

Planning, implementation, follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Goals



Regional survey by UNECE and the Regional UN Development Group for Europe and Central Asia

Geneva and New York, 2 December 2015

Purpose

At the UN Sustainable Development Summit in New York (25-27 September 2015), the Heads of State and Government adopted the 2030 Agenda, including the ambitious and far-reaching 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Entering into force on 1 January 2016, they will guide sustainable development efforts in all countries in the 15-year period until 2030.

In this context, this survey is sent to the Governments of 56 UNECE member States¹ to collect inputs on three crucial topics:

- The plans and approaches of governments to integrate the SDGs and targets in their national strategies and to implement them in their countries.
- The plans of governments to build and conduct monitoring and review at the national level for the SDGs and targets.
- The expectations of governments towards the regional UN system in view of SDG implementation and follow-up.

The survey is jointly conducted by UNECE and the Regional UN Development Group for Europe and Central Asia. The information received will be summarized and shared by their secretariats. It will serve to share experiences and to provide a practical overview of the first steps on the path to achieving the SDGs. Once the results are available, it is further envisaged to organize dialogues with and among member States in Geneva and New York in early 2016 to discuss and take forward the results.

¹ The 56 UNECE member States are listed as follows. They include 17 countries in which the Regional UNDG (R-UNDG) works (marked with *). In addition, the R-UNDG is active in Kosovo (under UN Security Council resolution 1244). Albania*, Andorra, Armenia*, Austria, Azerbaijan*, Belarus*, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia*, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan*, Kyrgyzstan*, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Republic of Moldova*, Monaco, Montenegro*, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia*, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Turkey*, Turkmenistan*, Ukraine*, United Kingdom, United States and Uzbekistan*.

Questionnaire

Please complete

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REMARKS:*	

Please return the completed questionnaire by **MONDAY, 15 FEBRUARY 2016** to:

UNECE, Sustainable Development and Gender Unit (SDGU)

E-Mail: sdgu@unece.org

The electronic version of the questionnaire is available at:

www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/sustainable-development/Regional_SDG_survey_final.docx

*The completed questionnaires will be posted on the websites of UNECE and the Regional UN Development Group for Europe and Central Asia (ECA R-UNDG). Please indicate under "Remarks" above if you prefer your reply not to be posted.

For questions or assistance, please contact:

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Note: At the current stage and shortly after the adoption of the SDGs, there may be no consolidated government position yet on many issues raised in the questionnaire. You are therefore kindly encouraged to share any preliminary thinking or tentative considerations you may have that will help provide an informal insight into the state of planning and debate in your Government.

Overall planning

Planning is a key step to embark on the path of SDG implementation. This includes the formulation of national (sustainable) development strategies and the integration of the SDGs in policy measures.

Question 1:

What are the overall plans of your Government to translate the SDGs and targets into action and measures at the national and subnational level and integrate them in national strategies and other policy interventions? In addition, will new planning tools or processes be developed in support of the SDGs or will existing structures be used?

The framework for the SDGs implementation has been established by the adoption of the Government Resolution on January 25, 2016, which tasked the Prime Minister in cooperation with the Minister of Environment to put forward a proposal for implementation of the SDGs on the government level by the end of 2016. The resolution has been adopted after a series of consultations between the Government Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Czech Statistical Office.

The SDGs are currently being analysed as to their relevance for the Czech Republic and based on this analysis, there will be a participatory process involving key stakeholders to choose the priority targets for the Czech Republic. The targets should be then integrated into the national sustainable development strategy, which is currently being drafted by the Sustainable Development Unit and should be submitted to the Government by the end of 2016.

For the coordination of the above mentioned process, the Czech Republic intends to use the existing structures and enhance them where needed. The Government Office has the leading role in the implementation process, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Environment. The Government Council for Sustainable Development (hereinafter referred to as the "GCSD"), chaired by the Prime Minister, will serve as a coordination body to ensure that all key stakeholders are involved and informed about the process. The GCSD is an advisory body to the Government and is responsible for the coordination of sustainable development policy-making among the central administrative authorities on an inter-sectoral basis. Representatives of all ministries, NGOs, parliament members, municipalities, industry, agriculture, trade unions, research, and academic society and other main stakeholders participate in the work of Committees (there are nine of them) and several working groups. There are currently two Committees dealing with the implementation of the SDGs. A new Committee dealing specifically with sustainable development indicators is to be established in March 2016 and will be led by the Czech Statistical Office.

Prioritization

One distinctive feature of the SDGs is their universality, i.e. the entire SDG agenda should be implemented by all countries of the world. Nevertheless, particular topics and targets will be of higher priority than others given a country's specific circumstances.

Question 2:

What is your Government's approach to identify SDGs and targets that have priority for your particular country context?

