

Policy coherence and the 2030 Agenda: Building on the PCD experience

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Key messages

The 2030 Agenda introduces the new principle of PCSD which sounds similar to PCD but in practice is considerably more complex. Moving from PCD to PCSD thus raises both substantive and procedural issues.

Developing an approach to PCSD is at the heart of tackling the major integrated policy challenge posed by the 2030 Agenda and needs to draw on a range of experience, such as nexus thinking, mainstreaming, whole-of-government ideas as well as PCD approaches.

Research suggests that there is considerable practical experience of promoting PCD that can be of direct value for creating tools to promote PCSD. In particular the idea of a 'PCD system' with various complementary tools working in conjunction with each other should be valuable.

One success story in promoting PCD has been the creation of 'policy champions' to push the development agenda with other policy areas. Working with several sector champions as a group might be a useful way forward for implementing PCSD.

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Acronyms

CDI	Commitment to Development Index
COP	Conference of Parties
CSO	Civil-society organisation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DEVCO	European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development
DEVE	Development Committee of the European Parliament
DG	Directorate-General
DPC	Development Policy Committee
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
EP	European Parliament
ESRF	Economic and Social Research Foundation
EU	European Union
FRAME	Fostering Human Rights Among European Policies
HLPF	High-Level Political Forum
HRVP	High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
iSDG	Integrated Sustainable Development Goals
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NCSD	National Commission on Sustainable Development
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NSDS	National Sustainable Development Strategies
ODA	official development aid
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PCD	Policy coherence for development
PCDI	Policy Coherence for Development Index
PCSD	Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development
SDC	Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TTIP	Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
WTO TRIPS	World Trade Organisation's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property

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This Discussion Paper grew out of reflection in two fora in which ECDPM is engaged. The first is a regular discussion group on PCD facilitated by ECDPM that includes PCD focal points from a few EU member states. The second is an on-going exchange with a number of other think tanks at the global level around the 2030 Agenda process at the UN, in which we seek to develop a programme of research on how best to promote PCSD in the implementation of the Global Goals for sustainable development. The authors wish to thank the various persons from both these fora and elsewhere who have offered their encouragement and comments on the early drafts of the paper. While the responsibility for the contents of the paper remains ours we hope we have done justice to their ideas and suggestions.

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Executive Summary

After two decades of stressing the importance of policy coherence, European and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) governments have become accustomed to the need to promote coherence among their policies. In their international cooperation work, the principle of policy coherence for development (PCD) in particular has become accepted, even though it often leads to fierce debate. A whole set of mechanisms and practices have been built up in support of this debate, so as to encourage the search for synergies and inform the trade-offs and arbitration that are often inevitably required.

With the advent of the 2030 Agenda, the principle of policy coherence has now been extended to cover the whole scope of sustainable development. PCSD, or 'policy coherence for sustainable development', has thus become a reality reflected in the 'Systemic Issues' section of Sustainable Development Goal 17 (SDG17) on 'Strengthening the Means of Implementation and Revitalising the Global Partnership'. Yet for those familiar with the practice of PCD, the challenge of this logical but much broader concept is immense. Recent research has demonstrated the multiple linkages that exist across the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the effort in terms of integrated policy-making that the 2030 Agenda will require. How this might be tackled, and what useful lessons can be gleaned from past practice in promoting policy coherence to support this effort, are the subjects of this paper.

The paper starts with an analysis of the practice of PCD and the mechanisms that have been developed to support its promotion. This is then extended to other existing practices in integrated policy-making, grouped into three broad types:

1. mainstreaming;
2. multiple-sector approaches;
3. whole-of-government approaches;

in addition to the single-sector approach to which PCD is deemed to belong. These four approaches are then compared and a set of lessons derived from the analysis to form the basis for building a possible approach to promoting PCSD.

The analysis demonstrates that, while all four approaches share a number of characteristics and tools, PCD does seem to have pushed integrated policy-making further than most. One of the key successes of the PCD approach is to have fostered 'champions' for the cause of developing countries inside high-income country policy-making systems. This advocacy approach, with an official or team proactively promoting the interests of developing countries in an OECD country government, has proven that it can produce results, particularly when it focuses on a small set of key issues in which the focal country can make a difference, as opposed to spreading efforts thinly over many different issues. If this idea of a policy champion is extended to the more complex framework of PCSD, one can imagine a set of several agents each tasked with championing one important aspect of the 2030 Agenda, but also with working together to work out the synergies, compromises and trade-offs required to promote PCSD successfully (see text box 4 on p.32).

The other important result of the PCD experience that can be useful for promoting PCSD is the notion of a PCD system with several types of tools working together in a complementary fashion. This model could be used to build a PCSD system based on four types of features:

1. *framework* elements, including legal and/or political statements of intent and designated leadership;
2. *mechanisms*, including champions spearheading the PCSD system as a group within institutions;
3. *knowledge systems* to provide analysis capacity, data, and modelling of optimised solutions and monitoring;
4. *accountability* based on transparency, reporting, peer review and scrutiny by external actors.

The paper concludes with a set of five recommendations on the importance of (i) maintaining PCD as a contribution to PCSD; (ii) empowering a group of sector champions to promote PCSD; (iii) declaring a clear political commitment to PCSD; (iv) building a PCSD system; and (v) communicating the added value of PCSD.

1. Introduction

Over more than two decades, donors from European Union (EU) and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries have grown accustomed to the principle of policy coherence for development (PCD) and have learnt to work with it effectively. In 2015, however, the 2030 Agenda introduced a new principle to the global community, that of PCSD or ‘policy coherence for sustainable development’.¹

Linguistically, the change seems small. All that has been done is to add the word ‘sustainable’ – central to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – to a familiar concept. The change seems innocent enough and in line with the wider conceptual change heralded by the SDGs. Yet many of those familiar with the practice of PCD and what it has achieved soon realised that this change would engender a shift in practice. Although PCSD is not defined in the 2030 Agenda, the OECD has drafted a first definition:

PCSD is an approach and policy tool to integrate the economic, social, environmental and governance dimensions of sustainable development at all stages of domestic and international policy-making. It aims to increase governments’ capacities to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) foster synergies across economic, social and environmental policy areas;*
- 2) identify trade-offs and reconcile domestic policy objectives with internationally agreed objectives; and*
- 3) address the spill-overs of domestic policies.²*

Enhancing PCSD is, however, one of the 2030 Agenda’s many targets. It features in a section on ‘Systemic Issues’ under Goal 17 on ‘Strengthening the Means of Implementation and Revitalising the Global Partnership’ (SDG17:14). At this early stage in its history, PCSD is perhaps better characterised as an ‘ambition’,³ though the triple foci in the OECD’s definition capture its operational scope. The tools that can be used to achieve this ambition are also still very much under debate, as the current paper seeks to demonstrate. PCD and the new approach of PCSD are therefore understood here as principles, to which countries and other entities can commit; which they pursue with the aid of mechanisms; and whose observance they can monitor with the aid of indicators. As their names indicate, both principles are about making public policies more coherent with each other, in order to make their impact more efficient, effective and credible. While cases of incoherence are often striking, cases of coherent action are often harder to identify, let alone quantify systematically.

In the past, research about and around PCD analysed the concept of coherence in many different ways. At the core of the concept, however, was coherence between different policies in different sectors. The question was, for instance, whether a government’s trade policy undermined or supported its development cooperation policy. This is the type of PCD examined by the OECD’s peer reviews or in the EU’s biennial reports on EU PCD. At the same time, the literature also recognises other dimensions, as Carbone suggests with his typology of four types of coherence:

1. horizontal coherence between different ministries or entities;
2. vertical coherence between different levels of government;

¹ SDG17: target 14: Revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development: Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development.

² OECD (2015)

³ Rudolph (2017)

3. donor-recipient coherence, as is not the case when a donor's foreign policies are at odds with the partner country's domestic policies;⁴ and
4. multilateral coherence, when different countries and organisations are involved at stake.

In this typology PCD is seen as 'horizontal coherence'. Perhaps even more usefully for our purposes, it can also be characterised as 'uni-directional', as signalled by the word '*for*' in the full name, 'policy coherence *for* development', which indicates emphatically that the core issue is coherence of a donor's policies with one priority, the interests of developing countries. As the interests of developing countries are not a purely technical matter but subject to debate, it is also clear that PCD is political in nature. At least with PCD, all policies can be tested on the basis of their impact on developing countries and it is 'uni-directional', i.e. directed towards a single policy sector (understood here as meaning an area of public policy traditionally addressed by a single ministry).

By contrast, PCSD is broader in scope and infinitely more complex in that it embraces the all-encompassing term of 'sustainable development'. To start with, 'sustainable development' has been understood since the 1992 Rio Conference as consisting of three dimensions: social, environmental and economic. At a minimum, therefore, policy coherence needs to be sought between these three dimensions. Moreover, the SDGs are universal, applying to every country and not just to developing countries, and they contain a clear commitment to future generations. So coherence becomes in a very real sense 'multi-directional,' with multiple goals against which to judge results. The relatively focused task of seeking better outcomes for the poor in developing countries has been transformed into a much more complex endeavour in which better outcomes are sought across many policy sectors, for all countries and for future generations as much as for the poor now.

The reasons for introducing PCSD in the 2030 Agenda are not in dispute. However, they raise certain questions that this paper seeks to address:

- How is this extremely ambitious new principle, i.e. PCSD, going to be effectively promoted?
- What is its added value compared with a straightforward commitment to the SDGs?
- Should PCSD be a flagship concept, used for identifying specific cases of incoherence; should it form the basis for a set of tools to fix specific, high-profile cases of incoherence; or should it be a set of measures to ensure that all public policy is always coherent with sustainable development?
- How will governments and other stakeholders judge outcomes against this complex target – or rather many different targets with intrinsic trade-offs?
- Moreover, for the practitioners of PCD, what should happen to the systems they have built to carry out their task?
- Is PCD simply to be subsumed into PCSD or does it have continuing value as a distinct approach that can enhance PCSD?
- Can lessons learned from promoting PCD be effectively transferred to help promote PCSD?
- What other policy integration approaches might provide useful lessons for building a PCSD toolbox?

At this stage, a few countries – most but not all of them EU member states – have started explicitly committing to PCSD and taking steps to see how it might best be promoted. Some of the unresolved questions above are complicating their task and probably also deterring others from joining them. In response to this need, this paper seeks to develop an approach to promoting PCSD.

⁴ This is also referred to as a lack of 'alignment' in the vocabulary of aid effectiveness (cf. Global Partnership on Effective Development Cooperation).

The first step is a review of the literature on promoting coherence, on PCD specifically and on other integrated policy-making approaches (Sections 2 and 3). Section 4 proposes a framework for analysing these approaches. Drawing on this, Section 5 then suggests a range of mechanisms for promoting PCSD. Sections 6 and 7 draw conclusions and make a series of recommendations that will hopefully prove of value to practitioners.

The publication of this paper comes at a time when international cooperation is in a state of flux, perhaps even a state of crisis. After a high point at the UNFCCC COP21⁵ meeting in Paris in 2015, cooperation on climate change is once again more called into question. Security, migration and the financial crisis are the issues dominating the headlines – more than development cooperation or indeed the 2030 Agenda. In such a context, enhancing policy coherence becomes, if anything, even more of a vital task. However, the debate also illustrates the fundamentally political character of the task, with different policy causes vying for attention. In Europe, for instance, where development cooperation policies are increasingly expected ‘to tackle the root causes of migration,’ it would seem that *policy coherence for migration* has gained the upper hand over ‘policy coherence for development’.⁶ Political economy analyses of international relations have long pointed to the ‘structural weakness of development policy vis-à-vis other policy areas’⁷ and the current rise of populist political movements in many OECD countries shows that progressive international cooperation is on the back foot.

Thus, while enhancing policy coherence remains vital, it is ultimately a political task demanding tough choices. Having said this, tough political choices need thorough preparation and decision-makers need to be aware of the full implications of their choices. It is here therefore that consensus-building mechanisms, *ex-ante* impact assessments and the various other tools for enhancing policy coherence that form the focus of this paper come into their own.

⁵ UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties.

⁶ Knoll & Sherriff (2017)

⁷ Prontera (2016), p. 298-318

2. Taking stock of PCD

2.1. The PCD principle

The principle of policy coherence for development (PCD) originates from a realisation, principally among OECD countries, that policies distinct from development cooperation can have a powerful impact on developing countries and undermine the positive effects of development cooperation. PCD states that, in formulating policies, donor countries should take account of their impact on developing countries. Typical domestic or international policies with big potential effects on developing countries include those on trade, agriculture, finance, security and fisheries. A specific example is the evidence that subsidised agriculture combined with free trade can cause developing countries' markets to be flooded with cheap imports of agricultural produce, undermining domestic production and food security.⁸ The principle of PCD calls for these policies to be adjusted in order to eliminate or at least minimise these negative side-effects.

