

## Meeting notes – 2<sup>nd</sup> Communication Fortnight

### VNR – Statistical annexes

25 May 2023

The TTCOM (AL, AT, CH, IS, PL, PT, ZA) gathered for its 2<sup>nd</sup> “Communication Fortnight”, under the topic of “Voluntary National Reviews – statistical annexes”. The results of the discussion are summarised below.

Medea Savary, from the FSO-CH, presented the Swiss experience in the process of contributing to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Swiss VNR and in developing its statistical annex. The presentation focused, not only on the [2022 Swiss VNR](#), its [Statistical Annex](#) and related communication products, but also in the partnerships established with the policymaking side, which, as highlighted in the 1<sup>st</sup> Fortnight (SDG publications), were key to establishing national priorities. The importance of data and statistics was stressed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> VNR, which was more evidenced based than the [first one in 2018](#), reinforcing the importance of naming and presenting data properly, as the first step in making them more visible and relevant. The following factors were highlighted as determinant to the success of the 2<sup>nd</sup> VNR and its statistical component, namely:

- 1) The early involvement of the FSO in the VNR preparation process (also true for the 1<sup>st</sup> VNR);
- 2) A stocktaking exercise/baseline assessment had already been performed by policy stakeholders, which was crucial for Switzerland’s priority setting regarding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;
- 3) A conscious effort to innovate, through a more digital approach towards the development of the VNR, reflected by the dynamic and interactive platform: <https://www.sdigital2030.ch/> ;
- 4) A pre-existing monitoring system for sustainable development ([MONET](#)), which was used for the SDG monitoring. Its target-based approach was adapted to a goal-based approach for the VNR, also incorporating other indicators from other sources within the public statistical domain;
- 5) The «17 data clusters» approach, which required the inputs from the policy counterparts of each sectoral domains, to discuss the most important topics within each SDG. This co-building participatory approach (thoroughly documented) provided a common understanding on every topic, increasing the data availability of each cluster;
- 6) A clear commitment to distinguishing the statistical analysis from the policy evaluation (qualitative appreciation), through a more neutral writing style, mindful of statistical independence and impartiality concerns, while also prioritising understandable and accessible language, visual/infographic information and storytelling/narrative aspects.

These aspects resulted in the delivery of three communication channels: the 1) [SDGital2030 platform](#), the 2) [VNR](#) and the 3) [statistical annex](#).

- 1) The SDGital platform, built specifically for the VNR, features framework information and a strongly visually driven and dynamic/interactive approach, where it is possible to assess the situation by SDG, customise the information and/or download the full report. The platform will not be updated yearly, but likely in the next VNR, which will be presented in four years’ time. The [MONET 2030 indicator system](#) continues to be yearly updated with all the relevant indicators.

- 2) For the VNR, the statistical input was highly visually driven, with supporting charts and short analytical texts. The rest of the text was by the Foreign Office, then proofread by the FSO for the quantitative information/appreciation.
- 3) The statistical annex, led by the FSO, included a 2-pager section for each SDG featuring story-telling elements, which complemented and added information to the indicators through charts and/or infographic components.

Some challenges were also addressed, like limitations in profiting from useful tools (like Data Wrapper) due to the different systems used in-house (long process for every minor correction), data gaps (e.g. environmental domain), the lengthy translation process (national languages, plus English) and the incorporation of civil society inputs (which is the improvement action foreseen for the next VNR, despite a strong engagement through social media).

However, most of these challenges were overcome through good coordination and cooperation with national stakeholders, especially with the Foreign Office. In the VNR, qualitative appreciation from the policymaking side was also used to provide complementary information in domains where data gaps persisted (e.g. food waste).

The participants shared their insights and voiced their appreciation for the inspiring experience shared by the Swiss FSO, once again stressing the usefulness of having a good engagement from the policymaking side and a clear setting of a baseline/national priorities, to further strengthen and guide the monitoring efforts. The group also shared useful examples of leveraging the VNR to boost implementation and monitoring of the SDGs, linking them with other national development strategies.

The meeting recording is already available in the MS Teams space.

In a year where many UNECE countries (Austria, Iceland, Ireland, Poland and Portugal and the EU) present their VNRs, the links below will increase in the upcoming months.

#### **Links to national practices:**

South Africa (2019):

[https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2021/23402RSA\\_Voluntary\\_National\\_Review\\_Report\\_The\\_Final\\_24\\_July\\_2019.pdf](https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2021/23402RSA_Voluntary_National_Review_Report_The_Final_24_July_2019.pdf)

Switzerland (2022):

- 1) SDGital2030 platform: <https://www.sdgital2030.ch/>
- 2) VNR: [https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2022/LB\\_2022\\_EN\\_090620\\_Link\\_final.pdf](https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2022/LB_2022_EN_090620_Link_final.pdf)
- 3) Statistical annex: <https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2022/VNR%202022%20Switzerland%20Statistical%20Annex%20English.pdf>.

The next Fortnight will be on 9 June (3pm, CET) and devoted to **Data visuals & Data stories** (kick-started by STATSSA).