



Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference

Nicosia, 5–7 October 2022

**Progress report on the implementation of the Batumi
Initiative on Green Economy (2016–2021)**



UNITED NATIONS



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
27 July 2022

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference

Nicosia, 5–7 October 2022

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

From Dobris to Nicosia:

30 years of environmental cooperation in the pan-European region

Progress report on the implementation of the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy (2016–2021)*

**Note by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
Committee on Environmental Policy**

Summary

At the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, 8–10 June 2016), ministers endorsed the voluntary Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy and welcomed the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy, a set of voluntary commitments to operationalize the Strategic Framework (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/2/Add.1, para. 5). Ministers also encouraged countries and other stakeholders to implement commitments under the BIG-E in order to facilitate the transition to a green economy, and to report on progress thereon in accordance with the Strategic Framework.

At its twenty-third session (Geneva, 14–17 November 2017), the Committee on Environmental Policy invited stakeholders to report on progress achieved in implementing the commitments under the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy, on the basis of a survey template prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the Bureau. Following this request, the online reporting tool was developed and launched by the secretariat. Based on the responses received from stakeholders, the secretariat prepared the mid-term report “Implementing the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy and the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy” (ECE/CEP/2019/4). At its twenty-fourth session (Geneva, 29–31 January 2019), the Committee welcomed the document.

At its twenty-seventh session (Geneva (hybrid), 3–5 November 2021), the Committee on Environmental Policy took note of the draft list of documents to be prepared for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference. The list includes the Progress report on the implementation of the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy. The Committee also welcomed the continuation of activities by the countries under the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy and the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy.

* Owing to time constraints, the present document was not formally edited.



The online reporting tool “EfE Progress report on the implementation of the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy (BIG-E)” has been launched by the secretariat on 1 April 2022.

At its special session (Geneva (hybrid), 9–12 May 2022), the Committee on Environmental Policy expressed its appreciation to the secretariat for the preparation of the draft progress report on the implementation of the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy and asked the Bureau, with support from the ECE secretariat and in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, to finalize the progress report on the implementation of the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy and issue it as an official document for the Nicosia Conference.

The present report is based on the inputs received from stakeholders through the online reporting tool in 2019 and 2022. The document aims to facilitate the ministerial discussion by providing background information to support delegations in preparing for the Conference, in particular for the discussion under agenda item 2.

I. Introduction

1. Since 2009, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Committee on Environmental Policy has been working on greening the economy as an approach to foster economic progress while ensuring environmental sustainability and social equity. The ECE secretariat, jointly with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and in cooperation with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and other organizations active in the region, is supporting the work of the Committee on green economy, which is considered to be a promising approach to contribute towards the implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals.

2. A key result is the endorsement by ministers at the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, 8–10 June 2016) of the Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy, a voluntary tool that supports countries' efforts in transitioning to green economy and, at the same time, in contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Goals. The Strategic Framework is meant to serve environment ministers in initiating and sustaining discussions on the green economy transition in their national Governments and, ultimately, in creating an inter-ministerial policy process to bring forward such an agenda involving key constituencies, including the public at large and the private sector.

3. In Batumi ministers also launched the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy (BIG-E), which consists of voluntary commitments to operationalize the Strategic Framework until 2030. Ministers encouraged countries and other stakeholders to implement commitments under the initiative in order to facilitate the transition to a green economy. At present, 123 commitments have been submitted by 27 countries and 13 lead organizations.¹ The committing countries are Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. The organizations include the Cittadellarte-Pistoletto Foundation; ECE; European ECO Forum; the Green Growth Knowledge Platform; the Group of Friends of Paragraph 47; the Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea; the International POPs Elimination Network; the International Resource Panel; OECD; the Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus; the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia; the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe; and UNEP.

4. Registered actions to which countries and organizations have committed in the framework of the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy are available on the ECE website;² in addition, the commitments have been promoted through the Green Growth Knowledge Platform in accordance with the ministers' request in Batumi (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/2/Add.1, para. 5).

5. At its twenty-third session (Geneva, 14–17 November 2017), the Committee on Environmental Policy decided that, to support the review of progress achieved in implementing the Strategic Framework and the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy, it would invite stakeholders to report on the progress achieved in the implementation of their commitments based on a template prepared by the secretariat together with UNEP, in consultation with the Bureau of the Committee. Based on those reports, the secretariat jointly with UNEP was requested to prepare a mid-term review report (ECE/CEP/2017/5, para. 46, and ECE/CEP/2017/16, para. 22).

6. A survey questionnaire was prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the Bureau of the Committee and UNEP. The online tool "EfE mid-term review: Survey on the implementation of BIG-E commitments" was prepared by the secretariat and launched on 13 April 2018. The secretariat also made efforts to reach out not only to Committee members but also to the contact points nominated for individual voluntary commitments.

¹ Several actions will be implemented in partnership with other organizations nominated in the commitments; the present document mentions only lead organizations.

² See <https://unece.org/big-e>.