Besides this concern with 'do no harm', a more advanced approach to PCD suggests efforts should be made to build synergies among policies so as to maximise their impact. For instance, granting preferential access to manufactured goods from a developing country in parallel with a private-sector development programme in the same country is a good example of synergy between development and non-development policies. Promoting PCD is thus both a corrective for perverse effects and a guide for encouraging a more efficient development effort.

The OECD has been at the forefront in terms of pushing PCD as a principle and has identified the following set of institutional 'best practices' for promoting it:⁹

- release a **policy statement** to commit politically to the principle;
- adopt **institutional mechanisms** to either address specific coherence issues or to change the structure of decision-making and implementation, so as to raise the likelihood of coherence issues being handled positively;
- create **mechanisms to control the effect of the changes** introduced and draw lessons so as to nourish further political commitments and institutional innovations.

In practical terms, PCD mechanisms consist mainly of structures for coordinating the actions of different ministries, agencies and administrations. Depending on the administrative culture of the country in question, these coordinating structures are either consultative or take the form of a 'watchdog' that proactively scrutinises policies that are most likely to undermine development, or even all policies. The bodies in charge of overseeing and promoting PCD in the various countries may be seen as PCD 'champions,' arguing the case of developing countries vis-à-vis a donor country government.¹⁰

⁸ ECDPM/ESRF (2015)

⁹ OECD (2012)

¹⁰ Galeazzi et al. (2013)

Box 1: PCD in Switzerland**Commitment**

The issue of PCD in Switzerland dates back to a federal law enacted in 1976, which stated that economic and trade policy should be coherent with commitments towards the South. This idea was further explored in the National Guidelines on North-South Cooperation published in 1994. Since then, Switzerland has built up its expertise and commitment to addressing the impact of non-aid policies on developing countries. The federal Dispatch on International Cooperation 2017-2020 calls for all departments to seek more coherence for development. It states that synergies should be identified and built upon, while trade-offs should be acknowledged and arbitrated. The five priority policy fields for PCD are: environment; trade and investment; migration; tax and international financial flows; and health.

Structures

The main actors involved in PCD include the Federal Council at the political level, a seven-member executive council heading the federal administration and operating as a collective presidency and as a cabinet. At the technical level, the offices in charge with promoting PCD are the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) on the one hand and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) on the other, with SDC as the lead agency in PCD matters. The institutional backbone for promoting PCD is a two-tiered consultation mechanism: a technical consultation is organised by the office in charge of a policy area, which gathers and consolidates comments from other offices. This step is then followed by a political consultation among Federal Councillors prior to and in view of final decisions. The SDC is authorised to assess the PCD perspective in the technical phase, which leads it to comment on between 70-90 cabinet items every year. The political phase can consist in submitting a conflict between competing policies for arbitration by the Federal Council in cabinet meetings. Most strategies for field operations in partner countries are integrated, which also helps to foster PCD. An Advisory Committee on International Development Co-operation also contributes to PCD by bringing together multiple stakeholders.

Political culture and impact

Switzerland's PCD system is embedded in a politico-administrative culture of consensual decision-making and interdepartmental cooperation. This is due ultimately to the country's regular use of referenda and the inherent pressure for compromise that this creates. By politicising issues, this culture is conducive to PCD: it increases public scrutiny, which operates in favour of the interests of developing countries when they are weighed against vested economic interests. On the other hand, day-to-day politics encourages short-termism, which can work against sustainable development.

Traditionally, concern for developing countries in Switzerland has been fostered by mechanisms and discourse on trade-offs, synergies and the political economy of decision-making in thematic areas rather than by the discourse on PCD itself. The formation of monitoring systems has not been linear and faces the challenge of attributing development outcomes to PCD efforts. Under the current monitoring procedure, a count is made of the number of times that the assistance of the SDC is solicited, that it provides input and has its input taken into account – the relevant figures are 403, 82 and 77 respectively for 2016. Following a recommendation by the DAC Peer Review 2013, the SDC is currently introducing dual monitoring: *ex-ante* assessment of Federal Council policy initiatives that affect developing countries, together with *ex-post* indicator-based annual reports from the field, impact assessments and Foreign Policy Reports.

Sources: Confédération Suisse (2016a); Knoll et al (2013); ECDPM (2016); OECD/DAC (2013); Thut & Kohler (2016).

2.2. PCD in the European Union

The European Union has long been committed to coherence. In 1992, a requirement to promote the coherence of all policies with development policy was introduced in the Maastricht Treaty, and has remained a commitment ever since. Promoting policy coherence for development was made a legal obligation in the 2007 Lisbon Treaty.¹¹ As shaped by the OECD and the EU, PCD is embedded in the EU's 2005 development policy statement, the European Consensus on Development, and the 2011 Agenda for Change.¹² Although EU member states have shown varying levels of eagerness in committing to PCD and introducing mechanisms, most, if not all, of them now possess mechanisms for promoting PCD.¹³

The promotion of PCD has at times also provoked negative reactions, with officials responsible for other policy sectors objecting to a focused uni-directional approach and questioning the authority of development cooperation to 'impose' its priorities. Such reactions underscore the importance of political authority and the need for agreed arbitration processes when trade-offs are required.

Progressively in the EU experience of PCD, five areas have emerged as deserving particular attention: (i) trade and finance; (ii) climate change; (iii) food security; (iv) migration; and (v) the links between security and development. These are regularly the subject of discussions in Council working groups and are reviewed systematically in the biennial EU PCD Report produced by the Commission on the basis of inputs from all EU institutions and member states. The latest stage in the EU's efforts to promote PCD has consisted of exploring ways of systematising the use of indicators to assess progress in these areas. The different stages in the EU's efforts to promote PCD are summarised in the chart below.

Table 1: Five stages in the debate on PCD in the EU

A Up to 1992	First reflections	Debates on consistency of European external policies and initial ideas for PCD provide basis for articles in Maastricht Treaty.
B 1992 -1999	Making the case	Maastricht Treaty (Treaty on European Union) articles highlight instances of incoherence and prompt debates on concepts and definitions. From mid-1990s, importance of PCD acknowledged in broader international circles. Concrete progress in Europe is slow.
C Early 2000s	Wider recognition & search for solutions	OECD/DAC Peer Review system starts to cover PCD. Issue picked up in Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Donors start to create PCD mechanisms.
D Mid-2000s	Experimentation and knowledge sharing	More systematic and widespread interest in PCD. EU governments seek to learn lessons from first experiences of PCD and the <i>European Consensus on Development</i> reiterates high-level political commitment.
E 2007 onwards	Consolidation & institutionalisation	Regular publication of EU PCD Report begins. Improvements made to <i>ex-ante</i> Impact Assessments. European Parliament institutes a Standing Rapporteur for PCD.

Source: Gregersen et al. (2016)

While the European Commission has played the central role in promoting PCD in the EU by introducing various coordinating mechanisms and regular reporting on PCD (more on these below), the European Parliament (EP) has also come to play an important role. The EP has a Standing Rapporteur on PCD and has reported independently from the Commission every second year since 2010. Responding and

¹¹ Council of the European Union (2007)

¹² Keijzer (2010)

¹³ Galeazzi et al. (2013)

commenting on the European Commission's PCD reports, the EP encourages discussion in its DEVE committee, both on mechanisms for PCD and on measures in each thematic area.¹⁴ Thus, according to the latest EU PCD EU Report from the Commission, the EP has become a major actor in the promotion of PCD, not least thanks to its role in promoting dialogue with third countries and a range of stakeholders.¹⁵

Box 2: PCD in Finland

Commitment

Finland's commitment to PCD goes back to the government's 2003 development policy which emphasised PCD as a 'golden thread'. The commitment was renewed in the current government's Strategic Programme of May 2015, and in the government's Report to Parliament on Finland's Development Policy of 2016. Finland has made progress on PCD in the past few years by piloting priority issues such as: food security, trade and taxation.

Structures

Two committees play an important role in coordinating PCD and PCSD issues in Finland. These are composed from diverse stakeholders such as representatives from political parties, ministries, business, trade unions, civil society and academia. The advisory committees are supported by a coordination secretariat within a government office. They advise policy makers and offer occasions to coordinate the views of different sectors. The National Commission on Sustainable Development (NCSD) was traditionally linked to the Ministry of Environment, but since January 2016 coordination has been provided by the Prime Minister's Office so as to improve policy coherence for the 2030 Agenda. The Development Policy Committee (DPC) has been mandated since 2003 to promote PCD as one of its two 'core tasks'. An evaluation in 2007 found that this Committee was an effective tool to promote independent dialogue and scrutiny on government efforts to promote PCD.

There are also a number of lower level coordination fora for PCD within government. Inter-ministerial working groups have dealt with food security, taxation and water issues, while a cross-departmental team coordinates trade issues relating to both trade and development. Not all these mechanisms focus mainly on PCD, but for instance taxation and food security are acknowledged as 'PCD issues'.

Finland has also undertaken several thematic studies on policy coherence such as a pilot study on PCD and Food security in 2012-13. This joint study with OECD-ECDPM-ESRF on food security in Tanzania developed a methodology for assessing the impact of OECD policies on food security in the field.

Political culture

Finland has a strong political culture of creating consensus and resolving issues through consultative committees that bring together many stakeholders. Both the NCSD and the DPC have a longstanding and prominent position in the policy making debates and contribute to solving coherence issues, although the articulation of PCD and PCSD is not yet fully clarified. What has perhaps been more of issue is then how the advice of these committees is transferred to government and translated into policy and implementation.

Sources: *Government of Finland (2015)*; *Government of Finland (2016)*; Government Resolution of 5 February 2004 quoted in Mackie et al (2007), Case Study on the Finnish Development Policy Committee; OECD/DAC mid-term review of Finland 2014

A lesson that has been learned from previous studies on the EU experience in promoting PCD is that each individual mechanism is not adequate on its own. Rather, the mechanisms should be seen as part of a wider 'PCD system' that needs to include:

¹⁴ European Parliament (2016)

¹⁵ European Commission (2015b)

1. clear statements of intent;
2. various institutional mechanisms for encouraging internal dialogue and consultation during policy-making; and
3. knowledge inputs and assessment capacity.

The system also operates within a context in which it is affected by political and governance constraints, and interacts with civil society and knowledge communities.¹⁶ Progress in terms of promoting PCD can be achieved only if the system operates as a whole. Creating just a number of individual parts will not produce the same results.

Box 3: PCD in the Netherlands

Political commitment

The Netherlands has been committed to PCD, i.e. to taking account of the interests of developing countries – and most notably the poor – in all its policies, since 1998. Over the years, the Dutch government has sought to bring about more coherent policies in areas including trade, access to medicines and climate. In 2016, PCD was formalised in an Action Plan on eight PCD areas: trade and investment agreements, access to affordable medicines under the World Trade Organisation's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (WTO TRIPS), tax avoidance, sustainable value chains, costs of remittances, climate change and food security. The Dutch government set out a strategic policy framework for PCD in a letter to parliament on the Action Plan and the Annual Report on Policy Coherence for Development (13 June 2016). The Action Plan contains goals and sub-goals for the eight PCD areas, which are aligned with the relevant SDGs. The sub-goals are also accompanied by concrete, time-bound actions. Progress on sub-goals and actions is monitored with the aid of indicators.

Coordination mechanisms

PCD is the responsibility of the government as a whole. PCD is initiated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, specifically by the Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation. Until 2013, a dedicated coherence unit at the Directorate-General for International Cooperation was responsible for formulating and pursuing the PCD strategy. Since 2015, this work has been coordinated by a project group of thematic experts, led by the PCD focal point at the Bureau for International Cooperation at the Directorate-General for International Cooperation. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs defines issues, proposes objectives, and discusses these with the responsible ministries in the project group.

All new EU policy proposals submitted to member states by the European Commission are screened in order to assess their potential impact on developing country interests. This is part of a systematic assessment undertaken by a committee representing all policy departments, i.e. the Committee for the Assessment of New Commission Proposals. The Dutch parliament is informed at regular intervals of the government's position on new EU policy proposals.

Monitoring, analysis and reporting

In 2015, Minister Liliane Ploumen for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation agreed to report annually to parliament on the progress made on PCD. The Dutch parliament endorsed the Action Plan and the first Annual Progress Report for May 2015-June 2016. Parliament asked the Minister to clarify conflicting interests in the 2017 report and to explain how these are handled, with the aid of a small number of case studies. From time to time the government commissions external academic studies, for instance into the impact of trade agreements (such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, TTIP) on developing countries and consultations are regularly held with non-governmental organisation (NGOs) to strengthen the basis of PCD.

Sources: See the article by two Dutch government ministers, Ploumen & Schippers (2016) and Ploumen (2016)

¹⁶ Gregersen et al. (2016)

2.3. Assessing the impact of PCD

Any assessment of the overall, global impact of promoting PCD needs to address several challenges. First, it is important to keep in mind that development is the product of the efforts of many actors, and of multiple policies operating in a specific context. It is therefore extremely hazardous to isolate the impact of one policy change or adjustment. Development outcomes can thus rarely, if ever, be attributed definitively to a single policy measure.