The Sustainable Development Unit is currently working on an analysis which should interpret the targets in the socio-economic context of the Czech Republic – it will focus especially on the already existing strategic documents to see whether the same policy issues are recognized on the national and global level and how they are framed and measured. The analysis will then serve as a background document for a series of round tables, which will take place between April and May 2016.

Adaptation

When devising national and local policies, experience suggests that global goals and targets may be adapted to national circumstances and that objectives, targets and indicators are developed and chosen that are in addition or complementary to the global agenda.

Question 3:

How does your Government foresee to transform global SDGs and targets into local objectives, targets and indicators (“localization” or “nationalization”)?

The national priorities selected within the above-mentioned process should be incorporated into the national sustainable development strategy and then monitored and implemented as a part of it. The sustainable development strategy should thus serve as an interlink between the global, the national and the municipal level.

Governance and budgeting

The SDGs are widely seen as an integrated agenda that encourages holistic policy-making and cross-sectoral cooperation. As such, they may have an impact on institutional and governance structures as well as on processes for resource allocation.

Question 4:

Does your Government envisage any changes in the budgeting processes and governance structures due to the SDGs, and which institution in your Government will oversee SDG implementation in your country?

The Government Office (Sustainable Development Unit) will be primarily responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. In the Government, the Prime

Minister together with the Minister of Environment is in charge of the sustainable development agenda.

At the moment, no changes in the budgeting processes and governance structures are envisaged.

Stakeholder involvement

SDG implementation will require forging partnerships and collaboration between a range of actors. This will also have a bearing on the work of governments with other stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector and academia.

Question 5:

How does your Government envisage to strengthen existing and build new partnerships with other stakeholders for the purpose of SDG implementation?

In order to have all relevant stakeholders “on board”, the GCSD widened the membership of one of the Committees dealing with the SDGs to include representatives of the NGO sector and business.

The key role of the Czech Statistical Office in the process will be acknowledged by establishing a Committee on Sustainable Development Indicators. The Czech Statistical Office recognizes its role in the process and declared the work on SDGs indicator to be one of its priority tasks for the year 2016.

In order to foster partnership and inform all relevant stakeholders about the latest developments in the field of sustainable development, the Government Office revived the tradition of the national Sustainable Development Fora, which are since 2014 held annually. The last year’s Forum was one of the first opportunities to discuss the implementation of the SDGs on the government level after their adoption.

UN role in planning and implementation

As recognized in inter-governmental fora, the UN will play a +critical role in support of SDG planning and implementation. Some key UN functions and services include providing fora for policy dialogue and exchange; international legal instruments, norms, regulations and standards; policy advice and expertise; capacity-building and technical cooperation. Based on the feedback from its member States, the UN system at the regional level will work towards strengthening and improving regional UN structures and processes and inter-agency cooperation to provide the most ‘fit for purpose’ SDG-related services.

Question 6:

What are the expectations and needs of your Government regarding the role of the UN system in the region² in assisting with SDG planning and implementation? Please highlight possible areas of improvement as well as any suggestions you may have.

The UN system needs to build upon the undeniable expertise of the UNECE, which has to be the cornerstone of the regional level of SDGs planning and implementation, as well as the follow-up and review (see Questions 10 and 11). The UNECE should use its existing bodies and mechanisms and promote sharing of experiences, challenges, best practices and lessons learned. The UN system in the region should better promote national ownership by supporting national institutional mechanisms and development plans that put into practice the integrated nature of the Agenda 2030 and by providing options for the incorporation of the SDGs into national contexts.

While the UNECE is at the center of the regional level, its close cooperation with other bodies and/or institutions is absolutely crucial for the SDGs implementation process to succeed. The UNECE's principal partners should be the OECD, the EU and the specialized UN organization (ILO, FAO, WHO etc.)

Although the time horizon of the SDGs seems to be relatively long with the fifteen-year time span of the Agenda 2030, we should be able to look much more ahead and proactively plan our work taking into account important global and regional megatrends. Using foresight methods in this respect would be helpful (here the cooperation with the OECD becomes especially useful).

However, all the hard work at the regional level should be properly recognized and accordingly reflected at the global level, namely in the UN headquarters. An effective link between the regional and the global level needs to be ensured and maintained, so the valuable input generated at the regional level isn't "lost in translation". The unique experience from the long-term efforts the UNECE has made towards harmonizing economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development might serve an inspiring input for other UN Regions.

Data and Monitoring

While the development of statistical indicators for the SDGs is ongoing, there are many calls for a "data revolution" to ensure that high-quality data will be available to monitor progress under the SDGs. This may involve more and better data, disaggregated data, new data sources, and building and strengthening statistical capacities on the ground.

Question 7:

² UNECE, R-UNDG, regional or subregional offices or units of UN entities, specialized agencies, funds and programmes, UN Country Teams active in the region.

How does your Government envisage to address the need for data, to strengthen statistical capacities and to monitor SDG progress?