7. Based on the responses received from stakeholders, the secretariat prepared the mid-term report “Implementing the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy and the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy” (ECE/CEP/2019/4). At its twenty-fourth session (Geneva, 29-31 January 2019), the Committee welcomed the document.
8. At its twenty-seventh session (Geneva (hybrid), 3–5 November 2021), the Committee on Environmental Policy took note of the draft list of documents to be prepared for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference. The list includes the Progress report on the implementation of the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy. The Committee also welcomed the continuation of activities by the countries under the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy and the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy and welcomed the proposal by Switzerland to advance the development of the catalogue of actions/measures on possible voluntary actions/commitments under the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy on the two themes of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference.
9. The online reporting tool “EfE Progress report on the implementation of the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy (BIG-E)” has been launched by the secretariat on 1 April 2022.
10. At its special session (Geneva (hybrid), 9–12 May 2022), the Committee on Environmental Policy expressed its appreciation to the secretariat for the preparation of the draft progress report on the implementation of the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy and asked the Bureau, with support from the ECE secretariat and in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, to finalize the progress report on the implementation of the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy and issue it as an official document for the Nicosia Conference. The Committee also expressed its gratitude to Switzerland for its leadership and the members of the group of experts in green economy with support from the secretariat and UNEP for developing the draft list of possible green economy actions.
11. The present report is based on the inputs received from stakeholders through the online reporting tool in 2019 and 2022. All references to “the survey” in this document refer to these responses, unless specified otherwise.
12. The report synthesizes the responses received from 25 countries and 9 organizations. These countries are Azerbaijan, Belarus, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. The organizations that responded are the European ECO Forum, ECE, the Green Growth Knowledge Platform, the Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development, the International Resource Panel, OECD, the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia, the Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus, and UNEP. The document reflects the progress made on 110 (89%) of the 123 voluntary commitments submitted to the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy.
13. The report summarizes the progress made and offers some observations that may be helpful in illustrating patterns and trends of national approaches aggregated at the regional level. The report also addresses the views expressed on the usefulness of the Batumi Initiative. Tables and charts illustrating some of the key findings are presented in an annex to the present document.
14. The Batumi Initiative on Green Economy (BIG-E) remains open for submitting new commitments: the Committee on Environmental Policy at its special session (Geneva (hybrid), 9–12 May 2022) “invited interested Committee members, observers, and other stakeholders to submit voluntary commitments to the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy” and stakeholders started submitting their voluntary commitments under the “Nicosia Call”.

II. Overview of progress in the implementation of commitments made within the framework of the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy

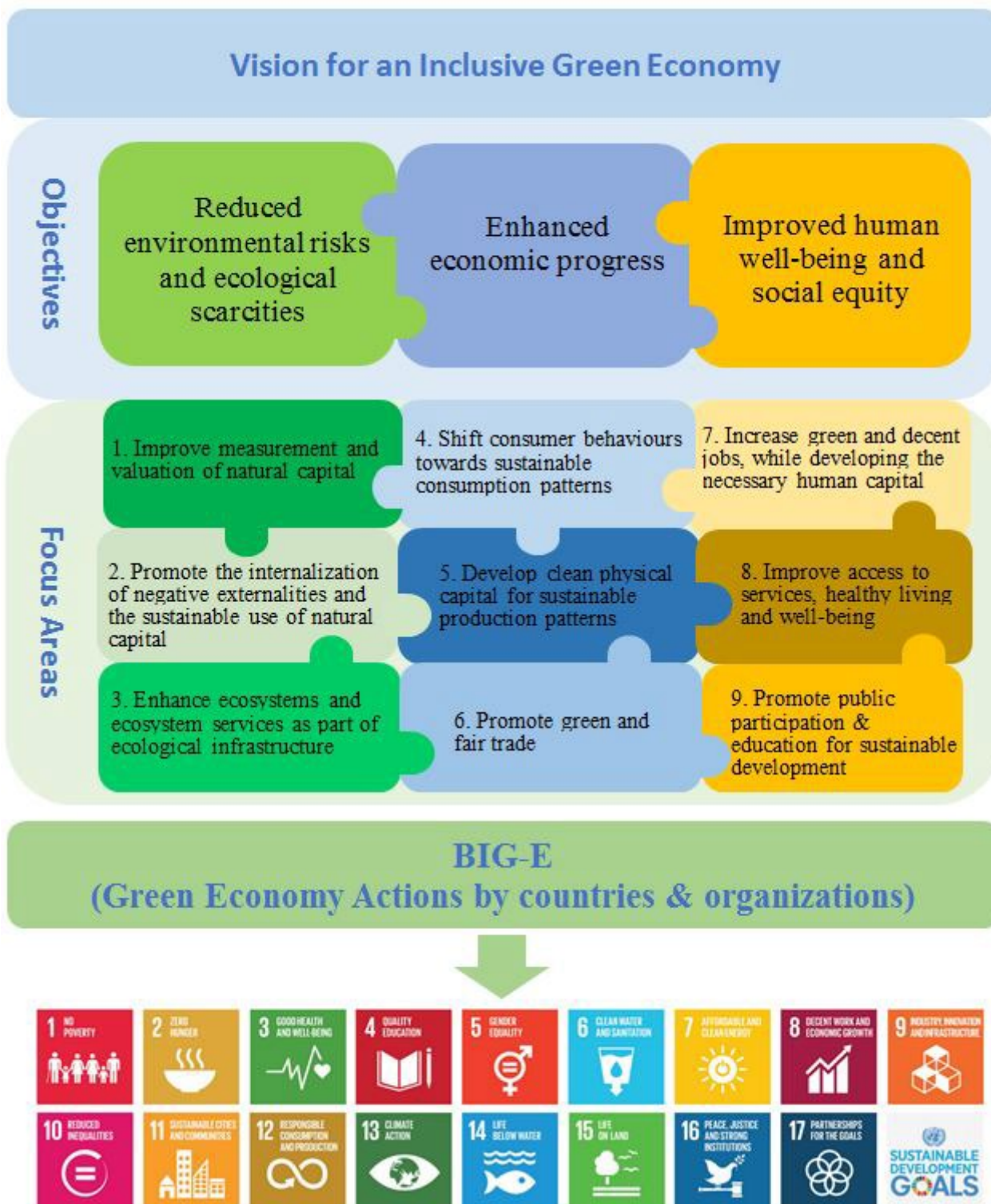
A. Scope and methodology

15. The present report analyses the 123 commitments made during the period of 2016–2021 under the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy to undertake green economy actions,³ with a view to revealing observable patterns and trends in regional approaches to green economy. The review also assesses the present status of implementation of the commitments.

16. The methodology for the review is based on the structured approach of the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy and the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy. The Strategic Framework identifies three main objectives to be attained, divided into nine integrated focus areas indicating priorities for achieving the three objectives (figure I). Under the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy, when submitting a voluntary commitment the stakeholders must provide detailed information on several aspects, including but not limited to: focus area(s) of the action; the type of action; economic sectors targeted; and the Sustainable Development Goals and targets that the action may contribute to implementing (figure II).