Second, many of the efforts made to promote PCD are not necessarily recognised as related to PCD, as they take place in a wide variety of policy-making processes across multiple sectors. The narrative on specific negative effects of non-aid policies that undermine development is increasingly accepted outside the aid sector. For example, the fact that the amount of tax revenues lost due to illicit financial flows is often greater than the total amount of aid is receiving wider acknowledgement.¹⁷ While there is no single causal relationship between this narrative and national strategies or international agreements for curbing illicit financial flows, every achievement in this area is a success for PCD. At the same time, the contribution made by PCD promotion to this success is indirect and hard to measure.

Indicators, and particularly outcome indicators, of PCD performance have been difficult to develop and their use remains problematic. This is partly because of methodological confusion and the limited political commitments, but also because of the complexity of impacts of multiple policies and the lack of counterfactual evidence.¹⁸ Indeed, while it is difficult to isolate the side impacts of any one policy change, it is harder to determine how much worse-off the interests of developing countries would have been if the policy agenda of donors had not included PCD. For example, a study into the impact of non-aid policies on food security in Tanzania concluded that 'OECD farm policies have changed, with the result that they now cause much less distortion in the world markets than they used to.'^{19 20}

Equally, various PCD assessments of EU policies in fields such as agriculture, fisheries, energy and trade have documented attempts to get these policies to integrate the concern for food security in developing countries. These efforts have produced some results. For instance the EU's Economic Partnership Agreements have come to include food security safeguard clauses, hence introducing a development concern within trade instruments.²¹ Yet even if, as in the previous example, these agreements have appeared to achieve results in line with PCD, it is impossible to determine the extent to which these changes, which made non-aid policies more coherent with development, were actually *caused* by action taken in the name of PCD. Indeed, policy changes are the product of highly complex sets of incentives and strategies for which scientific evidence is elusive and for which no quantitative measurement is fit.

That said, indicators of whether PCD is successful and whether it is needed in different sectors, are still subjects of enquiry and research. The most sophisticated PCD monitoring systems tend to rely on a dual approach: internal and/or independent monitoring of policy efforts (outputs) in parallel with monitoring in developing countries of PCD 'thematic' issues such as food security (see Text Boxes 1-3 on national experience with PCD). A challenge faced by all public authorities is the need to demonstrate progress to encourage political support in line with results-based management principles. Some attempts have been made to develop integrated indicators, for example the Commitment to Development Index (CDI) developed by the Center for Global Development, which ranks countries according to the sum of their

¹⁷ Confédération Suisse (2016b), p.10

¹⁸ Seters et al. (2015)

¹⁹ ECDPM/ESRF (2015), p.115

²⁰ The methodology is being tested a second time in Burkina Faso: ECDPM/CEDRES (forthcoming).

²¹ Engel et al. (2013), p.31

policies' impacts on international development. While the CDI is an ambitious attempt to account for the impact of non-aid policies on international development, it comes with three inherent problems. First, the choice of indicators is not without difficulty. Second, it has been hard to find adequate data. Finally, it does not pay much attention to the issue of coherence between the selected policies.²²

Spanish NGOs recently developed a Policy Coherence for Development Index (PCDI). This is in line with the post-2015 concern with sustainable development, so despite its name it is likely to be useful in a PCSD system rather than just for PCD.²³ Along with the social, environmental and economic pillars of sustainable development, the PCDI addresses a country's contributions to global governance and the qualitative structure of its economy.²⁴ Although the index relies on aggregated indicators of many different types which can make comparison difficult, these are valuable benchmarks generating incentives for the pursuit of sustainable development in all its aspects. Moreover the proposed annual release of reports updating the values for countries offers scope for regular stocktaking, for naming and shaming; for proposing new policy initiatives and for learning lessons from positive experiences.

In short, while the PCDI approach is valuable, the methodology used to systematically track the impact of PCD through to end results is still somewhat tenuous. An alternative would be to use the proxy indicator of policy actions undertaken to increase coherence. In other words, this would mean monitoring inputs rather than outputs or outcomes.

Political expressions of commitment to PCD, combined with public scrutiny facilitated by civil-society organisations and research institutions, do create incentives for officials to pursue coherence, while institutional mechanisms and impact assessments create administrative environments where it is both harder to disregard the interests of developing countries altogether, and easier to identify possible synergies. Taken together, these measures thus establish what we have referred to above as a 'PCD system'. Whether a country establishes such a PCD system and whether it operates successfully – to the extent of producing outputs in the form of policies that stakeholders agree are coherent among themselves – is an indication that efforts to promote PCD are undertaken. Equally, a transversal reading of the EU's five biennial PCD reports (from the first in 2007 to the fifth in 2015) covering a full decade of PCD promotion does show that progress is being made, and that it is a long-term effort that takes time to show results.

2.4. Political commitment to PCD

PCD has been successfully encouraged in European countries although the attention it has received has not always been constant, as different governments have displayed different levels of commitment. Countries joined in progressively, first with political statements and then with institutional innovations, until the current situation was reached, in which most European states now have their own, tailor-made PCD system (with varying levels of emphasis over time). In certain countries, the balance of power among ministries prevented the agents in charge of PCD promotion from exerting a big influence over policy sectors. In other countries, PCD progressively gained recognition because it focused on particular themes and pushed specific developmental agendas such as food security, access to medicine or the fight against illicit financial flows. Champions of these agendas used the credentials and tools of PCD to bring additional legitimacy and leverage to their cause, which in turn contributed to the recognition of PCD as an effective and legitimate principle.

²² Frey & Thut (2015)

²³ <http://www.icpd.info/en>.

²⁴ Martínez Osés & Pablo José et al. (2016)

Within administrations of countries promoting PCD, some actors are inclined to embrace the principle and the institutional adjustments it carries because they see in them an added value or a boost to their activities. Other actors are reluctant because the changes go, or seem to go, counter to their interests. As a result, it is crucial to conduct thorough *ex-ante* impact assessments, including, ideally, political economy analyses, and to use this lens at later stages when assessing the results, the challenges and the possible ways forward for introducing policy integration mechanisms.²⁵ The goodwill of all actors involved is crucial, as is political will at the highest level, in order to generalise a common narrative, create incentives for cooperation at all levels, make institutional changes work and adjudicate in cases of policy conflict.²⁶

'The interests of developing countries' is a catch-all phrase that can cover opposing policies, including for instance, those based on political beliefs. At its narrowest, PCD is the principle that donor policies should not generate or worsen poverty in the South. A broader understanding of PCD involves the provision and protection of global public goods and ultimately of the whole 2030 Agenda in developing countries. Although most practitioners take a more balanced view, at the extremes of the spectrum the former definition is closer to the approach of 'poverty-focus' development practitioners, while the latter is promoted by practitioners with a strong environmental background. This divide, which can also be seen in the 20-year split between the MDG and the Rio/Agenda 21 schools of development, has major implications for the future of PCD now that PCSD has been included in the 2030 Agenda.

If PCD was about 'sustainable development' as a whole and did not focus primarily on social development, it must now be turned into PCSD by adopting the SDG framing and its three dimensions as well as its spatial and temporal elements, i.e. here and elsewhere, now and later.²⁷ If on the other hand, PCD is the safeguard for the poor's core and most immediate needs (in an international environment where multiple priorities and agendas come into conflict), it is of paramount importance to ensure that PCD stays in place and does not get absorbed by and 'diluted' in PCSD. Indeed, in the understanding of many development practitioners, subsuming PCD into PCSD would signal a regression that might result in OECD country policies becoming less sympathetic to the interests of developing countries since their most committed champions would turn into sustainable development generalists.²⁸ A third option is that recently expressed by the EU²⁹ and several European governments,³⁰ in which PCD continues and is viewed as one *contribution* to a broader effort to promote PCSD.

PCD has a long, strong track record at the EU institutions. In 2007, an evaluation of the mechanisms used in the EU to promote PCD noted that the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms were still insufficient.³¹ In the same year, as shown in Figure 1 above, the EU began a practice of releasing an EU PCD Report every second year. These reports by the European Commission initially assessed the achievements in twelve thematic areas³² agreed with the European Council in 2005. Later (2009), in order to make better progress, a more targeted approach was seen as necessary, and the five PCD priority issues were

²⁵ Seters et al. (2015)

²⁶ Galeazzi et al. (2013)

²⁷ Niestroy (2016)

²⁸ Ronceray (2016)

²⁹ European Commission (2016)

³⁰ E.g.: Confédération Suisse (2017), p. 169

³¹ Mackie et al. (2007), *Appendix II: Literature Review and Analysis of Country Profiles*.

³² The 12 thematic areas for PCD identified by the European Council in 2005 were: trade; environment; climate change; security; agriculture; fisheries; social policies; migration; research and innovation; information technologies; transport; and energy

identified that the EU still focuses on today: trade and finance; climate change; food security; migration and security.³³

Nowadays, the biennial EU PCD reports, including the most recent one published in August 2015, assess the EU's record in these five areas. A number of EU Delegations provided feedback on PCD for the 2015 Report.³⁴ There all now plans to formalise this practice and extend it to all Delegations. This should enable them to play a pivotal role in the 'knowledge' component of PCD by identifying potential incoherencies at country level, and also enhance the EU's added value as the main herald of PCD.³⁵ The European Commission's Better Regulation framework invites officials to include an *ex-ante* impact assessment in policies, so as to check whether they 'comply with the obligation of Policy Coherence for Development'. The use of this type of language shows that PCD is taken seriously as a legal commitment with implications for the routines of policy-making.³⁶

At the same time changes in political agendas and fluctuating public opinion result in an ebb and flow of the level of priority enjoyed in the North by the interests of developing countries. For instance, in many OECD countries, development cooperation is currently under the threat of being reduced to a way to deal with migration flows.³⁷ This trend is often linked to populist political discourse. It has been pointed out that when 'negative' impulses occur, coherence amplifies the movement, and that conversely "*a certain degree of incoherence might – at least for a while – have safeguarded development budgets from being used for migration management purposes*".³⁸ While policy incoherence might thus actually serve the interests of developing countries, it can hardly be advocated as a principle for public policy. On the other hand, the directional coherence intrinsic to PCD can counterbalance at least partially the contextual prominence of short-term political agendas. As such, PCD gains a particular political importance in the context of a perceived rise of populism around OECD countries.

While all these efforts do not solve the problem of the lack of commonly accepted PCD indicators, the concept of PCD in European policy-making has at least been partially successful in creating a process in which the interests of developing countries are considered and respected during the formulation and pursuit of non-development cooperation policies. This positive track record is a decisive reason for arguing that, in terms of the quality of developed country policies, developing countries' interests would not be well served if PCD were simply merged with the new, broader concept of PCSD.

The next chapter introduces some other approaches to integrated policy-making which have developed sufficiently to provide other useful lessons for the pursuit of PCSD, as well as the state of research on PCSD so far.

³³ Gregersen et al. (2016)

³⁴ European Commission (2015b)

³⁵ European Parliament (2016)

³⁶ European Commission (2015a), p. 103

³⁷ Knoll and Sherriff (2017)

³⁸ Sørensen (2016), p.1

3. Wider approaches to integrated policy-making

Integrated policy-making is not new. Many initiatives have been taken to promote coherence and the integration of specific policy concerns across sectors, some of which teach lessons for our purpose of outlining possible futures and challenges for PCSD. We have already dealt with PCD in the previous section as that is the starting point of our research. However, in the following sections we also consider the features and merits of three other approaches: (i) issue-based mainstreaming; (ii) multi-sectoral approaches; and (iii) whole-of-government approaches.

3.1. Issue-based mainstreaming

In development policy as in other areas of government action, OECD countries have sought to systematically integrate certain concerns. Prime examples of these are human rights, environmental protection and gender equality. From this perspective, coherence can be promoted by establishing procedures to ensure that an advocated cause should receive at least some attention in all decisions.

Mainstreaming human rights has progressively entered the international agenda in recent decades. A good example is the United Nations' 1997 Reform Programme, which integrated human rights in all of its activities. According to a study by the FRAME international project assessing the place of human rights in European policies, human rights mainstreaming can typically have three dimensions for a state, institution or other entity:

1. *Internal mainstreaming* involves operationalising certain standards as rules, and applying these internally. The challenge is to decide how principles translate into rules, and to set up a facility for monitoring the observance of these rules. Because the upholding of human rights is not usually a core activity, rules have to be consensual enough to avoid producing disruptions that could become disincentives for the mainstreaming process.
2. *Bilateral mainstreaming* consists in setting up human rights criteria, choosing partners and interacting with them based on their record on these criteria. For example, the Cotonou Partnership Agreement includes an 'essential element' on human rights.³⁹ A rigorous stance leads to the loss of economic and/or political opportunities if partnerships have to be rejected or revised due to a poor human rights record. However, flexibility and double standards in the application of officially mainstreamed concerns can discredit the whole process. The main challenge for bilateral mainstreaming is the need to address the trade-off between these opposite stances.
3. *Multilateral mainstreaming* is all about consistently raising the issue of human rights in international fora, in a way that has been agreed with partners and using agreed language. Because countries and organisations have different and often conflicting interests, there is a tendency to generate joint commitments based on the lowest common denominator. This can take the shape of non-specific language, which each partner can then interpret in a way that is favourable to its own interests. Generating real incentives for countries to engage and publicise specific commitments is the main challenge for this type of mainstreaming.⁴⁰

All these three dimensions of human rights mainstreaming are evidence of an effort to bring coherence to an organisation's policy position, be it in its internal policy coherence and ability to absorb this additional policy principle, or externally in its attempts to establish coherent in its relations with partners at different levels.

