

Questionnaire

Please complete

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The electronic version of the questionnaire is available at:

www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/sustainable-development/RegionalSDG_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.

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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 Government of the Republic of Serbia has established an Inter Ministerial working group with the task of monitoring the implementation of the SDGs and targets of the Agenda

for sustainable development until 2030. In that framework the Inter Ministerial working group will initiate with the support of the UN Country team the adoption of a new revised National Strategy for Sustainable Development as well as a strategy for its financing taking into account the preaccession negotiations process with the EU and the Development partnership framework for the period 2016 to 2020 that the Government is about to conclude with the UN . The previous strategy for sustainable development was adopted in 2008 and should be revised. The Inter ministerial working group had its inaugural session on 27th April 2016.

The Republic of Serbia is currently in the process of improving its planning system. New procedures and methods are going to be introduced in a form of law. According to these rules, new planning and monitoring tools are going to be used in translating the SDG into our policy framework not only in national strategies but also in operational and action plans as well as midterm planning.

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?

While all sustainable development goals are relevant in their entirety some like SDG 8 centered on promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all as well in conditions of high unemployment in Serbia as well as SDG 1 focused on the fight to eradicate poverty are more pressing and are themes that the Government focuses its efforts on consistently. The identification of priority goals and targets will be one of the main challenges of the Inter-Ministerial working group as it commences its work on the thorough realization of the SDGs.

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 global SDGs have to be adapted to local circumstances and they have to be nationalized taking into account national priorities and present needs, particularly taking into account the process of accession to the EU. The Inter ministerial working group with the assistance of the National Statistics Office will develop a set of national targets for each priority SDG together with relevant statistical indicators. Most of the SDGs are encompassed in regular Government tasks and priorities.

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?

As already mentioned the Government has established an Inter-ministerial working group composed of all relevant line Ministries and offices that will closely follow and monitor the implementation of the SDGs and propose concrete guidelines and measures and actions in fulfilling them. If the need arises governance structures will be adapted to facilitate the implementation of the SDGs which may entail according budgetary adaptation.

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?

The Inter Ministerial working group will with the support of the UN Country team establish regular consultations and comprehensive cooperation with NGOs, the civil society sector, business community already engaged in the UN global compact and academia. Prior to the establishment of the Inter Ministerial working group meetings on the implementation of the SDGs have with the assistance of the UN country team taken place with civil society and members of the UN Global compact.. The Serbian Parliament will also have a certain role in monitoring the implementation of the SDGs.

Question 6:

What are the expectations and needs of your Government regarding the role of the UN system in the region¹ in assisting with SDG planning and implementation? Please highlight possible areas of improvement as well as any suggestions you may have.

Cooperation with the UN country team in the implementation of the SDGs is vital. In that framework the UN could assist in the organization of regional and sub regional meetings and peer reviews which could be a useful platform for sharing experience, best practices and advising how to eliminate emerging barriers and bottle necks in the fulfilment of the SDGs. All countries in our region are facing similar problems in the implementation of the SDGs so regional cooperation with UN coordination and assistance is certainly significant. The UN Country team has already devised a Matrix consisting of a table of goals and targets and corresponding EU preaccession chapters and Government policy targets.

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:

¹ UNECE, R-UNDG, regional or subregional offices or units of UN entities, specialized agencies, funds and programmes, UN Country Teams active in the region.

⁻¹ See outcome document of UN Sustainable Development Summit "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", paras 80 and 81. ■* A/RES/67/290. para 13.

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

A strong data base for monitoring the implementation of the Agenda is a key prerequisite to the implementation of the SDGs. National statistics offices usually do not have sufficient resources and personnel to comprehensively follow and monitor the implementation of all the sustainable development goals in a comprehensive manner and assistance of the UN statistical office would in that framework be very significant. Development of statistical indicators by the Inter agency group on statistical indicators and the UN statistical department is of vital importance.

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?

The role of identifying whether progress in the implementation of the SDGs is satisfactory or not will primarily rest with the Inter Ministerial working group who should at regular intervals with the support of the UN country team submit to the Government reviews and analysis on how the SDG are being implemented in practice.

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?

It is too early to determine or envisage the reporting modalities on SDG progress as the Inter ministerial working group has yet to commence its work. It would be logical that annual or bi annual reviews on the implementation of the SDGs should take place, which would be transmitted to regional economic commissions of the UN which are the natural body for regional analysis and consideration. The High level political forum of ECOSOC is the prime organ in the UN system for the review of the implementation of the Agenda and countries should deliver voluntary reports to HLPF meetings.

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.

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 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?

The Regional Economic Commissions of the UN should have a central place in steering and coordinating the implementation of the SDGs and the sharing of best practices and experience. The results, findings and conclusions of the Regional Commissions should be aggregated and synthesized at the High level political forum every four years in the General Assembly.

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 previous answer for question 10 covers this question.