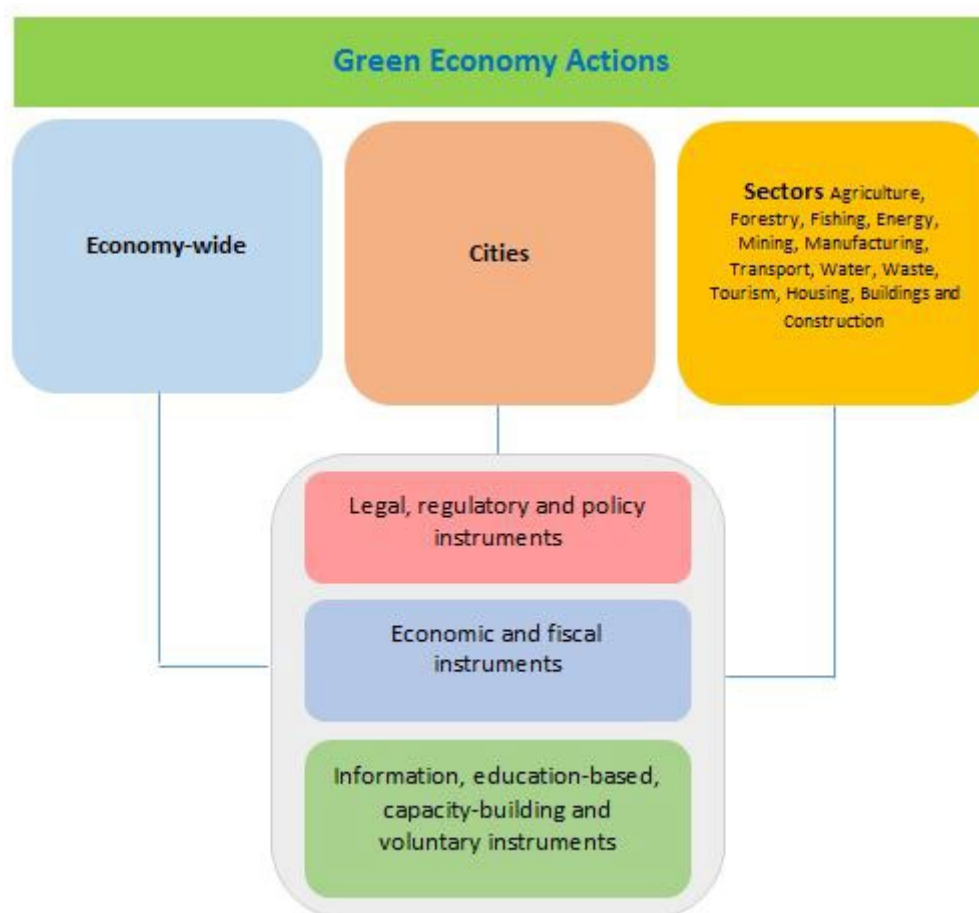
³ Selection criteria to guide the identification of green economy actions are specified in the appendix to the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy.

Figure I
The Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy at a glance



Source: ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/6.

Figure II
Green economy actions at a glance



Source: ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/6.

17. Assessment of the present status of implementation of the commitments uses the data supplied through the online survey in 2018 and 2022. The status of several commitments already reported as “implemented” in 2018 has generally not changed in 2022.

18. As recommended by the Committee and the Bureau, the survey questionnaire was short, with just a few questions on each commitment, using checkboxes for responses. The survey also addressed the question of the usefulness of the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy separately.

19. To compensate for such a simplified approach, the respondents had the opportunity to leave extended comments. These comments, which contain very rich and useful information on the challenges and lessons from the practical implementation of the green economy approaches, could not be incorporated in the present document owing to word limitations. This information is therefore being issued by the secretariat as a separate document⁴ which provides an essential addition to the present report.

⁴ “Implementing the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy and the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy: Compilation of responses to the Survey on the implementation of BIG-E commitments”. Information document ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/INF/6.

B. Analysis of the status of the commitments under the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy

Background

20. The 123 commitments submitted by 27 countries and 13 organizations to the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy reflect the substantial interest of the stakeholders in the Initiative. The 27 participating Governments represent almost half (48%) of the membership of ECE and 60% of the member States attending the Batumi Conference. Most commitments were submitted before or during the Conference; several stakeholders, both governments and others, submitted their commitments after the Conference, increasing the total number of commitments by 22% (from 101 to 123) and the number of stakeholders by 17% (from 34 to 40).

21. Geographical distribution of the participating Governments is fairly even, with 18 European Union member States, 1 non-European Union country from Western Europe, 3 countries from the Eastern Europe (non-European Union), 2 countries of the Caucasus and 3 Central Asian States (annex, figure I). The two subregions particularly absent are South-Eastern Europe (non-European Union) and North America.

Focus areas⁵

22. The distribution of 123 commitments across the three objectives and nine subsequent focus areas of the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy offers an interesting insight into the regional approaches (annex, figure II). Eleven commitments are positioned by the stakeholders as “overarching”; the rest refer to one or more focus areas under the three objectives. Of those, focus areas under objective II, “Enhanced economic progress”, are referred in 76 (62%) of the commitments.⁶ Objective III, “Improved human well-being and social equity”, is the least mentioned, with only 36 commitments (29%) referring to this area. Fifty-one commitments (41%) are aimed at focus areas under Objective I, “Reduced environmental risks and ecological scarcities”.

23. An in-depth look into the commitments’ focus areas reveals that the theme of greening production and consumption patterns (focus areas II.5 and II.4) is quite prominent overall and is particularly prominent among the commitments made by Governments. Focus area III.7, “green and decent jobs”, is the least addressed, closely followed by II.6, “green and fair trade”. The ranking of the focus areas by the frequency of mention is as follows:

- (a) **Focus area II.5** (Develop clean physical capital for sustainable production patterns) – 49 commitments, 37 of them from Governments.
- (b) **Focus area II.4** (Shift consumer behaviours towards sustainable consumption patterns) – 42 commitments, 29 of them from Governments.
- (c) **Focus area I.2** (Promote the internalization of negative externalities and the sustainable use of natural capital) – 32 commitments, 16 of them from Governments.
- (d) **Focus area I.1** (Improve the measurement and valuation of natural capital) – 25 commitments, 12 of them from Governments.
- (e) **Focus area III.9** (Promote public participation and education for sustainable development) – 19 commitments, 9 of them from Governments.
- (f) **Focus area III.8** (Improve access to services, healthy living, and well-being) – 17 commitments, 10 of them from Governments.
- (g) **Focus area I.3** (Enhance ecosystems and ecosystem services as part of ecological infrastructure) – 16 commitments, 9 of them from Governments.