³⁹ European Commission (2000)

⁴⁰ Beke et al. (2014)

Environmental mainstreaming is usually traced back to the 1992 Rio Declaration, which states that *'in order to achieve sustainable development, environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it'*.⁴¹ Since then, and until the recent adoption of the SDGs in 2015, there has been a debate on how to reconcile the objectives of development and sustainability, given that the Northern model of economic growth and development is not sustainable in itself and particularly not if followed across the more populated South.

'Common but Differentiated Responsibilities' is a principle originally developed at the 1992 Rio Conference and now enshrined in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda (paragraph 12). This principle is intended to reassure developing countries in particular, which historically contributed less to the deterioration of the environment than the developed countries, that they will bear a smaller part of the cost of climate change mitigation. Environmental mainstreaming is largely framed in terms of the additional cost of 'being green'. Even though all countries benefit from sustainability efforts, all are keen not to do more than their 'fair share' of mainstreaming. This illustrates an important feature of policy integration processes: they occur in a given political economy context which they disrupt, creating winners and losers, and different levels of commitment according to the varying interests of actors.⁴²

Efforts to mainstream environmental concerns are now recognised in most policy sectors. They involve virtually all entities from private companies, to civil-society organisations and public administrations. The two main approaches to mainstreaming are horizontal and vertical integration. Horizontal policy integration is understood as arising from a joint coordination effort where there is a sufficient level of joint ownership of the issue. Vertical integration is conversely the case when an actor must champion a cause and obtain a mandate to enforce it on others 'from above'. These two approaches differ significantly when it comes to the toolbox at the disposal of policy reformers. Two key findings of the literature on environmental mainstreaming are firstly that there is no one-size-fits-all method, and secondly that horizontal and vertical approaches can be used together in a coordinated manner, depending on the context.⁴³

Gender equality mainstreaming has been high on the international agenda since the United Nations' Beijing Women's Conference in 1995. For public authorities, gender mainstreaming takes two distinct shapes: mainstreaming in an organisation and mainstreaming in the programmes it delivers. While the former can take the shape of incentives for ensuring a balanced gender composition of staff at all levels and equal pay rates, the latter typically leads to integrating a gender perspective in all policies, whether during policy formulation, *ex-ante* impact assessment, implementation or evaluation, and in the programmes based on them. Gender equality mainstreaming has been successful in several sectors. For example, it has reportedly succeeded in *'influencing development organisations to make gender equality and women's rights a corporate priority – leading to more investment in projects for women and girls, as well as to gender equality and women's rights being taken into consideration in mainstream programmes and spending decisions'*.⁴⁴

Other studies on gender mainstreaming have also highlighted the discursive character of mainstreaming exercises: their side-effect can be to generalise a given type of accepted language. This can pose a threat to the very cause being promoted, insofar as generalising and normalising the language – of gender equality in this case – also makes it available to actors with no commitment to the cause itself. The effect is

⁴¹ United Nations Environment Programme (1992)

⁴² Nunan et al. (2012)

⁴³ Nunan et al. (2012)

⁴⁴ Derbyshire (2012)

that they adopt it in order to blend in, but without modifying their practices.⁴⁵ This practice is commonly referred to as 'greenwashing' when applied to the environment. However, 'window-dressing' can equally challenge other causes such as development. What it means for policy integration processes is that indicators must look beyond language elements and into other types of evidence.

The experience with mainstreaming specific policy issues suggests that it needs to be supported by a variety of measures. These include a clear statement of intent, leadership and commitment from those in authority, expert advisory capacity to support those who are expected to integrate the mainstreamed issue into their daily work, and monitoring and evaluation capacity to assess progress. Sanctions can also be useful, but they need to be used in a measured fashion that is adapted to the context.

Mainstreaming has a serious drawback in that many different issues may potentially deserve to be mainstreamed, yet if all of them are pursued, the attention paid to each one of them individually diminishes. This is a phenomenon sometimes known as 'mainstreaming overload'.⁴⁶ Prioritising and focusing mainstreaming are therefore vital.

3.2. Multi-sectoral approaches

Another way of promoting coherent policies is by formulating them as responses to 'problems' straddling different traditional policy areas. Policy nexus analysis and individual SDGs are such approaches. A key feature of multi-sectoral approaches is that, because they have to accommodate the concerns of different sectors, they promote multi-directional coherence with no single overarching objective.

The starting point of a **policy nexus** is a 'problem' recognised as straddling two or more areas of concern. Although traditionally dealt with individually, they are sufficiently interrelated to justify being tackled jointly. Perhaps best developed in academic circles, the nexus approach is first a conceptual lens which, from the outset, defines policy integration as desirable, possible and efficient. In a second stage, the nexus approach leads naturally to establishing joint task forces, interdisciplinary teams, applied research streams and balanced solutions that seek to optimise across policy sectors rather than maximise one over another.

The rationale underlying many of the SDGs, just as in nexus approaches, is the cross-sectoral nature of the issues they cover. At the same time, the political nature of the SDGs – they were agreed by governments at the highest level – means that their degree of integration is partial and aspirational rather than operational. Thus, they do not necessarily follow the lines which research and experience have found to be most fruitful in addressing specific nexuses.⁴⁷

A popular nexus that has attracted both researchers and policy-makers is that linking water, energy and food security from a sustainable development perspective. The underlying narrative is that population growth leads to higher demand for food and energy, which has a big impact on the environment. Because these concerns are closely linked, treating them as a nexus allows us to keep track of trade-offs and synergies. This nexus gained a higher profile with the 2011 Bonn Nexus Conference⁴⁸ that was devoted to it, and is now the topic of an international stream of research.⁴⁹ A different, but also widely acknowledged nexus links development and security, starting from their mutual dependence and the shortcomings of any approach integrating only one of the two concerns.

⁴⁵ True (2010)

⁴⁶ Agrawala and Van Aalst (2015)

⁴⁷ Boas et al. (2016)

⁴⁸ <https://www.water-energy-food.org/about/bonn2011-conference/>

⁴⁹ Davis (2014)

The nexus approach is recognised as a useful basis for transdisciplinary research and the co-production of knowledge across multiple policy areas. It has a strong potential for linking with policy-makers and giving them access to transdisciplinary research so as to help avoid ‘unintended consequences of policies’. It would seem that this debate has not been taken far enough, though. Thus, ‘... a *thorough critical assessment of what a transdisciplinary approach is – its characteristics, role, knowledge and tools needed for its implementation – is missing, alongside a comprehensive assessment of how and what it can contribute to research on decision making.*’⁵⁰

There is also a long tradition of integrated policy-making based on multiple goals that emerged from the 1992 Rio Conference and the Agenda 21 process. Many countries sought to implement this by balancing economic, social and environmental objectives in drafting and pursuing National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS). Responsibility for the NSDS was usually given to environmental ministries, which may have made a balanced multi-sectoral approach more difficult to achieve as in practice environmental concerns tended to dominate. As a result, what started with a multi-sector ambition in many instances tended to verge towards a single-sector approach that might be termed *policy coherence for the environment*.

The current overarching framework of international development, the 2030 Agenda, essentially brings together both the Rio process and the MDGs. It includes a set of **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs), which help to promote integrated policy-making. Each goal presents a cross-cutting theme that straddles traditional policy sectors. Like the nexus approach presented above, the SDGs do not come with a user manual. Instead, they act as an invitation to innovate and provide reference points for assessing the results of policies.

Many of the individual SDGs require integrated policy even within themselves. Political choices will have to be made whenever competing interests exist. Trade-offs are inherent to the SDGs given the three pillars of sustainable development: social, environmental and economic. For example, SDG 8 includes the three different concerns of sustainable development in itself (bracketed words added):

SDG8: ‘Promote sustained, inclusive [*social concern*] and sustainable [*environmental concern*] economic growth [*economic concern*], full and productive employment and decent work for all [*social concern*].’⁵¹

Maybe even more significantly, trade-offs and integration are required *among* SDGs. For instance, addressing the three-way ‘water-energy-food’ nexus referred to above actually involves eight SDGs, i.e. 1, 2, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14 and 15 on poverty reduction, food security, water, access to energy, consumption, climate action, biodiversity and environment respectively. While this may be an extreme case, understanding the interactions between SDGs lies at the centre of a worldwide research effort.⁵²

The first step in this research into SDG interactions was to assess the different types of interactions among SDGs, including enabling and cancelling effects, i.e. synergies and trade-offs. The International Council for Science and the Stockholm Environment Institute were prominent in studying these SDG ‘linkages’.⁵³ The second step involved mapping all interactions in order to identify the nodes (or nexuses) where most interactions take place, because they are the ones where the added value of integrated policy-making is

⁵⁰ Howarth and Monasterolo (2016), p.55.

⁵¹ United Nations General Assembly (2015)

⁵² Jungcurt (2016)

⁵³ Nilsson et al. (2016)

greatest.⁵⁴ The Integrated Sustainable Development Goals (iSDG) project takes this a step further by providing an interactive interface to simulate interactions between policy options and SDGs.⁵⁵

The United Nations' Development Group has released a Reference Guide for UN Country Teams, providing guidance on how to turn the SDGs into context-aware national strategies.⁵⁶ A small number of countries have reportedly started implementing integrated strategies to attain the SDGs. Of these, Sweden stands out as having gone the farthest, by addressing the politically difficult issues of lifestyle and sustainable consumption.⁵⁷ The Stakeholder Forum has developed a toolkit to support advocacy in the fields covered by the SDGs.⁵⁸ The Bertelsmann Foundation has also developed a Transformation Index to compare the progress made by countries in achieving the SDGs.⁵⁹

Efforts to achieve the SDGs represent a generalisation of cross-sectoral approaches. In particular, some SDGs come with targets which qualify as being 'from different sectors', so the linkages (and thus the probability of trade-offs and the opportunity for synergies) are acknowledged as being at the highest level. For example, SDG 10.c calls for reducing 'to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances' – an acknowledgement that financial flows, migrant remittances and migration policies have an impact on sustainable development of departure countries. It is an invitation for countries to adopt an integrated approach to development and migration.⁶⁰

SDG17 on means of implementation outlines a few principles for translating the Agenda into action. In particular, it proposes **Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development** as the principle for acting on the linkages mentioned above. However, it does not enter into detail as to how this might be implemented, nor does it in fact refer at all to the coherence issues that arise within most of the SDGs. Thus, while there is already a flourishing stream of research on SDGs in general and their linkages, studies about how to turn the principle of PCSD into concrete measures for implementing the SDGs are few and far between.⁶¹

The OECD has developed a PCSD screening tool containing three frameworks for decision-makers. An *analytical framework* allows for *ex-ante* reflection on how to implement the SDGs, in terms of linkages but also of actors, contextual factors, sources of finance and wider impact. An *institutional framework* addresses the conditions required for SDG-oriented, integrated policy-making. And a *monitoring framework* outlines the principles for measuring the effects of PCSD.⁶² The OECD tool also includes three modules on illicit financial flows, food security and green growth.

This suggests that PCSD could well follow a path similar to PCD in identifying key areas in which coherence is particularly challenging and crucial. One major difficulty with this first attempt to produce a systematic list of the conditions and options for PCSD is the fact that all countries come with different contexts and administrative cultures, resulting in differences in terms of political economy of institutional reform. Because of this diversity of contexts and because PCSD is fairly new and untested, learning based on feedback will be crucial. Moreover, it is likely that innovation in PCSD can best be encouraged by a conscious process of 'trial and error' and learning from mistakes in policy processes.⁶³ While

⁵⁴ Le Blanc (2015)

⁵⁵ <http://www.isdgs.org/>

⁵⁶ United Nations Development Group (2016)

⁵⁷ O'Connor et al. (2016)

⁵⁸ <http://www.stakeholderforum.org/>

⁵⁹ <https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/our-projects/transformationindex-bti/>

⁶⁰ United Nations General Assembly (2015b)

⁶¹ Jungcurt (2016)

⁶² OECD (2016)

⁶³ Niestroy and Meuleman (2016)

acknowledging that, ultimately, there can be no one-size-fits-all model for PCSD, this paper seeks to identify a set of useful tools, bearing in mind that not all tools will be suitable for all situations.

3.3. Whole-of-government approaches

A classic, practical counterpart to thinking in terms of cross-sectoral issues is to change the number and nature of actors dealing with issues. This responds to the common complaint that different branches of government spread ‘horizontal’ incoherence by acting like ‘silos’ – in other words, by each branch not heeding what other branches are doing. This may be the result of a lack of coordination, or even of a more systemic problem of differences in prioritisation. The latter usually results in the negative externalities of policies within other sectors being overlooked, and in policies having impacts ranging from sub-optimal to disastrous.