According to the latest analysis, half of the indicators proposed by the UNSTAT are not collected by the Czech Statistical Office, but by numerous government agencies and ministries. Therefore, the monitoring of progress on SDGs will require a strong expert involvement as well as enhanced coordination role of the Czech Statistical Office. The Government Office will support the Statistical Office in this role by establishing a coordination platform within the GCSD structures (see the above-mentioned Committee on Sustainable Development Indicators).

Assessment of progress

Based on a solid data foundation, it will be crucial to identify the reasons for SDG progress and shortcomings as well as to derive appropriate policy interventions and corrections.

Question 8:

How does your Government envisage to identify the drivers of satisfactory or unsatisfactory SDG progress and to draw the related policy conclusions?

Since the priority targets shall be embedded in the national development strategy, the progress will be monitored on a 2-year basis in a form of an analytical report, which will build upon the indicators, identify the main obstacles and drivers of progress on the SDGs and provide recommendations to all relevant actors.

The sustainable development strategy is expected to have a direct link to other sectoral strategies, which will actually act as the main implementation hub. Through the overarching sustainable development strategy, the individual targets will be assessed in an integrated manner.

Reporting

National reports are recognized as important cornerstones in the future SDG follow-up process. Typically, they will be government-led and involve a range of other stakeholders. The format and content of national reports is expected to depend on data availability and other constraints. Sharing national reports for discussion and mutual learning could be beneficial for all stakeholders, including at the subregional and regional levels.

Question 9:

What is the current (even preliminary) thinking of your Government regarding possible modalities for reporting on SDG progress at the national level in your country, what are the constraints, and what should be the channels used to share these national reports internationally?

The above-mentioned biennial report tracking the progress of the sustainable development strategy should serve as the main source of information on the SDGs progress.

UN role in follow-up and review

In addition to providing a possible regional platform (see question 11), the role of the UN in SDG follow-up and review could include statistical support, synthesis of national reports, preparation of thematic reports and other services.

Question 10:

What are the expectations and needs of your Government regarding the role and services of the UN system in the region² in SDG follow-up and review?

A meaningful follow-up and review process must be based on a well-designed set of indicators and their monitoring. The UNECE can, in cooperation with its regional and national partners, provide a valuable statistical support and share good practices and lessons learned in the follow-up and review process. The UNECE and the UN regional system should therefore closely cooperate with national statistical systems, the EU institutions, the OECD and other Inter-governmental institutions to ensure relevant and comparable data throughout the whole region.

The UNECE should enhance regional harmonization of statistics and development efforts to improve data collection for evidence-based policymaking at the national level. The UNECE should therefore support countries in the region in addressing the data revolution challenges related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Also, the UNECE can play a significant role in harmonizing and streamlining different monitoring and review processes within the Region. Nurturing policy coherence and consistency between the global and regional level can be reinforced through the exchange of best practices and triangular cooperation between regions or different country groupings. Strengthening the policy coherence of the UN system in the region is therefore an important role for the UNECE as well.

The regional dimension of the follow-up and review should represent a vital connection between global frameworks and national development agendas through regional experiences and perspectives. In this context, the UNECE should have a greater voice in highlighting some specifics of the region in order to promote a balanced integration for sustainable development. In addition, the UNECE should further enhance and develop integrated approaches among countries that share similar economic, social, environmental and cultural realities.

The UNECE should also analyze the experiences of public-private partnerships and look at new ways to harness innovation and efficiency gains by all relevant actors to promote sustainable development. Supporting and promoting partnerships with the academia and non-governmental organizations for enhanced policy impact at the national level should be considered as another expectation and need.

Regional platform

The 2030 Agenda highlights the opportunities of follow-up and review at the regional level for peer learning, including through voluntary reviews, sharing of best practices and discussion on shared targets. Regional reviews should draw on national-level reviews and build on existing review mechanisms. Member States are encouraged to identify the most suitable regional forum in which to engage, supported by the Regional Commissions.³ Earlier, the General Assembly had invited the Regional Commissions to hold annual meetings in preparation of the High-level Political Forum (HLPF).⁴

Question 11:

How could a regional platform for follow-up and review be designed that integrates national experiences and existing review mechanisms and channels the findings to the global level in a coherent manner?

The regional platform for follow-up and review should, without any doubt, use a peer review mechanism, which proved to be useful on other similar occasions. The Environmental Peer Review (EPR), including the fruitful co-operation with the OECD EPR processes, might serve as a good example, but its principles would of course need to be applied to the complete set of the SDGs.

There could be a dedicated session within the UNECE, preceded by a working group of national specialists who would share their experiences and coordinate the peer review process to prepare a strong and useful follow-up and review of the SDGs. The UNECE can also help to institutionalize intergovernmental mechanisms, which could serve as the regional platform for cohesive and coordinated implementation of Agenda 2030.

³ See outcome document of UN Sustainable Development Summit “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, paras 80 and 81.

⁴ A/RES/67/290, para 13.