⁵ As categorized in the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy, para. 18.

⁶ Most commitments cover several focus areas, so the total number of focus areas and objectives referred in the commitments exceeds the number of commitments themselves; therefore, the sum of calculations in some paragraphs is more than 100%.

(h) **Focus area II.6** (Promote green and fair trade) – 14 commitments, 7 of them from Governments.

(i) **Focus area III.7** (Increase green and decent jobs, while developing the necessary human capital) – 12 commitments, 6 of them from Governments.

(j) **Overarching actions** – 11 commitments, 8 of them from Governments.

24. The three objectives are largely speaking environmental (objective I), economic (objective II), and social (objective III). The bias noted towards the “economic” component in the commitments is even more pronounced in government commitments: out of 86 commitments, objective II is mentioned in 57 (66%), objective I in 28 (33%) and objective III in 19 (22%). The pattern is different for the non-governmental commitments. Out of 37 commitments, objective I is the leader, with 23 commitments referring to it (62%), followed by objective II, with 18 commitments (49%). Objective III is the least mentioned here, too, albeit by a slight margin, with 17 commitments mentioning this objective (46%). The group of non-governmental stakeholders is heterogeneous and relatively small, so any further breakdown of data is uninformative.

Types of actions⁷

25. Reviewing the type of actions among the 123 commitments submitted to the Initiative reveals another facet of the approaches in use in the ECE region (annex, figure III):

(a) **Legal, regulatory and policy instruments** – 64 commitments, 55 from Governments.

(b) **Economic and fiscal instruments** – 29 commitments, 27 from Governments.

(c) **Information, education-based, capacity-building, and voluntary instruments** – 74 commitments, 41 from Governments.

26. The Governments hold a near monopoly on commitments to actions involving economic and fiscal instruments and predominate for commitments concerning legal, regulatory and policy instruments. However, information, education-based, capacity-building, and voluntary instruments also form the target of numerous Government green economy actions in both European Union and non-European Union countries.

Economic sectors⁸

27. The distribution of commitments across three broad categories (“economy-wide”, “cities”, and “sectors”) shows interesting characteristics (annex, figure IV). First, “cities” are the least popular (10 commitments in total). Imprecise definitions might be a factor here, as some commitments in, for example, the urban transport or energy sectors, are not attributed to the “cities” category.

28. A noticeable difference is observed between the commitments of government versus non-governmental groups of stakeholders in addressing sectors: a typical governmental commitment generally indicates only one or two beneficiary sectors, while a typical non-governmental commitment refers to about six. Thus, it makes sense to consider government and non-governmental commitments separately.

29. Some 62% of the government commitments are of an economy-wide nature, with 12 of them also indicating a few beneficiary sectors. The distribution of government commitments by sectors is as follows:

(a) Economy-wide (53).

(b) Energy (15).

(c) Agriculture (13).

⁷ As categorized in the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy, annex, para. 8.

⁸ As categorized in the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy, appendix, para. 6 and footnote c.

- (d) Transport (12).
- (e) Water (10).
- (f) Waste (9).
- (g) Housing, buildings, and construction (9).
- (h) Other (8).
- (i) Forestry and fishing (6).
- (j) Manufacturing (6).
- (k) Tourism (5).
- (l) Cities (4).
- (m) Mining (3).

30. The picture is different for non-governmental commitments: only 7 out of 37 have indicated one or two sectors as a beneficiary, while the remaining 30 (81% of the non-governmental commitments) are economy-wide measures either explicitly or implicitly and are related to 6 to 10 sectors.

Sustainable Development Goals and targets

31. The data on Sustainable Development Goals (annex, figure V) linked to commitments are assessed separately for the Government and non-governmental stakeholders to see both the similarity and the difference in the approaches.

32. For the Governments, Sustainable Development Goal 12 (responsible consumption and production) is a clear leader. Below is the percentage of governmental commitments related to the various Goals:

- (a) Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production – 63%.
- (b) Goal 9: Industry, innovation, and infrastructure – 39%.
- (c) Goal 13: Climate action – 36%.
- (d) Goal 7: Affordable and clean energy – 35%.
- (e) Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities – 34%.
- (f) Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth – 32%.
- (g) Goal 6: Clean water and sanitation – 27%.
- (h) Goal 15: Life on land – 27%.
- (i) Goal 3: Good health and well-being – 22%.
- (j) Goal 14: Life below water – 20%.
- (k) Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals – 20%.
- (l) Goal 2: Zero hunger – 12%.
- (m) Goal 4: Quality education – 10%.
- (n) Goal 16: Peace, justice, and strong institutions – 9%.
- (o) Goal 1: No poverty – 6%.
- (p) Goal 10: Reduced inequalities – 3%.
- (q) Goal 5: Gender equality – 1%.

33. There is some difference between the government commitments from the 16 European Union member States and the 8 countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia that are participating in the Initiative. More than half of the commitments of the latter group address Goal 9 (56% of commitments, as compared with 31% for the European Union) and Goal 8 (52% of the commitments, as compared with 27% for the European Union) and about

a quarter address Goal 16 (26% of commitments, as compared with 2% for the European Union) and Goal 17 (22% of commitments, as compared with 7% for the European Union). Commitments related to Goal 4 display a similar discrepancy on a lower scale (15% for the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia as compared with 4% for the European Union). In contrast, Goal 14 is almost neglected by the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia, with only 7% of commitments related to this Goal, while it is relevant for a quarter (22%) of the European Union commitments.