Inspiring though ‘breaking down the silos’ may be as a slogan, it is not a satisfactory answer. A division of labour between ministries and policy sectors in line with bureaucratic specialisation does generate greater efficiency, allowing each structure to pursue its individual objectives, even though it can also lead to policy incoherence. Even more importantly, silos are conducive to accountability, transparency and visibility.⁶⁴ A challenge common to all approaches promoting coherence is the fact that they are initially likely to make institutional policy processes more complex. This increased complexity can work even against efforts to achieve coherence by generating resistance, and also by imposing extra constraints on actors and reducing their efficiency.⁶⁵ Thus, rather than breaking down silos, implementing the SDGs requires us to ‘*teach them how to dance*’, by facilitating communication among actors in each sector and by promoting new narratives that link them to each other.⁶⁶ The need to prevent exclusive ‘silo’ thinking and behaviour is the underlying rationale of much international effort, which is summarised in this section.

One approach consists in distributing **ministerial portfolios** so that responsibility for different yet closely related issues is vested in one and the same person. Combining development and trade portfolios or development and environment portfolios is a practice that has been used by Nordic countries, the Netherlands and Canada. While such combinations do not guarantee that development concerns will be dominant or even present in trade or environmental matters (and vice versa), this instrumental distribution of portfolios generates an institutional proximity favourable to coordination. Most importantly, it places responsibility for adjudicating trade-offs at a lower level than the Head of Government. This is likely to accelerate the procedure and decrease the risk of a political deadlock. This approach highlights the importance of the level of arbitration. In particular, it can solve the problem caused when the political economy of government is dominated by certain sectors, and arbitration cannot do justice to certain causes because they are defended by less influential actors.

Another example of a redistribution of portfolios was seen in Norway in 2014. Norway downgraded its aid agency from the status of a ministry to an implementer of decisions taken by the foreign ministry. Norway’s move was reportedly closely studied by Canada, which then ruled it out because it would increase the power wielded by the foreign ministry without increasing the parliamentary scrutiny of its activities. Similarly, both Germany and the United Kingdom have autonomous aid bureaucracies with ministerial status,⁶⁷ whereas in most other European countries development is part of the ministry of foreign affairs.

⁶⁴ Persson (2016)

⁶⁵ Henökl (2016)

⁶⁶ Niestroy and Meuleman (2016)

⁶⁷ Henökl (2016)

These examples show that there is no single best solution for all countries. Whether a redistribution of ministerial portfolios is an appropriate means of encouraging policy coherence is something that needs to be decided by means of thorough impact assessments built on political economy analysis.

Collective cabinet responsibility is a principle adopted by some governments, in which all ministers are required to support cabinet decisions in public, whether or not they agree with them privately. Because all decisions are officially supported by all ministers, collective responsibility creates powerful incentives for coordination prior to the cabinet's appraisal of a proposal. Oversight of this coordination is typically the responsibility of a 'lead' ministry or authority. Collective responsibility is a notable feature of the 'Westminster system' constitutions of many countries with an Anglo-Saxon legal tradition.

The European Commission also functions according to the principle of collective cabinet responsibility. All new policies are the collective responsibility of the College of Commissioners. To prepare these decisions the EU has a long-standing inter-service consultation system. Because major decisions and policy initiatives are taken jointly by the College of Commissioners, a systematic consultative approach, organised by the Secretariat General, is followed in order to produce policies that all the Commissioners can accept. This includes various intermediate steps such as submitting draft policies and circulating them among Commissioners' cabinets for comment. This has proved an efficient way of solving many coherence issues upstream.

Building on this principle 'the institutional organisation of the Commission headed by President Juncker is a policy coherence instrument in itself,' as six of the Vice-Presidents of the Commission are in charge of coordinating 'project teams' bringing together other Commissioners and establishing bridges between their portfolios.⁶⁸ These project teams deal with clusters of sectors and cross-cutting issues, such as 'a connected digital single market'; 'a new boost for jobs, growth and investment'; 'a deeper and fairer Economic and Monetary Union', etc. International development and cooperation issues are included in the external affairs group chaired by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, who is also a Vice-President and the head of the EU's delegations. This ensures that conflicts between EU external policies affecting development can be arbitrated at a high level. However, the system does not encourage the coherence of internal EU policies with development cooperation.

Collective responsibility is also the underlying theme of the United Nations' 'Delivering as One' or 'One-UN' initiative,⁶⁹ which was launched in 2005 to tackle systemic incoherence. Along with reforms aimed at administrative rationalisation, it resulted in a tightening of legal frameworks and chains of command in UN activities, so that all UN bodies must now pursue the same strategies.

Collective responsibility can also take the shape of targeted, ad-hoc **whole-of-government approaches**. The UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, the Netherlands and Finland are reported to be among the most prominent users of whole-of-government approaches. Sweden did something similar specifically in relation to development: under its 2003 Policy for Global Development, PCD became a responsibility of all government ministries, all of which were obliged to report on their contributions to global development.⁷⁰ The approach has proved to be a particularly good way of addressing 'wicked issues' such as poverty, crime, education and health.⁷¹ A 'wicked issue' is defined as 'a social problem in relation to which the various stakeholders can barely agree on its definition, let alone its solution.'⁷²

⁶⁸ European Commission (2015b), p.3.

⁶⁹ <https://undg.org/home/guidance-policies/delivering-as-one/>

⁷⁰ Odén (2009)

⁷¹ Colgan et al. (2014)

⁷² Curtis (2010), p.11

Whole-of-government approaches tied to political mandates allow policy-makers to explore ways of dealing with wicked issues by agreeing on a temporary, working definition of the problem before addressing it coherently with diverse tools. When they are not time-bound and linked to a specific governing majority, these approaches do not differ much in substance from collective responsibility approaches or even from issue-based mainstreaming. A concern with such approaches is that, even within a given, unified strategy, trade-offs and competition for resources arise. For example, a study of a number of whole-of-government approaches to fragile states concluded that ‘development and in particular humanitarian actors seem to act defensively vis-à-vis what they see as encroachments on official development aid (ODA) funds and pressures on aid principles, mainly from military actors.’⁷³

⁷³ Stepputat and Greenwood (2013), p.48

4. Analysing integrated policy-making approaches

4.1. Introducing a comparative framework

The previous two chapters introduced various traditions of integrated policy-making. Of these, we have isolated the following for further analysis:

1. approaches that favour the concerns of a **single-sector** policy (e.g. PCD);
2. **issue-based mainstreaming** within a specific sector;
3. approaches that start from a **multi-sector** view that recognises that several policy sectors all impact on a specific problem (e.g. nexus and SDGs); and
4. **whole-of-government** approaches.

Some of these approaches may overlap in practice, particularly since they present a mix of conceptual lenses and policy tools relevant to several or all approaches to policy coherence. Nevertheless, these traditions have standalone characteristics that can shed light on how to promote PCSD. In this chapter, we use an analytical framework to compare the four approaches in order to extract valuable lessons for PCSD. In each case, we look at the rationale for the approach, the mechanisms used to put it into practice, and its impact. We have a limited number of features for each of these issues, giving a total of eight features.

- *Rationale*
What stands out from the descriptions of the four approaches in the previous sections is that their rationales varies. Each approach follows a different logic, as is evident from (1) its problem definition, (2) its goal and (3) the 'direction' of the coherence being promoted.
- *Mechanisms*
Central to the functioning of all coherence-promotion approaches are the mechanisms they use. These begin with (4) a legal (or simply political) commitment to a principle. Then come the (5) structures that serve this principle by promoting dialogue, consensus and coordination, together with enforcement mechanisms that direct and guarantee their effectiveness and knowledge inputs. No less important is the attribution of (6) implementing authority and leadership.
- *Impact*
Finally, in order to deliver and judge progress, the four approaches all involve (7) monitoring & evaluation systems and learning processes. Their ability to deliver is (8) constrained by a number of challenges.

4.2. The main features of the four approaches

Table 2 is based on chapters 2 and 3. It summarises the main features of the four selected traditions of integrated policy-making (in columns), in order to clarify their differences and the characteristics that can inform the development of PCSD. The first row shows examples of how these approaches have been used, and the subsequent rows describe their main features in terms of the eight categories set out above and provide a few more examples. Descriptive text is in normal font and examples are italicised.

Table 2: A comparison of key features of four approaches to promoting policy coherence

No.	Approach: Feature:	Single sector approach	Issue-based mainstreaming	Multi-sector joint approach	Whole-of-government approach
	<i>Examples (in italics)</i>	<i>Policy coherence for development</i>	<i>Human rights-based approach to development; climate impact; gender equality mainstreaming</i>	<i>Nexus: in water, energy & food; in security & development SDGs: most are multi-sector</i>	<i>Swedish Policy for Global Development; Netherlands '3D' approach to fragile states</i>
RATIONALE					
1	Problem definition: Policy impact is undermined because	The impact of policy in one sector is undermined by direct actions or the side-effects of policies in other sectors	Policy in a specific sector does not respect minimum standards in values and norms that are core to another sector	A problem cannot be resolved by tackling it from a single policy sector, as several policy sectors play an equally important role	A government fails to speak with one voice or to act consistently with a single shared strategy
2	Goal	All policies deliver results more in line with the focal sector's core objectives <i>PCD ensures that all non-aid policies take account of development impacts and lead to better outcomes for the poor and developing country interests ('do no harm', identify synergies)</i>	The focal sector successfully factors in a concern which is not core to its mission, and ensures its own compliance with set standards <i>Gender awareness mainstreamed through development policy and programmes</i>	An issue is conceptualised as requiring contributions from several policy sectors; these are brought together and their concerns are balanced <i>SDGs: foster better environmental, social and economic results for all countries and for the future</i>	A government agrees on a unified strategy involving a set of priorities which are endorsed by all ministers and jointly implemented by all governmental bodies
3	Direction of coherence	Unidirectional: focus on the interests and goals of one policy sector	Unidirectional: focus on a concern that is not a core concern for the sector where mainstreaming takes place	Multidirectional: focus on the concerns of several sectors at the same time	Multi-directional: focus on the multiple goals of a cross-sector strategy
MECHANISMS					
4	Legal or policy statements - International treaty - National policy paper or strategy	- EU: 1992 Maastricht Treaty, 2005 EU Consensus on Development, 2010 Lisbon Treaty, 2011 Agenda for Change - 2006 White Paper on Irish Aid	- 2005 Consensus on Development - UN agreements on Human Rights - United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change - National Strategy for Mainstreaming Gender in Climate Change in Egypt	<i>SDGs: 2030 Agenda as signed by Heads of Governments Nexus: ad-hoc recognition of interrelatedness of issues</i>	<i>Swedish Government 2003 Bill on, 'Shared Responsibility: Sweden's Global Development Policy'</i>

No.	Approach: Feature:	Single sector approach	Issue-based mainstreaming	Multi-sector joint approach	Whole-of-government approach
5	Coherence promotion system - Structures for dialogue, consensus-building, coordination and enforcement - Knowledge inputs	- PCD advocates or 'champions' to promote discussion and policy change in specific, crucial thematic areas, and to scrutinise policies - <i>Ex-ante</i> impact assessments <i>PCD Focal Points, inter-ministerial committees; OECD Peer Review chapter on PCD; EP Standing Rapporteur for PCD</i>	- Guidelines for translating principles into rules - Mainstreaming advisory desk - Unit checking the observance of rules & sanctioning non-compliance - Trainings, awareness-raising - Opinion leaders and coalitions consistently raising the issue in international fora	- Leads to coordination between policy departments and/or appointment of task forces - <i>Ex-ante</i> gap analyses - Research and nexus modelling - Reporting & peer pressure <i>SDGs: UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) National Voluntary Reviews</i>	- Coordination prior to cabinet agreement on strategy or /method - Reporting on progress in contribution to the strategy - Ministers are dismissed if they do not adhere to the agreed line
6	Implementing authority	'Champions' within Ministry or DG for development/international cooperation <i>EU: DEVCO PCD unit; EU HRVP for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy</i>	Support unit or coordinator setting standards, pushing the issue and looking for gaps	Ad hoc for nexus approaches. Cabinet, head of government or one ministry for the SDGs. <i>EU: 1st Vice President (SDGs)</i>	All government bodies, including decentralised authorities Ministers who do not stick to the agreed line may be dismissed
IMPACT					
7	Monitoring & evaluation - progress reports, <i>ex-post</i> evaluations, studies, learning processes	<i>PCD progress reports</i> <i>'PC question' in all EC evaluations;</i> <i>OECD peer reviews covering PCD;</i> <i>Biennial EU PCD reports</i>	Policy assessment procedures systematically taking account of issues in each M&E exercise <i>Gender disaggregated indicators</i>	Nexus approaches: ad hoc SDGs: indicators; research on linkages and impact modelling National audit institutions <i>HLPF meetings and National Voluntary Reviews</i>	Overall monitoring; sectoral contribution reports
8	Constraints and challenges	- Requires sustained political will - Difficult to assess PCD performance - Lack of indicators for meaningful measurement due to methodological confusion & attribution issues - Calls to merge PCD into PCSD to improve the multifaceted nature of sustainable development	- Dilemma between broad buy-in on lowest common denominator versus ambitious plans and resistance. - Lack of a decision-making authority - Generalising and normalising mainstreaming language without commitment or implementation - Risk of mainstreaming overload	- Adds extra complexity - Theoretical approach which is sometimes hard to link to policy and tools for implementation - Uneven political commitment - SDGs: Incomplete integration - PCSD: Lack of a single, clear sense of direction; making everything coherent with everything else is impossible	- Depends on political cohesion - Dilemma between broad buy-in on lowest common denominator versus ambitious implementation and possible resistance

Applying the comparative framework in section 4.1 shows that some of the four approaches for integrated policy-making are much more developed than others. More practical experience and reflections are available for the 'single-sector' and the 'issue-based mainstreaming' approaches to PCD, as these have been used by a range of public institutions. Others approaches are either sketchier or less well-linked to policy-making processes.

