and Sustainable Development**
2) 10 out of the 32 countries: **Prime Minister's Office**
3) 10 out of the 32 countries: **Ministries of Foreign Affairs**
4) 8 out of the 32 countries: have **more than one responsible ministry**
    1) 7 of these 8 countries have **Ministries of Foreign Affairs as the second co-responsible ministry**
5) 2 of the 32 surveyed countries: **Ministry of Finance**
6) 3 of the 32 countries: **responsible coordination committee or general secretariat**
7) 4 of the 32 countries: **responsible ministry that was not a Ministry of Environment or related ministry, nor the Prime Minister's Office**

Ministries Involved in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SGDs

2 main trends that could be identified:

1) 25 countries out of 32 countries: **involve all government ministries**
   a. 2 countries from the 25 **did not include the Ministry of Defense**

2) 7 countries of the 32: **only a selected number of ministries were involved**

A high majority of the surveyed countries have a whole-of-government approach when it comes to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs and try to involve all government ministries. This high percentage reinforces the integrated nature of the SDGs, as every ministry seems to have a specific role to play in helping the country realize and meet the SDG targets.

Good Leadership Aspects of Governments

<u>8 trends were identified regarding good leadership aspects that would be important for governments:</u>

1) 13 of the 23 countries: **policy-coherence for sustainable development**

2) 9 out of the 23 countries: **political attention and willpower**

3) 8 out of the 23 countries: **communication and awareness-raising**

4) 7 out of the 23 countries: **foster more stakeholder collaboration and participation**

5) 6 out of the 23 countries: **monitoring and assessing the SDGs**

6) 3 out of 23 countries: **budgeting for the SDGs**

7) 3 out of the 23 countries: **fulfillment of the SDGs in the mid- to long-term (past election cycles)**

8) 2 out of the 23 countries: **government taking concrete actions**

Political Commitment Needed to Support the Government's Activities

5 trends emerged:

1) 12 out of the 21 surveyed countries: **high-level political commitment at the national level**

2) 7 out of the 21 countries: **international and EU level political will**

3) 4 out of 21 countries: **including stakeholders more in dialogues and the implementation process**

4) 3 out of the 21 countries: **national parliaments being involved and showing their political will**

5) 3 out of 21 countries: **finance and budgeting along the SDGs**

Within Europe, there is a general lack or not nearly enough political willpower that is being invested towards the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. This goes for not only the national level, but also the EU and global level. It seems as if political willpower regarding the SDGs is a common theme that runs through the SDGs. Without it, the SDGs seem to not be able to receive the attention and importance they need in order to be achieved by 2030.

Horizontal Policy Integration

Institutionalized Horizontal Policy Integration Mechanisms

- 4 countries that reported no active mechanisms, two countries indicated that this was not set up, but foreseen, and two countries described the activities related to the 2030 Agenda implementation as delegated to respective ministries.

<u>Out of these 27 countries, 6 trends were identified:</u>

1) All countries indicated that the mechanisms described were developed and **active for the sole purpose of the 2030 Agenda**

2) 10 countries reported having **more than one mechanism** for horizontal policy integration in place
   - Out of these 38 mechanisms, 16 were working groups, 9 were networks, 5 were committees, 4 were councils, 3 were commissions, and 1 mechanism was described as a delegation.

3) 9 countries (33%) answered that their mechanisms also involved actors other than ministries, e.g. civil society representatives, youth organizations and non-governmental organizations

4) 24 countries (88%) reported that their mechanism(s) involved **all ministries**, out of these, 8 countries described how their mechanism(s) contained a set-up that involved a 'ministerial focal point' system

5) 5 countries out of the 27 surveyed also indicated in their answers that there was a division in the mechanisms regarding horizontal integration of SDGs relevant for **national implementation contra international implementation**

6) 25 countries stated a **specific purpose of the active mechanisms**
   1) 17 out of the responses indicated that the mechanisms were tasked with implementation of the 2030 Agenda, 3 answers listed coordination, 2 answers listed monitoring, 2 answers listed exchange and promotion of SD, and 1 answer listed preparation of the VNR as the primary task of the mechanism.