34. The links of non-governmental commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals present largely the same picture as those set out for Governments above, except for Goal 17 (partnership for the Goals). For this group, Goal 17 is the second most frequently linked to committed actions – not surprisingly, as many commitments from this group rely on transboundary collaboration on the regional and subregional level. Environmental (but not social) Sustainable Development Goals are also slightly more prominent in this group. The percentage of non-governmental commitments related to the various Goals is as follows:

- (a) Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production – 57%.
- (b) Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals – 41%.
- (c) Goal 9: Industry, innovation, and infrastructure – 38%.
- (d) Goal 13: Climate action – 38%.
- (e) Goal 6: Clean water and sanitation – 35%.
- (f) Goal 15: Life on land – 32%.
- (g) Goal 3: Good health and well-being – 32%.
- (h) Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities – 32%.
- (i) Goal 7: Affordable and clean energy – 30%.
- (j) Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth – 30%.
- (k) Goal 14: Life below water – 30%.
- (l) Goal 2: Zero hunger – 16%.
- (m) Goal 4: Quality education – 16%.
- (n) Goal 16: Peace, justice, and strong institutions – 8%.
- (o) Goal 1: No poverty – 8%.
- (p) Goal 10: Reduced inequalities – 3%.
- (q) Goal 5: Gender equality – 0%.

Results of the reporting on the status of implementation of the commitments

35. Responses have been received from 25 Governments (93% of participating member States) and 9 organizations (69% of participating organizations) – 85% of stakeholders overall (34 out of 40). Information has been provided on 110 actions (89% of total commitments).

36. While for each commitment submitted a responsible contact point is identified, the survey tool was designed to allow for decentralized responses, with reports submitted on a “per commitment” basis. Thus, in some cases more than one contributor has reported on behalf of some stakeholders. As a result, 44 officials and experts representing 34 stakeholders contributed to the survey.

37. The status of implementation of the commitments is calculated based on the survey data. The survey question (“Has the commitment been implemented?”) identified three options: “Yes”, “In progress” and “No”. Due to this rather simplified approach, some respondents indicated both “Yes” and “In progress” for some commitments, meaning that the action was implemented but was still ongoing.

38. The status (annex, figure VI) of 110 commitments (out of 123) was reported to the secretariat (89%). The reporting rate is high across various groups of stakeholders – Governments, non-governmental entities, Governments of European Union member States, and Governments of Eastern European, Caucasian and Central Asian States.

39. Only 5 commitments (5% of those reported) have shown no implementation; 46 (42%) are under implementation; 11 (10%) are reported as being both “in progress” and “implemented”; and 48 commitments (44%) are reported to be fully implemented.

40. Governments have reported on the status of 79 out of their 86 commitments (92%). Of these, only 1 commitment (1% of those reported by Governments) has not progressed in implementation; 33 (38%) are under implementation; 7 (8%) are reported as both “in progress” and “implemented”; and 38 commitments (44%) are fully implemented. The European Union member States have implemented almost two thirds of their commitments – 15 “in progress” and 27 “implemented” (with one commitment both “in progress” and “implemented”). however, for the Governments of States in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia this ratio is at 1/1(10 “in progress” and 10 “implemented”, with 4 commitments both “in progress” and “implemented”).

41. Non-governmental stakeholders reported on the status of 31 out of 37 commitments (84%). Of these, 4 (10% of those reported) have not progressed in implementation; 13 (35%) are under implementation; 4 (11%) are reported as both “in progress” and “implemented”; and 10 commitments (27%) are fully implemented.

Value of the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy

42. 37 respondents have expressed their opinion on the statement “the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy is useful in supporting transitioning to green economy in the pan-European region”. Out of these, 34 (92%) agreed to it either strongly (21 responses or 57%) or somewhat (13 respondents or 37%), and 3 respondents were neutral. In addition, four respondents had “no opinion”, and two respondents made written comments. The agreement was stronger for the government respondents from Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia (5 out of 6 responders agree strongly).

III. Conclusions: lessons and challenges

43. The theme of greening the economy continues to attract lasting interest from the ECE member States. Already two ministerial conferences of the Environment for Europe process (Astana, 2011, and Batumi, 2016) have addressed this topic as one of the two main themes. Both themes of the 9th Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference: “Greening the economy in the pan-European region: working towards sustainable infrastructure”, and “Applying principles of circular economy to sustainable tourism” are related to greening important sectors of the economy. The Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy and its operationalizing Batumi Initiative on Green Economy are designed to support these efforts. The Initiative remains open to new participants and to the new commitments from the existing participants.

44. The survey demonstrated that the participants to the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy consider it to be a useful tool to operationalize the Strategic Framework, with 88% of respondents seeing it to be useful in supporting the transition to a green economy in the pan-European region. However, there is also a notable difference between the groups of respondents: respondents from the governments of countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia and respondents from organizations have stronger view of the Initiative as useful, whereas respondents from the group of governments of the countries of the European Union, express less strong but still positive views on its usefulness. This may be a consequence of the current structure of regional and transboundary cooperation in general, with its current distribution of sources and recipients of both experience and funding.

45. A sufficiently high level of responses to the reporting survey allows us to draw the following conclusions with a sufficient degree of confidence about the progress in fulfilling voluntary obligations:

(a) In general, the pan-European region is actively implementing measures to build a green economy, as evidenced by an even geographical distribution of stakeholders with commitments across the region.

(b) The analysis of the objectives and focus areas of the commitments indicate that:

(i) The government's default approach to green economy actions is that they should be driven primarily by economic goals, often complemented by calculated environmental (rarely social) effects. While this approach does not conflict with the definition of a green economy, the causes, and consequences of the relative lack of social ambition may be the subject of further discussion.

(ii) The topics of sustainable consumption and production are the focus of green economy action for both government and non-government stakeholders, while green jobs and green trade are not among popular focus areas. This pattern can be partially explained, on the one hand, by the government's extensive experience in regulating consumption and production, and, on the other hand, by the desire to achieve fiscal neutrality or even a surplus. Action in less popular areas may also require innovative tools that are either relatively less tested or require significant upfront investment.

(c) The analysis of the types of actions:

(i) Confirms the traditional government preference for command-and-control approaches, with legal, regulatory and policy instruments outnumbering economic and fiscal instruments by 2 to 1.