More fundamentally, however, while the 'single-sector' approach to PCD has been systematically considered and thought through over the years, the mainstreaming and whole-of-government approaches have been adopted on numerous occasions, but with a greater diversity in design and building less on previous and simultaneous similar experiences. Applying the characteristics of the framework to these more 'diverse' approaches results in more diverse and less focused findings, which may nevertheless bring valuable insights to PCSD. A comparison of the eight (1-8) features of the four integrated policy-making approaches presented in Table 2 leads to the following analysis.

Rationale: First, the main characteristics of the four approaches are compared, in terms of their rationale – problem definition, goal and direction of coherence.

1. *Problem definition:* The approaches can be categorised according to their starting point, i.e. the problem which they address. All problems have in common the fact that they undermine both the efficiency and the credibility of public policy. PCD is a response to a major concern of a single sector: development cooperation. The problem is that uncoordinated non-development-aid policies can undermine the positive effects of aid and in fact generate much worse outcomes. As a second step, PCD can also take advantage of unexploited synergies between development and non-aid policies. Issue-based mainstreaming responds to the problem that a particular value or norm is not sufficiently upheld in a sector policy. The logic underlying multi-sector approaches such as nexuses and SDGs is the fact that a problem is currently addressed sub-optimally because it straddles policy areas traditionally encompassing a number of sectors and so these sectors must be brought together and their concerns coordinated. Whole-of-government approaches respond to the problem of insufficient discipline within a government and the lack of overarching strategies.
2. *Goal:* This is different in each approach. PCD starts from the interests of one policy area (as defined by development actors and the political guidance they receive). Its goal is that other policy sectors should take account of development cooperation interests. Issue-based mainstreaming approaches have a similar goal, although their scope is narrower (focusing on a well-defined issue). The goal is to promote the issue in question in one specific sector (e.g. gender equality *in* development). On the other hand, multi-sectoral approaches (nexus, SDGs) start from a complex problem and do not prioritise one policy area over another. Instead, they consider the combined stakes of two or more sectors together in an attempt to achieve the best possible outcome without sidelining any of these concerns. Whole-of-government approaches aim first and foremost for a unified approach with no dissenting voices within a government. Although certain dominant interests may vary, all actors are expected to conform to one unified line.
3. *Direction of coherence:* The different levels of complexity in coherence promotion can be grasped through their orientation. PCD is labelled as unidirectional, because coherence is to be assessed in relation to *one* set of elements, collectively labelled 'the interests of developing countries'. Issue-based mainstreaming is also unidirectional, because, in the sector in which mainstreaming takes place, the approach consists of promoting coherence with one concern. Multi-sector and whole-of-government approaches, on the other hand, are both the result of an *ad-hoc* analysis and/or

strategy. This makes sense only insofar as it attempts to accommodate more than one priority, which is why these approaches are labelled as multidirectional. The SDGs involve aspects of social, environmental and economic development, in a perspective integrating time and space, which makes them as multidirectional as possible.

Mechanisms used to promote coherence can be studied with reference to legal or political commitments, coordination, coherence-promoting procedures and the nature of the authorities responsible for the enforcement.

4. *Legal and/or policy statements:* Political commitments must be expressed, whether or not they are pinned down in a formal or even legally binding manner. PCD is a legal requirement in the EU under the treaties themselves, and member states have imposed it in the form of policy documents emanating either from the centre of government or from a ministry. Commitment to mainstreaming is regularly included in development policies (among others) and the issue is often the subject of international multilateral agreements, which are then operationalised in the form of sector-by-sector guidelines. The commitment to the SDGs is expressed in the 2030 Agenda signed by Heads of Governments and ratified in accordance with country-specific procedures. Nexus approaches may be officially recognised by countries in *ad-hoc* documents, although these do not generally use the word 'nexus'. Whole-of-government approaches may be the product of an agreement within the ruling party or coalition following an election or simply stem from a strategy endorsed at the highest level and for which government discipline is demanded from all ministries and agencies.
5. *Coherence promotion system:* The procedures, structures and routines allowing for coordination, dialogue and enforcement of the policy coherence approaches depend on the level at which the approach in question has been institutionalised. To different extents, all approaches rely on oversight structures, coordination committees, *ex-ante* impact assessments and gap analyses, as well as sanctioning mechanisms (if only naming and shaming). In a single-sector approach, the PCD champions play a central role, with their mandate to simply promote their cause or even to scrutinise other sectors. Besides safeguarding the whole issue of 'developing countries' interests', they usually focus on a few thematic areas with a substantive and meaningful potential for progress. Issue-based mainstreaming is more systematic, but within a given sector, where the principle being mainstreamed has to be translated into applicable and verifiable rules whose application can then be scrutinised by a competent agent. Routines which play a role in nexus and whole-of-government approaches depend strongly on the strategy adopted, but the basic principle is that all actors have to comply with the strategy and are encouraged to voice their concerns ahead of its adoption. Coherence mechanisms for the SDGs are still at an early stage of development, but some of these routines are already in place, and national strategies, indicators and gap analyses are in progress.
6. *Implementing authorities* are a key feature of approaches to promoting coherence. Along with the policy statements of commitment, they reflect the political profile attained by the approach, and thus its ability to turn principles and formal rules into actual coherent policy processes. The PCD champions, such as the DEVCO PCD unit or PCD focal points within member states' ministries, share their responsibility, depending on the administrative context, with political authorities. In the case of the EU, this is both the DEVCO Commissioner and the High Representative for Foreign Policy / Vice-President. In issue-based mainstreaming as in nexus approaches, it is up to the decision-maker to nominate a responsible authority, either close to implementation (within a relevant sector) or at a higher political level. Responsibility for the SDGs is also a matter of choice, and some countries have attributed this responsibility to their Head of Government's office. In others, it resides

in ministries such as the environmental ministry or even in a newly created position such as an SDG coordinator. The very nature of a whole-of-government approach involves placing a strategy under the collective responsibility of a cabinet, even though this attribution may be either rhetorical (if the strategy is still carried by a single sector) or effective in the event of actual joint ownership.

The impact of policy integration approaches needs to be followed closely as it is a complex product of many variables. Monitoring and evaluation processes, including learning, are crucial parts of each of these approaches. Evaluations also provide an opportunity to identify any constraints and challenges that need to be addressed in designing any policy integration approach.

7. *Monitoring and evaluation* systems to feed learning processes are included in all four approaches. Ex-post impact assessments are perhaps the most systematically used. The Biennial EU PCD reports and the PCD chapters in OECD peer reviews are examples of such feedback routines for a single-sector approach. The concept of issue-based mainstreaming includes incorporating some key indicators for the mainstreamed issue into reporting on the target sector. In nexus approaches, monitoring can be part of an ad-hoc strategy or may simply be added to all sectors concerned. Indicators for SDGs, targets and linkages (enabling and cancelling effects between SDGs and targets) are already the subject of a huge volume of research, and an overall SDG reporting framework is now in place, including National Voluntary Reviews for the HLPF as a standard feature. Whole-of-government strategies usually mean that all actors have to demonstrate that they have contributed as much as possible to the strategy and thus monitoring takes place both informally and as part of the on-going political debate within government.
8. *Constraints and challenges*: Many different factors and trends limit the impact of these approaches. Perhaps the most important one is the need for sustained political will, in order for coherence-promoting routines to bed in and deliver results in the long run. This more or less rules out any one-size-fits-all approaches, as changes must be adapted to the specific context, particularly the political and administrative culture. In some cultures, building a coalition and establishing a favourable balance of power is key, whereas in some others the solution is to build a general consensus by promoting narratives and language which portray the change as universally desirable. All four approaches disrupt traditional policy-making, and this can be achieved only if carried by a favourable political economy dynamic, i.e. if endorsed at the highest level and supported by enough key actors. This generates a trade-off between ambitious approaches and approaches that are likely to be broadly well-received and thus implemented to the fullest. Also, different stakeholders are likely to be interested in a coherence-promoting approach for different reasons or to reject it for different reasons. Understanding these reasons is one of the challenges.
9. Another constraint on PCD is the lack of appropriate indicators for measuring impacts. The problem (and this applies to all approaches) is that rhetorical and political commitments can be taken only as proxy indicators as they signal no more than a will to make progress towards coherence, not actual progress. Equally, issue-based mainstreaming runs the risk of mainstreaming a language rather than a set of practices. It also runs the risk of overloading policy sectors with many concerns which are not core to their activities, hence undermining their ability to deliver. This latter problem is particularly crucial for the SDGs, because workload realities mean that it is impossible to allow for the coherence of everything with everything else – an overambitious PCSD can blur the sense of direction and priorities that is needed in a coherence agenda. The nexus approach faces a similar problem in that many issues cut across multiple sectors, but efficiency commands a minimum of ‘silo’ distribution of work. Blurring these lines paves the way for numerous ‘pecking order’ conflicts. The main limit of

nexus approaches is that they are relatively theoretical and conceptual and therefore hard to link to policies and implementation tools. Whole-of-government approaches face problems of political discipline when different entities have different stakes in a problem. There is also the constraint of dependence on a political timeline – since such approaches can outlive the government majority which carries them only if they are consensual enough to be endorsed by a different majority.

The above analysis shows that PCD is but one of several traditions of integrated policy-making, which, when compared, display frequent overlaps. Interestingly, similar tools have been used throughout the four different approaches, suggesting that coherence promoting initiatives can learn from one another. Overall, the experience gained in following the single-issue (PCD) approach seems to be of real value as a source of potential mechanisms for PCSD. Thinking on the three types of mechanisms of the PCD system (*i.e. statements of intent, bridges between silos and knowledge inputs*) is well developed and their use has been extensively reviewed.

However, the three other approaches face comparable challenges and offer different perspectives on how to promote coherence. The mainstreaming approach has been used in a wide variety of ways, within institutions, among institutions and internationally. This experience in dealing with a range of institutional levels and actors beyond public institutions can be of relevance to the SDGs. The nexus approach appears to lack certain systematic, concrete linkages to policy-making, but its focus on in-depth research and its aim of balancing trade-offs and finding synergies is likely to be essential given the complexity of the SDGs and the need for strengthened monitoring and impact assessments. The whole-of-government approaches operate on the highest levels of decision-making in public institutions, and their more explicitly political nature is also very relevant to SDG implementation. This analysis also considered the SDGs as a multi-sectoral approach in its own right because the research undertaken so far (see section 3.2) is already promising, although SDG implementation is still in its inception. The next chapter attempts to learn lessons from these approaches that can be applied to the coherence principle inherent to the SDGs: PCSD.

A key lesson to be learned from this analysis is that countries should seek to embed into their government structures complete policy coherence *systems* comprising a number of complementary tools, as individual tools will not achieve much on their own. To operate effectively, such policy coherence systems also need to be well adapted to each country's politico-administrative culture. Finally, it is important to keep in mind the political economy of the actors and interests involved in the use of such systems. This is because, at the end of the day, resolving policy coherence contradictions is often a political choice.

5. Creating a PCSD system

Based on the OECD definition presented in the introduction and the experiences discussed above, we can sketch out a set of guiding ideas for PCSD, based on the eight features identified above. These are summarised in Table 3 below. The semantic proximity of PCD and PCSD might tempt us to simply transpose PCD mechanisms onto PCSD, with a few adjustments. But although the experience with PCD has generated lots of useful concepts for the PCSD toolbox, the SDG approach has an entirely different starting point, encompasses a wider range of institutional levels and actors, and its key objective is essentially much broader. This will need to be reflected by the approach adopted for PCSD. Indeed, it is clear from Table 2 in the previous section that all four approaches to integrated policy-making identified in the columns include concepts that may be relevant to PCSD.