Important Achievements of Horizontal Policy Integration

- Over a third of the answers (38%) listed **commitment and awareness of the importance of horizontal policy integration** (approving a strategy, government committed to processes of horizontal policy integration, monitoring the progress and outspoken support for integration)

- More than a third of the answers (38%) mentioned that the greatest achievement thus far was **setting up mechanisms for horizontal policy integration** (networks of focal points, competence centers or working groups)
  - Two out of these answers also highlighted that a success factor of the mechanism was the increased participation of non-governmental actors.

- Over a fifth of the answers (22%) mentioned the **increased alignment of national policies with the SDGs** (strengthened ownership of the goals.
  - Two answers also described how **aligning the budget with the SDGs provided cross-cutting coherence**

Challenges of Horizontal Policy Integration

- A strong majority (over 60%) of the answers mentioned that **achieving coherence between compartmentalized policy sectors, aligning conflicting policy goals and managing potential trade-offs was the primary challenge faced**. Over a fourth of answers that mentioned the challenge of aligning conflicting policy goals and aligning policy objectives to the SDGs also stated 'aligning national budget' to implementing the SDGs and 2030 Agenda as a challenge that needed addressing.

- Over a fifth of the answers (23%) mentioned **implementation as one of the primary challenges**. Aspects related to implementation highlighted as challenges were e.g. obtaining commitment from local governments and anchoring implementation with parliament.

- A sixth of the answers (17%), primarily answers that mentioned the achievement of outlining the importance of horizontal policy integration, answered that the **actual "set-up" of the mechanisms** posed a particular challenge

Vertical Policy Integration: Mechanisms in Place to Foster Vertical Policy Integration

○ Out of the 27 surveyed countries, 11 answers stated that no active vertical policy integration mechanism was in place at the time of the survey. However, 4 of these answers stated that a mechanism for vertical policy integration of the 2030 Agenda was planned, but not yet active.

Out of the 16 remaining countries:

○ 11 countries reported having mechanisms for vertical policy integration that were **specifically developed for implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.**

  ○ 8 of these countries reported that the mechanism was linked to mechanisms of horizontal policy integration (established SDG councils, committees and working groups)

  ○ Out of the 11 answers, the most prevalent structure of the mechanism was listed as 'working groups' (6 answers), followed by commissions and councils. One answer listed that vertical policy integration was fostered through events and conferences.

○ The remaining 5 countries indicated that the mechanisms in place were not developed for the sole purpose of implementing the 2030 Agenda, but were **existing mechanisms also used for vertical integration of the SGDs.**

  ○ The roles of these mechanisms ranged from consultative (2 answers) to cooperation and implementation, in one case this also concerned 'implementation as delegated' from a national level.

Major Success Factors of Vertical Policy Integration

○ 15 national focal points addressed the most prominent success factors

○ Two-fifths (40%): **increased local commitment to the SDGs** and the 2030 Agenda implementation.

  ○ strengthened local ownership of the SDGs and in some instances also described how local actors, municipalities and regions had instigated their own initiatives for collaboration

  ○ efforts by local actors added value to national targets and goals, as well as how regions could learn from each other in terms exchanging best practices

○ One-third (33%: **had fostered collaboration and cooperation**

  ○ increased participation of local actors and stakeholders, inclusion and continuity of meetings as well as jointly coordinated activities and collaboration on e.g. Voluntary National Reviews.

○ More than a fourth (27%): **development and active role of the mechanism was a success in itself.**

Major Challenges of Vertical Policy Integration

- 9 answers addressed **challenges** related to vertical policy integration

- A third of the answers (33%): **absence of vertical integration and mechanisms fostering cooperation and coherence**.

- Over a fifth of the answers (22%): **addressing the co-responsibility between stakeholders** to achieve the SDGs, and that a major task was defining common goals between national and local levels.

- Two answers (22%): current political system and 'set-up'.
  - 'breaking down' the prevalent silo-approach to foster collaboration
  - inherent political competition present in the system as this was directly antagonistic to the calls for cooperation stipulated by the SDG and the 2030 Agenda.

- The two remaining answers (22%): fostering learning between local actors (in the absence of mechanisms facilitating such learning), and how progress of vertical integration and local efforts could be effectively monitored.

Thank you for your attention!