(ii) Also shows that this preference is gradually complemented by the recognition of the need for broad participation of the public and other stakeholders through information, education, capacity building and voluntary tools with broad involvement of non-governmental stakeholders.

(d) The analysis of the beneficiary economic sectors reveals that:

(i) Government measures are usually either directed at the economy as a whole or narrowly focused on one or two sectors. On the contrary, the aim of non-governmental stakeholder actions is much broader, targeting six sectors on average. Among the reasons for this may be differences in definitions, the nature of the work of organizations and the criteria for obtaining the necessary funding.

(ii) The energy, agriculture and transport sectors are the most supported by government green economy measures, while the mining sector is the least popular.

(e) The analysis of the links of actions to the Sustainable Development Goals reveals that:

(i) Stakeholders appreciate the link between their actions and the Sustainable Development Goals.

(ii) Governments tend to view the green economy as primarily an economic concept (the same conclusion as for the focus area analysis above): almost two-thirds of the commitments are linked to Goal 12 (responsible consumption and production), followed by industry and energy-related targets strengthening the point.

(iii) Within the government group, there are numerous actions among countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia addressing Goal 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth) and Goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), which may be a reflection of development priorities such as strengthening the industrial base and governance structures. This sub-group also favours Goal 4 (quality education) higher than the other groups.

(iv) Organizations are remarkably active on Goal 17 (partnerships for the Goals), which seems natural. However, the response from Governments on this Goal is less pronounced.

(v) Gender, inequality, and poverty-related goals are scarcely addressed by the green economy actions, while the Goals linked to the environment and well-being of the population are somewhere in the middle.

46. The challenges encountered by countries and organizations were described in the form of comments and clarifications entered the survey. Among some of the challenges cited to greening the economy were:

(a) **General policy and legislation:** problems with legal definitions; and a lack of green economy considerations in sectoral strategies.

(b) **Authorities:** limited human and financial capacities in environment authorities; limited awareness and expertise in non-environment ministries; frequent institutional changes and high staff turnover; difficulties regarding inter-ministerial dialogue and coordination; cross-sectoral measures hard to design; different competent authorities interpreting the same subject differently; very low awareness on green economy or Sustainable Development Goals at the local level; slow nomination of contacts or focal points impeding transboundary and subregional cooperation; insufficient level of political power designated to environment authorities; and institutional instability leading to delayed decisions and revised agreements;

(c) **Private sector:** confidentiality concerns; new legal requirements may present a challenge for old installations; low access to green finance; human capacity problems among small and medium-size enterprises; not enough availability of modern technologies; low level of awareness about green economy; low motivation to transition to green economy.

(d) **Markets:** new recycled products are difficult to introduce; too few green producers and service providers; green products and services in competition with low-cost alternatives; distortions by environmentally harmful subsidies; poor recognition of eco-labels; problem with fake labels or “greenwashing”.

(e) **Data and research:** lack of adequate data for decision-making; difficult to harmonize different legal frameworks for data collection and methodologies on indicators; local data difficult to obtain; research inconclusive, subjective, more extensive than planned, or hard to transform into practical measures.

(f) **Greening public procurement:** a relatively new topic, especially in transitional economies; perceived as expensive and complicated; fears regarding restricted competition and appeals of tender results; not included at the planning phase and difficult to include later; complicated procedures and small volumes unattractive to companies; staff involved in procedures need training.

(g) **Public:** consumer behaviour hard to shift; a challenge to communicate benefits; scarce information in national languages.

(h) **Education:** Lack of donor interest to support activities; and limited progress in revising technical and vocational education and training programmes.

47. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought new challenges to the implementation of several projects: it is mentioned as a problem in almost a fifth of the reports received in 2022. The pandemic caused delays in planned activities, training, and supplies, delayed the development and adoption of strategic documents, and changed the duration and order of regulatory procedures. On the other hand, new activities have been introduced in some projects in response.

48. While both government and non-government commitments have been impacted by the pandemic, the latter have also been affected by the deterioration in the availability of donor funds, in some cases preventing the initiation of a project. Nevertheless, the overall impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the full range of commitments seems to be noticeable, but not too significant. The disruptive effect of COVID is temporary and may fully pass with the normalization of the situation. However, it is important to learn lessons from this major

unexpected event, as there are no guarantees against other major destabilizing events in the future.

IV. Future steps and follow-up

49. The present document represents the fulfilment of the provisions of the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy which stipulates that “the transition to an inclusive green economy also entails reviewing progress in implementation. In line with Agenda 2030, the time frame suggested for the review of progress in advancing the objectives of the Strategic Framework, through active implementation and monitoring its BIG-E commitments, is 2016–2030. The main implementing actors will be the countries and organizations participating in the BIG-E”⁹. National experience on using green economy instruments and approaches obtained through practical implementation of the voluntary commitments under the Batumi Initiative can be extremely valuable, especially to the member States seeking optimal ways to facilitate the greening of their economies. Exchange of information and experience through bilateral and multilateral contacts may help to simultaneously increase the motivation of key national actors and remove some resistance towards practical application of the green economy measures.

50. The Environment for Europe process is in a good position to stimulate the necessary transition to green economy in the region: it is a tested platform for regional policymaking; it has in place a region-wide approved policy to promote green economy – the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy; and to operationalize the policy, it possesses a practical vehicle for information gathering and exchange – the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy.

51. The support of the process through the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Committee on Environmental Policy is essential in discussing and agreeing on the practical future steps to reinforce the present impetus. In addition, new measures could be proposed and discussed, including organizing stakeholder meetings in a form suitable for the better exchange and promotion of experience. Therefore, periodic review by the Committee of the implementation of the Strategic Framework and the Batumi Initiative should continue, providing necessary background and context for the Ministerial discussions at the Environment for Europe Conferences.

V. Questions for discussion

52. The following questions might be addressed by the Ministers:

(a) How effective is the current regional cooperation in greening the economy? The survey respondents seem to agree on the usefulness of the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy. Does this consensus reflect the real added value of the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy and the initiative?