1. Problem definition

Promoters of PCSD, as those of PCD before them, cannot simply assume that their audience will be favourably disposed towards the principle they advocate. The PCD experience has shown that the legitimacy and visibility of efforts for promoting policy coherence tend to increase when conflicts with and the negative side-effects of other policies are explained and examples of incoherence are given. This means that practitioners should be prepared to spend time explaining the added value of PCSD as a principle with a growing set of tools. The best entry point is by illustrating and defining the problem – the intrinsic incoherence stemming from the 2030 Agenda and the impossibility of delivering on all of the Agenda's commitments using a silo approach, due to the interconnectedness of issues.

2. Goal

The promotion of PCD has shown that the definition of the scope and goal of a coherence principle is a matter of debate, since 'the interests of developing countries' is a phrase whose meaning is open to negotiation, as is 'sustainable development'. A lesson learned from both the PCD and the mainstreaming experience is that it is not possible to promote all coherence issues simultaneously with equal success, if only due to the lack of human and financial resources. In other words, there are already political choices to be made at this first stage of choosing objectives.

However, in order to achieve meaningful progress and despite the dangers of what might be seen as cherry-picking or as a way to avoid tackling real transformative changes, PCSD efforts must focus on a set of high-impact themes where there is real scope for improvement. Ideally, PCSD structures should acquire legitimacy and visibility in an incremental process that allows for the gradual expansion of a list of targeted issues in which coherence can be fruitfully promoted. Past multi-sector approaches (whether labelled 'nexus' or simply following the same logic) have allowed practitioners to get used to dealing with several policy sectors together. Their views on the political economy of joint approaches can be a valuable means of assessing windows of opportunities and the risks of opposition to coherence initiatives.

3. Direction of coherence

As part of the 2030 Agenda, PCSD should cover the interactions within and between all the SDGs, everywhere, now and in the future. This means that the coherence promoted should be highly multi-directional. One of the lessons learned from multi-sector and whole-of-government approaches is that it is impossible to achieve full multi-directional coherence. At the same time, pursuing it in some key areas (such as food security, sustainable consumption and illicit financial flows) can allow actors to reach close-to-optimal outcomes where most sectoral interests are adequately addressed. In the same way that PCD is already recognised as an important contributor to the broader concept of PCSD, combining PCD with

several other narrower, uni-directional coherence efforts may be a path to the successful promotion of PCSD, even if this is rather less multi-directional than the 2030 Agenda calls for.

Table 3: Lessons learned from other approaches that could benefit PCSD

No.	Features	PCSD characteristics	Lessons learned from other approaches
1	Problem definition: policy impact is undermined by ...	Ambitious 2030 Agenda cannot be achieved by silo work in traditional separate policy sectors	- PCD: Need to explain, illustrate the principle, and show its added value, e.g. by starting from specific examples of thematic incoherence
2	Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have fewer policies working in conflict with each other - Foster integrated approaches to achieve better outcomes across all sectors, for all countries - and also for future generations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All: Complete policy coherence is not possible, so compromises must be found - PCD: An internationally agreed coherence principle could push a few themes decisively forward - Nexus: Be aware of political economy of collaboration/arbitration between sectors
3	Direction of coherence	<p>Multi-directional across all components of 2030 Agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - economic, environmental and social development - in terms of space - here and elsewhere - over time - now and in the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nexus and Whole-of-government: Multi-directionality adds complexity to coherence, but pursuing it can encourage emergence of best-fit compromises that address most sector interests - PCD: Single-sector coherence approaches can contribute to PCSD, provided there is political will
4	Legal or policy statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2030 Agenda: overall statement of intent, not legally binding - depends on individual countries and regions; peer pressure - National strategies (many currently being developed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PCD: Refine the overall statement with strategies identifying specific areas and high-impact policies - Mainstreaming: promote shared language and commitments in international fora and build coalitions to increase incentives for states and legitimacy of implementers
5	Coherence-promoting system - structures for dialogue, consensus-building, coordination and enforcement - knowledge input tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SDG-based cross-sector teams (nexus thinking) - <i>Ex-ante</i> impact assessments - SDG coordinators - HLPF National Voluntary Reviews - OECD tools - No sanctioning mechanism - Peer pressure based on moral authority of 2030 Agenda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PCD: Role of champions as policy entrepreneurs; dialogue and coordination mechanisms; <i>ex-ante</i> impact assessments; involving multiple actors; regular reporting and review - Nexus: Research and modelling studies - Whole-of-government: <i>Ex-ante</i> coordination and consultation on strategies to ensure buy-in - Mainstreaming: Adjust level of ambition to ensure both meaningfulness and buy-in
6	Implementing authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National level: to be determined - SDG supervision is sometimes already assigned to centre of government or to specialist ministries, but authority for PCSD is generally absent - EU level: 1st VP responsible for coordinating SDG implementation - Global level: United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) or United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Whole-of-government: Based on authority at the highest level and includes sanctioning (dismissal) - PCD: Use of committed champions: specialist policy implementers with institutional continuity to ensure visibility and legitimacy; involve parliaments to bed in political processes - All approaches: Need for a clear authority and mandates, and use of third parties to generate a system of positive and negative incentives for contributions

7	Monitoring & evaluation - progress reports, scrutiny, <i>ex-post</i> evaluations, studies, learning processes	- Annual UN HLPF meetings - HLPF National Voluntary Reviews - UNGA or ECOSOC - National parliaments - National auditing institutions - <i>Ad-hoc</i> gap analyses, studies	- Mainstreaming: Developing indicators able to see through purely 'cosmetic' changes (changes in language, but not in practice) - PCD: OECD peer reviews; EU biennial reports; thematic progress reports, gap analyses; consultations and training in lessons learned in order to incrementally improve the system
8	Constraints and challenges	- Extremely multi-directional and complex, so many intrinsic trade-offs arise - Concerns many different areas; will require operational strategies	- All: No one-size-fits-all approaches; risk of generating complexity; context and political economy analysis matter - Nexus: Research into managing complexity - PCD: Start with key areas with decisive synergies or trade-offs rather than trying to cover everything; PCD can contribute to PCSD for developing countries - All: Danger of cherry-picking & avoiding difficult cases

It is also important to bear in mind that problematic situations addressed by PCSD will not present a single 'best possible outcome', to be achieved by reconciling (or buying in) sectors. Indeed, depending on the perspective and ideological considerations, the perceived best outcome may be altogether different. Although PCSD can (as PCD does) offer a relatively consensual principle and a technical set of tools and mechanisms, the final outcomes will depend on politically and ideologically motivated decisions. This means that, to be successful, PCSD must become part of the national political debate. It also means that as it is possible to achieve results in line with PCD or PCSD without using or even knowing the principles, it is also possible to undermine sustainable development while claiming to serve PCSD.

4. Legal or policy statements

Establishing the legitimacy of PCSD in policy statements will be a key issue, as these introduce and politicise the principle at a national level. Due to its scope, PCSD necessarily involves several layers of governance. The overarching commitment, the 2030 Agenda, is not legally binding although it was adopted in a multilateral forum, thus providing the basis for some degree of peer pressure and scrutiny. Implementation is through national strategies, which present an opportunity to renew and specify commitments. Yet most implementation takes place at a third, i.e. local, level. In order to make the most of these three levels, PCSD can build on lessons learned from issue-based mainstreaming approaches. These have demonstrated the importance of building transnational, multi-stakeholders coalitions which share language and coordinate action in order to develop a system of incentives for actors at all three levels to contribute. For instance, civil-society organisations are needed at national and local levels to scrutinise public policy and implementation. Their reports will have extra impact if other countries spearheading implementation are ready to step in and voice their concern or appreciation in multilateral fora. This type of flexible, multi-stakeholder coalition is instrumental in solving issues, but it also enhances the legitimacy of actors and can incrementally consolidate the PCSD principle. Policy statements on PCSD can also benefit from the tendency for national specialisation observed with PCD: government strategies focus on a limited number of priorities in relation to which the government believes that it could make valuable progress. Whole-of-government and mainstreaming approaches show that consultation ahead of the adoption of a policy statement is important to ensure that actors embrace the principle in more than just rhetorical terms.

5. Coherence promotion system

Routines, structures and mechanisms conducive to promoting coherence in line with PCSD already abound. These include task forces, coordination committees and authorities, *ex-ante* impact assessments,

national reviews, OECD guides such as the PCSD self-assessment tool, peer scrutiny of other signatories of the 2030 Agenda, including at the HLPF. Yet the scope of PCSD is such that these elements together can only form a rough outline of a PCSD system that is able to deliver on its commitments. The PCD experience has shown the importance of policy entrepreneurs and champions legitimising and empowering the principle by means of political endorsement. For PCSD, it may be useful to identify multiple champions, each with a specific policy concern (see text box), who are then tasked to work as a team, much as is done in a nexus approach. Several PCD routines, such as periodical PCD reports, could be transferred directly to PCSD, but the latter's broad scope might make it preferable to divide it into smaller areas that could be surveyed more efficiently.

All approaches underline the importance of involving a broad range of actors, particularly civil-society organisations that can inform and contribute to the legitimacy of PCSD and challenge any cases of incoherence. Thus, all approaches demonstrate that the political economy of collaboration and competition between sectors plays a crucial role in the promotion of coherence. Multi-sectoral approaches have developed advanced conceptual tools for assessing the interactions between sectoral issues and the impact of policies on sets of interrelated goals. These can be of use to PCSD, at the policy design stage and for monitoring and evaluation.

Box 4: Multiple champions for PCSD

The role played by a PCD focal point in championing the cause of developing countries within a European government policy process could well be transposed to other sectors. The result would be the creation of a series of champions for the environment, health, the private sector, etc. Viewing this group of champions as a team capable of pushing PCSD, and inviting them to work together to find coherent solutions that respect their respective policy sectors, might well prove to be a vital mechanism for promoting PCSD.

However, given the diversity of topics covered by the 2030 Agenda, it might prove difficult to agree on a limited number of champions covering all the main concerns. One possible solution might be to have one champion for each of the three pillars of sustainable development and another two to cover its spatial and temporal dimensions. The result would be five champions on the following lines:

1. a social champion (people);
2. an environmental champion (planet);
3. an economic champion (prosperity);
4. an elsewhere champion (partnerships with other countries);
5. a futures champion (inter-generational pact).

Other models are also conceivable of course, but this one could give maximum coverage with a diverse yet still manageable team.

Mainstreaming approaches and the resistance to them show there is a need to adopt enforcement mechanisms which create genuine incentives for change, but also for these to be commensurate with the level of ambition. There is a thin dividing line between a coherence principle that is too vague or benign to be meaningful, and one that is too specific or ambitious to be accepted and embraced. So it will be up to policy-makers to assess the context and determine the most fitting course of action.

6. Implementing authority

In Europe, over a year since agreement was reached on the 2030 Agenda, the attribution of authority for implementing PCSD at national and European levels is still largely undetermined. In certain cases, the supervision and/or coordination of action on the 2030 Agenda has already been assigned, mostly to the

centre of government. However, if PCSD is to be promoted as a unitary principle, a body in each country will have to be made responsible for supervision, and given the means to discharge this mandate. The success of champions in promoting PCD suggests that it may be preferable to identify a number of different aspects of PCSD and to appoint and legitimise a specific, specialist champion or ambassador for each of these. This need not be a major upheaval, as the institutional structure in more and more countries includes entities with a mandate to oversee and coordinate cross-cutting issues.

The challenge for PCSD is to rationalise their mandates, legitimise them and coordinate their action without recreating watertight silos and without adding too much institutional complexity. The experience with PCD has also shown the added value of involving parliaments, for example with rapporteurs and periodic reviews. Indeed, embedding the principle in political processes with this increased scrutiny consolidates the overall system of incentives for all actors to promote, implement and not obstruct coherence. Whole-of-government approaches present a model of vertical enforcement, in which authority resides at the highest level and lower levels of governance have to cooperate, failing which a sanction can be imposed. Other collective responsibility approaches, such as the redistribution of ministerial portfolios, show that different institutional arrangements can be more or less favourable to the successful pursuit of coherence, and that attention must be paid to the detail of an administration's political economy.

7. Monitoring and evaluation

As with the coherence promoting system (point 5 above) to which they contribute indirectly, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms already exist in profusion for the SDGs. However, it remains to be seen whether they are well adapted to assessing progress in the promotion of PCSD. Transferring PCD routines to PCSD may prove useful: for example, the chapter on coherence in OECD Peer Reviews, the biennial EU PCD reports, progress reports and gap analyses in specific thematic areas, consultations and trainings, all teach lessons that be drawn on to improve the system incrementally.

The monitoring and evaluation of a coherence principle presents certain challenges. The main lesson learned from the PCD experience is the problem of attribution. As further points, quantitative indicators are difficult to identify and qualitative assessments are not always comparable and meaningful. If indicators focus on outputs, they run the risk of monitoring trends disconnected from the final outcomes and of generating incentives for making policies regardless of their impact. In particular, as mainstreaming approaches have shown, indicators need to be able to see through purely 'cosmetic' changes, in which language is adapted to the principle of coherence but the substance remains unchanged.