(b) What are the most interesting findings from this review of progress on commitments? Do they confirm the ministers’ expectations? Is the relative lack of social aspects in commitments a cause for concern?

(c) What positive and negative lessons can be learned from the implementation of the Batumi Green Economy Initiative? What are the main difficulties in its implementation? What are the regional and national aspects of these problems? How can they be overcome?

(d) What steps can be proposed to maximize the impact of the Batumi Initiative on the green economy at different levels? How can the exchange of experience between stakeholders be enhanced?

⁹ The Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy, para. 39.

Annex

Fact sheets and graphs

Number of commitments taken/reported by the participants in the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy

Albania	0	Estonia	2/2	Liechtenstein	0	Serbia	0		
Andorra	0	Finland	2/2	Lithuania	5/5	Slovakia	1/1	CAREC	8/8
Armenia	0	France	2/2	Luxembourg	1/1	Slovenia	1/1	Cittadellarte- Pistoletto Found.	2/0
Austria	1/0	Georgia	4/4	Malta	0	Spain	0	European ECO Forum	1/1
Azerbaijan	1/1	Germany	4/4	Monaco	0	Sweden	3/3	GGKP	1/1
Belarus	5/5	Greece	0	Montenegro	0	Switzerland	5/4	FoP.47 / UNEP / GRI	1/0
Belgium	0	Hungary	4/4	Netherlands	5/2	Tajikistan	0	ICSD / IFAS	1/1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0	Iceland	0	Norway	0	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	0	IPEN / Eco-Accord	2/0
Bulgaria	0	Ireland	0	Poland	5/5	Turkey	0	IRP / UNEP	1/1
Canada	0	Israel	0	Portugal	4/4	Turkmenistan	0	OECD	4/4
Croatia	5/5	Italy	4/4	Republic of Moldova	5/5	Ukraine	4/3	REC Caucasus	4/4
Cyprus	0	Kazakhstan	2/2	Romania	2/2	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	0	REC CEE	1/0
Czechia	0	Kyrgyzstan	1/0	Russian Federation	0	United States of America	0	ECE	8/8
Denmark	0	Latvia	3/3	San Marino	0	Uzbekistan	5/5	UNEP	3/3

Figure I
UNECE member States participating in and reporting to the BIG-E by subregion