8. Constraints and challenges

A major challenge for the promotion of PCSD is the extreme multi-directionality of policy coherence, which includes social, environmental and economic aspects of development in terms of both time and space. While PCSD offers opportunities to reconcile these aspects, trade-offs remain inevitable. Adjudicating these trade-offs in a manner that is transparent and best serves the public interest requires a political mandate and authority that can really only be found at the centre of government. Operational strategies for promoting PCSD offer some scope for preparing cases for 'arbitrage' and resolving certain trade-offs at lower levels of government.

Another challenge is that all policy integration approaches have shown that there can be no universal solution. At the same time, the legitimacy of PCSD relies on an assumption that there is added value inherent to a unitary principle. This principle offers an opportunity to pool solutions and boost knowledge, visibility and legitimacy. Yet distributing its operational promotion over several sectoral coherence areas (including PCD) might be the most effective course of action: PCD has shown that focusing on a key set of

areas in which it is possible to make a meaningful difference is more effective and efficient than attempting to cover all concerns simultaneously, and also more feasible in terms of resource constraints and the political economy of policy-making.

One challenge for PCSD (which is faced by all forms of coherence promotion) is the risk of adding undue complexity to an extent that reduces or cancels out the gains from greater coherence. Impact assessment is of the essence to prevent such situations, but feedback and adaptation (i.e. trial and error) are also highly important.

Another big challenge overall is the need for sustained political will over time to back any coherence promotion initiative. All approaches can be constrained by insufficient political commitment and respond in different ways to greater incentives, ranging from scrutiny and 'naming and shaming' to communication on impact and gap analyses. While the broader scope of PCSD allows for the involvement of a broad variety of actors, ranging from political parties to private companies, it also means that coalitions of the willing run the risk of being undermined by incompatible agendas or even of recreating watertight silos. This constraint is a powerful reason for building on the PCD experience of sector champions who can push the agenda, and for finding solutions that contribute to a broader PCSD effort.

6. Conclusions

Despite their basic similarity and semantic proximity, there is one fundamental difference between PCD and PCSD. In the case of PCSD, policy-makers have to secure multi-directional coherence by pursuing multiple goals at the same time, whereas for PCD coherence is uni-directional, i.e. it is directed towards a single cause, which is the interest of developing countries. This applies particularly when PCD is interpreted in narrow terms as being oriented towards poverty reduction.

The diversity and scope of the SDGs makes the task much more difficult for a PCSD agent who cannot either advocate a particular goal or realistically embrace the interests of all sectors at stake in sustainable development. Conversely, it is one of the key successes of the PCD approach to have fostered ‘champions’ for the cause of developing countries inside government policy-making systems in high-income countries. This advocacy approach, with an official or team proactively promoting their vision of the interests of developing countries within an OECD country government, has proven that it can achieve results. This is particularly true when it focuses on a key set of issues in which the focal country can make a difference, as opposed to spreading efforts thinly over many different issues.

PCSD, on the other hand, is still largely untried. There is as yet no clear consensus on how it should be tackled. So while some argue that PCD should be subsumed into PCSD and need no longer be pursued as a separate goal, PCD practitioners are reluctant to drop a principle and system that works (PCD) for one that they do not yet know will work (PCSD) and which provides no assurance that the interests of developing countries will be articulated as the same level as with PCD.

There is a middle path, however. This involves trying to build on the PCD model and using the best of it for PCSD. Along with a number of high-income countries,⁷⁴ the EU recently expressed a clear position on the articulation it envisions for PCD and PCSD. Its proposal for a new European Consensus on Development states that *‘the EU and its member states reaffirm their commitment to policy coherence for development, as an important contribution to the collective effort towards achieving broader policy coherence for sustainable development.’*⁷⁵ The definition of PCD as a principle covering part of the area safeguarded by the broader PCSD principle is thus likely to remain the dominant paradigm for some time, at least among PCD’s own constituency and despite past calls to merge them. Rather than seeking to confront this view, a more promising tack is to take a broader look at a variety of approaches to integrated policy-making, including but not limited to PCD, and to try and build a system for PCSD on the lessons learned from and the best practices adopted by as many traditions as possible.

Although a system for implementing the SDGs is gradually taking shape, it cannot on its own deliver on the extremely ambitious commitment to secure PCSD. This paper identifies three traditions of integrated policy-making besides PCD which can teach lessons in the quest for an efficient model of PCSD:

1. issue-based mainstreaming;
2. multi-sectoral approaches;
3. collective responsibility approaches.

⁷⁴ Including Switzerland.

⁷⁵ European Commission (2016)

All four of these traditions are assessed with the aid of an analytical framework of eight lenses, in order to identify key features bringing valuable insights. This provides the basis for sketching out a system for promoting PCSD's multi-directional coherence, and making recommendations for policy-makers tasked with taking PCSD forward.

7. Recommendations

The principles and lessons learned presented in chapter 5 could form the basis for an extensive set of recommendations. However, it is perhaps more useful to focus on a few of the most practical and pressing concerns which policy-makers wishing to promote PCSD may want to consider.

1. Both PCD and PCSD matter

Policy coherence principles such as PCD and PCSD cannot cover the whole field of policy-making from one day to the next. Although part of their rationale is to improve overall coherence by fostering positive dynamics across all sectors, a more substantial part of their added value consists in pushing forward a limited number of issues, and addressing the damaging incoherence that can arise within and among these issues.

PCD focal points have progressively accumulated experience in using their mandate to promote the issues in which their country's international position, and their own institutional position, allow them to make a difference. PCSD, on the other hand, is still largely untried and offers no guarantees that it can deliver similar results immediately. This means that, in the view of many of its practitioners, if PCD were to be simply subsumed into PCSD, there is a real danger of a regression towards incoherence in several important areas of developed country policy. Moreover, PCSD is an overarching principle for multi-directional coherence, which will benefit from using existing systems where relevant. As a result, it is better to retain PCD, both as an important contribution to PCSD and as a source of expertise in integrated policy-making, and to build up a system for PCSD in tandem, as the EU and a number of countries are already advocating.

2. Establish sector champions to promote PCSD

While they may not carry any flagship name such as PCD, other policy sector agents have long been acting along lines which could be described as 'policy coherence for the environment', 'policy coherence for global health', 'policy coherence for economic growth', and so on. No single entity can be an expert on the whole 2030 Agenda, so such specialist inputs can be extremely useful. Assigning responsibility for PCSD to a single body poses a risk of recreating silos within this entity, resulting in an opaque approach to trade-off adjudication.

On the other hand, a system of multiple 'sector champions' could deliver results similar to those in PCD over the whole spectrum of SDGs. To start with, policy-makers should legitimise the existing champions in their individual missions. Over and above this, they should impose a wider imperative on them to adjust their work to the SDG framework. The advocates for each policy sector should therefore not content themselves with achieving the best outcome for their policy sector only, but wherever trade-offs may be required they would also have a responsibility to dialogue with advocates of other policy sectors in a search for common ground that would serve the wider interests of sustainable development. Thanks to the mutual scrutiny exerted by champions, no single actor could easily disregard other concerns and promote, for example, 'brown' polluting development solutions, or environmental policies that are blatantly detrimental to the poor, or again an economic growth scenario that is not inclusive and sustainable.

3. Make PCSD your own

Although coherence promotion approaches can offer principles and mechanisms, the action that is taken depends ultimately on political commitments. Achieving PCSD will take time, so there is a need to build political commitment across the spectrum, so that PCSD survives and is passed on from one government to the next. We therefore urge decision-makers to embrace the principle of PCSD, sustain their

endorsement, and use PCSD as part of specific strategies, be they national or international. There is no such thing as a single pathway to sustainable development, and PCSD covers such a broad spectrum of issues that it can accommodate many different political agendas. In the process of introducing and promoting PCSD in their country, decision-makers should identify those areas in which their country is most influential or best equipped and where there are most opportunities to introduce changes for more coherence. This requires extensive knowledge of sustainable development, and of domestic political and bureaucratic culture and processes, as well as leadership.

It is worth bearing in mind is that all policy and institutional changes generate winners and losers. Even within a state administration, some stand to gain and some to lose from changes. So in order for PCSD to be successful, attention should be paid to the political economy of such choices. The first step is to ensure buy-in and create incentives for aligning individual and institutional agendas with the public interest. Policy statements such as national strategies can then outline implementation and create a PCSD system.

4. Build a PCSD system

Individual mechanisms aiming to promote coherence can achieve little on their own. Decision-makers should focus on the bigger picture: how to create a PCSD system that generates incentives for enforcement, contribution and non-obstruction to coherence in the service of sustainable development, within their specific governance and institutional settings. The following complementary tools, used in coordination in ways which suit each institutional context, are important features of a PCSD system:

1. *Framework*
 - a. Clear legal and/or political statements of intent at all governance levels, to legitimise the overall PCSD system and decisions on thematic issues falling under PCSD.
 - b. Designated political leader(s) and clear locus for arbitration and decision on trade-offs.
2. *Mechanisms*
 - a. Mandated sector champions spearheading the PCSD system as a group within institutions.
 - b. Consultation and consensus-building mechanisms between policy sectors and communities and interest groups.
 - c. Transparency on potential and competing policy options.
3. *Knowledge systems*
 - a. Analytical capacity for considering options, modelling possible optimised solutions and performing *ex-ante* impact assessments, both within government and by independent actors.
 - b. Monitoring mechanisms, including measurable indicators and *ex-post* evaluations, for example by systematically inserting a question on PCSD in all evaluations.
 - c. Knowledge management mechanisms creating feedback loops to ensure that lessons are learned, shared and fed back to decision-making and arbitrating authorities.
4. *Accountability*
 - a. Strategies based on thorough political economy assessments to identify how actors across different governance levels offer maximised contributions to the PCSD system.
 - b. Regular reporting to encourage both *ex-ante* and *ex-post* transparency, peer review and enable accountability.

There can be no one-size-fits-all model for a PCSD system. The political and administrative culture particularly crucial in determining the best model. Is it consensual building on coordination? Or is it more conflictual, favouring advocacy and arbitration? The PCSD system must also be adapted to the objectives pursued at a particular time, while allowing initiatives to emerge and priorities to shift.

5. Communicate on the added value of PCSD

Resolving cases of incoherence, preventing new ones and fostering synergies between policies are self-explanatory goals. The contribution of PCSD as a principle to these goals, on the other hand, is not self-evident. However, recognising it as a legitimate principle is a necessary pre-condition if it is to live up to expectations. Like any unself-explanatory acronym, PCSD requires some explaining. Yet its pertinence can be demonstrated quickly, both in the abstract and particularly with the aid of examples of perverse incoherence within the SDG framework. Although the discourse on the relevance of PCSD should be built explicitly on values-based statements (PCSD is about fairness), when the context requires, it can also feed on management logic (effectiveness and efficiency, i.e. value for money) as well as self-interest (sustainable development worldwide is about prosperity and ultimately our survival).

However, with the adoption of 'SDG thinking' itself still in progress and incomplete, it will be a challenge to generalise the reference to PCSD among the broad range of audiences dealing with various aspects of the SDGs. PCSD in itself, as opposed to a mere drive to increase coherence in public action, offers an opportunity to bring together many different efforts striving for coherence. It is an ambitious attempt to improve them all with the backing of a UN norm, and by enabling cross-fertilisation among coherence-problematic areas. Coherence is always coherence for something, or someone; and PCSD is ultimately about realising sustainable development by ensuring the goal is not undermined by incoherent policies.

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About ECDPM

ECDPM was established in 1986 as an independent foundation to improve European cooperation with the group of African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP). Its main goal today is to broker effective partnerships between the European Union and the developing world, especially Africa. ECDPM promotes inclusive forms of development and cooperates with public and private sector organisations to better manage international relations. It also supports the reform of policies and institutions in both Europe and the developing world. One of ECDPM's key strengths is its extensive network of relations in developing countries, including emerging economies. Among its partners are multilateral institutions, international centres of excellence and a broad range of state and non-state organisations.

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ECDPM organises its work around four themes:

- Reconciling values and interests in the external action of the EU and other international players
- Promoting economic governance and trade for inclusive and sustainable growth
- Supporting societal dynamics of change related to democracy and governance in developing countries, particularly Africa
- Addressing food security as a global public good through information and support to regional integration, markets and agriculture

Approach

ECDPM is a “think and do tank”. It links policies and practice using a mix of roles and methods. ECDPM organises and facilitates policy dialogues, provides tailor-made analysis and advice, participates in South-North networks and does policy-oriented research with partners from the South.

ECDPM also assists with the implementation of policies and has a strong track record in evaluating policy impact. ECDPM's activities are largely designed to support institutions in the developing world to define their own agendas. ECDPM brings a frank and independent perspective to its activities, entering partnerships with an open mind and a clear focus on results.

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ECDPM Discussion Papers

ECDPM Discussion Papers present initial findings of work-in-progress at the Centre to facilitate meaningful and substantive exchange on key policy questions. The aim is to stimulate broader reflection and informed debate on EU external action, with a focus on relations with countries in the South.

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