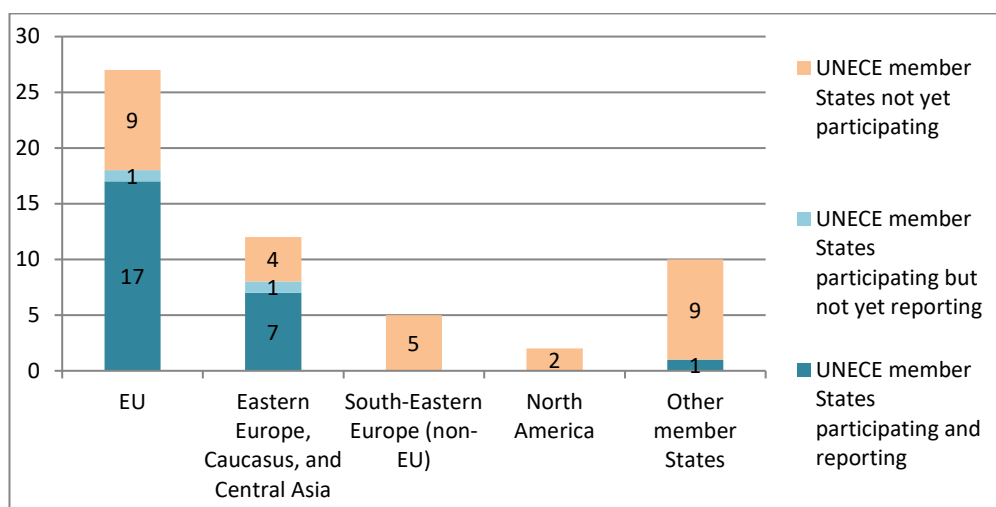


Figure II
BIG-E commitments by objectives and focus areas

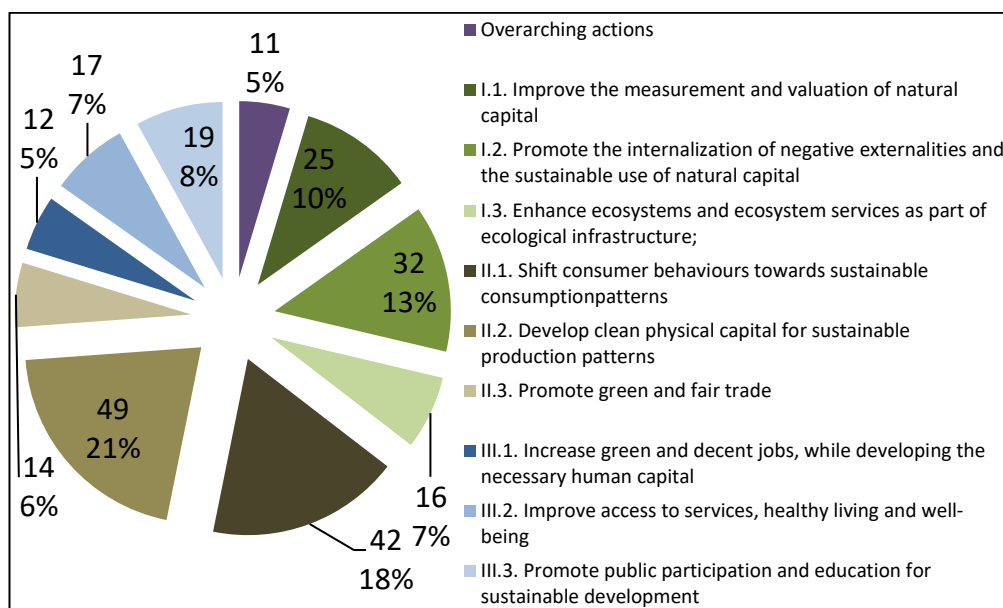


Figure III
BIG-E commitments by types of action

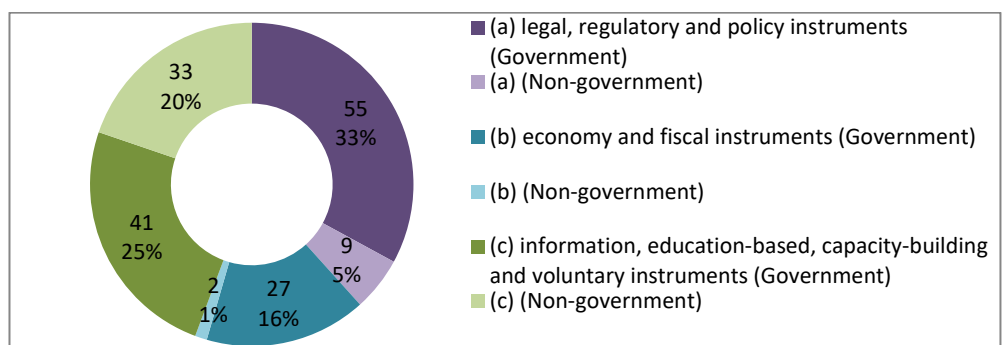


Figure IV
BIG-E commitments by sectors

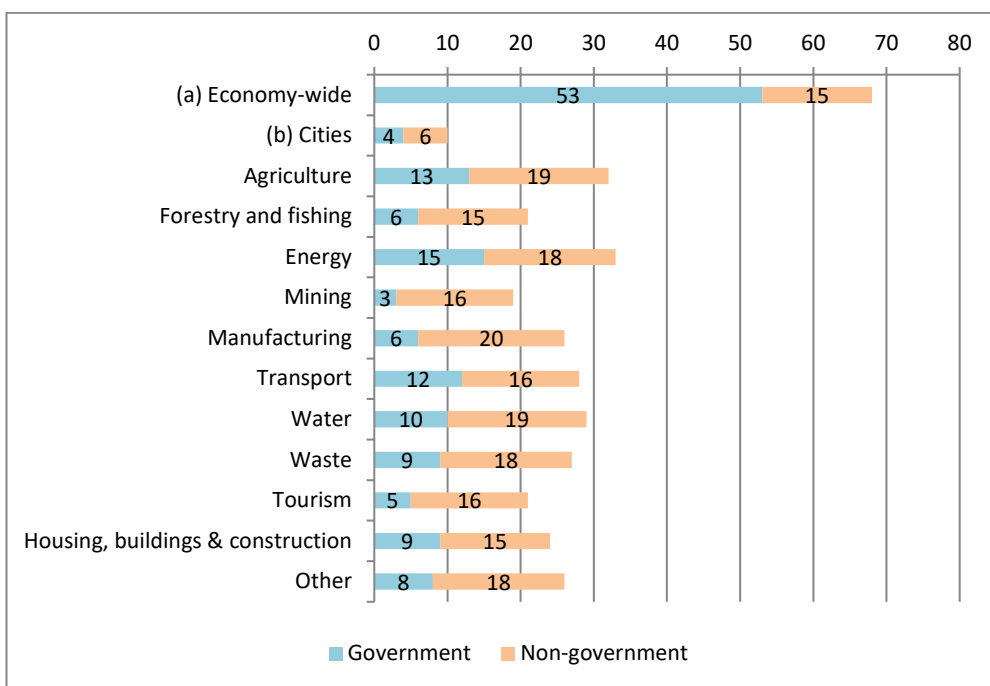


Figure V
BIG-E commitments by Sustainable Development Goals

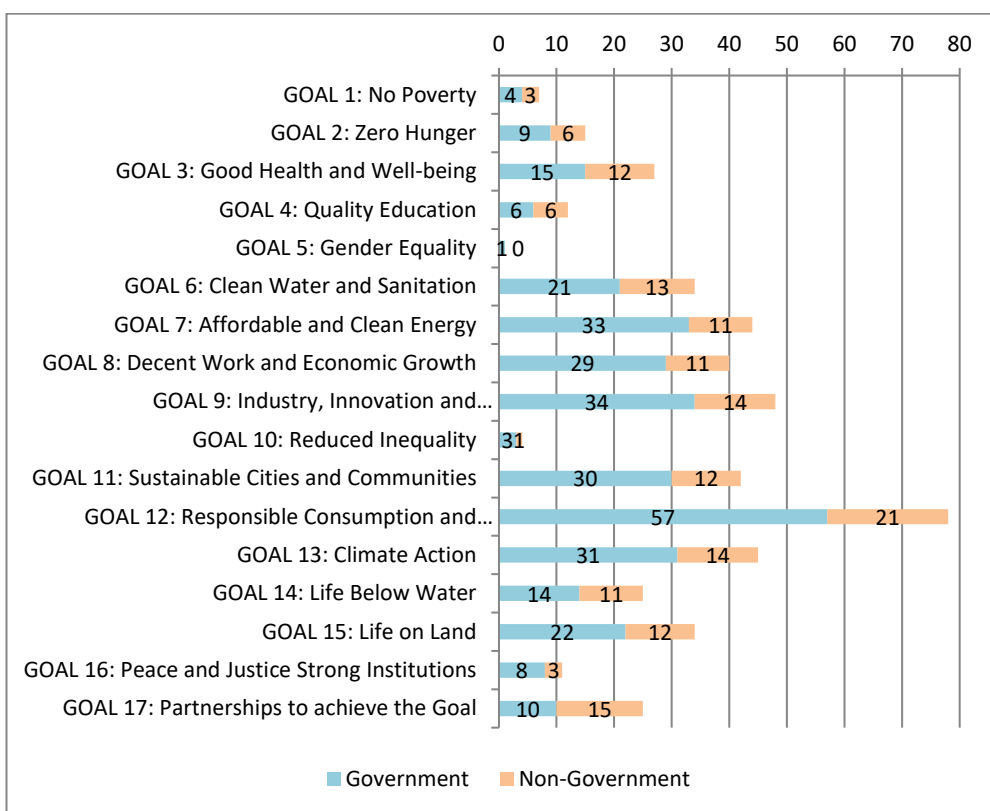


Figure VI
BIG-E commitments' progress in implementation

