

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



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

Geneva and New York, 2 December 2015

Purpose

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

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

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

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

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

Questionnaire

Please complete

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REMARKS:*	

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

UNECE, Sustainable Development and Gender Unit (SDGU)
E-Mail: sdgu@unece.org

*The electronic version of the questionnaire is available at:
www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/sustainable-development/Regional_SDG_survey_final.docx*

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

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

Overall planning

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

Question 1:

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

In Belgium, in accordance with the political set up described in the Belgian Constitution, the Federal State, the Communities (Flemish, French and German-speaking) and the Regions (Wallonia, Flanders and Brussels-Capital) are all pursuing the objectives of a sustainable development². They are on an equal footing but have powers and responsibilities for different fields. The implementation of the SDGs is therefore a shared responsibility between these authorities taking into account their respective competencies.

In view of furthering coherence in the implementation of SD policies in Belgium, an Interministerial Conference for Sustainable Development (IMCSD) – gathering the respective ministers in charge of SD and Development Cooperation of the different authorities – was established in 2012.

Federal level

SDGs implementation will occur through existing mechanisms of the federal strategy for sustainable development and a dedicated implementation plan to broaden the commitments. The existing Interdepartmental Commission on SD (ICSD) will be the platform to implement the SDGs in the existing instruments:

- The long-term vision on SD exists since 2013 and encompasses 50 goals towards 2050, the ICSD will match this with the new SDGs as to create synergies.
- The Federal Plan for SD, coordinates action between the different Federal Public Services for the following five years, it will take into account the SDGs.
- Annual reports from the ICSD will contribute to the follow up and review of the SDGs
- The Federal reports on SD, from the Federal Planning Bureau will also contribute to the follow up and review, through their database of SD indicators and work and policy evaluation tools.
- Furthermore the Federal Public Services will be stimulated and supported to implement the SDGs in their operations and policy by an array of tools (SD objectives

² Art. 7 bis In the exercise of their respective powers, the federal State, communities and regions pursue the objective of a sustainable development in its social, economic and environmental dimensions, taking into account the solidarity between the generations. http://www.senate.be/doc/const_fr.html

in their own action plan, public procurements etc.).

- Finally, the advisory body composed of representatives from civil society organizations will also review the progress towards SDGs.

The SDGs also touch on subnational competences, as such the already existing Interministerial Conference on Sustainable Development will be reinvigorated to enhance cooperation within the Belgian framework. One of the themes of this IMCSD will be the implementation of the SDGs in the National Strategy on SD. Whereas the interaction with the European and multilateral level is concerned, existing coordination platforms for political and strategic orientation (eg Coormulti and DGE) will continue serve as mechanisms to determine the common Belgian position by taking on board the positions of the federal and federated entities.

In terms of external action, the Belgian development cooperation will focus especially on the needs of LDCs and fragile states/environments. At least 50% of ODA should be channeled towards LDC's and fragile states and the Belgian government recently decided on a list of partner countries for the Belgian development cooperation. In this list, 12 out of 14 partner countries are LDCs. 13 out of the 14 partner countries are African countries and 8 of the 14 countries are considered by the OECD as fragile states.

Furthermore, Belgium will work through SDG references in multi-annual cooperation arrangements with our multilateral partner organizations, and through multilateral efforts to make the whole UN development system more « fit for purpose ».

Finally, Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) has recently been identified as a political priority, giving rise to a legal framework and corresponding institutional architecture. These aim to identify and mitigate potential policy trade-offs impacting developing countries, as much as to foster a whole of government approach with regards to migration, peace and security (diplomacy, defence, development, law & order (3D-LO)), trade and finance, climate and food security. The 2030 ASD will serve as the overarching guiding instrument to further discussions in this context.

Flanders:

The SDGs are currently being integrated into "Visie 2050", the new long term strategic policy plan of the Flemish Government. In addition, the 7 transition priorities (implementation of the policy plan) will contribute to accomplishing the SDGs on the subnational level. This will mainly be monitored by existing structures. However, a new governance model, whereby each transition priority is assigned to a group of Ministers under the coordination of the Minister whose specific competence is deemed to be the most relevant for the transition, will also be piloted.

Flanders defined its second position on the 2030 ASD, including priority targets and Modes of implementation for the 2030 ASD, in the running up to the Summit of the 25th of September, working through an interdepartmental group of experts.

Flanders is introducing an SDG lens into its new, multiannual Country Strategy Papers and is preparing for a stakeholders consultation moment on the 18th of April within a

broader exercise to adapt its development cooperation policy to the new paradigm of the 2030 SDA

Wallonia:

The adoption of the 2nd Sustainable Development Strategy expected by June 2016. The strategy aims to help implement the SDGs along with sectoral policies and plans. It intends to bring coherence in the actions undertaken by the Walloon Government to achieve the SDGs.

The current draft strategy itself integrates the SDGs and targets as medium term objectives and specifies for every target if a commitment has already been made by the Walloon Government. The draft strategy encompasses an action plan which focuses on 3 axes: autonomy in food, energy and resources. A 4th axis includes different cross-cutting actions dealing with information, education and research, corporate social responsibility, sustainable public procurement and the international level. The contribution of the actions to the implementation of the 2030 ASD is clearly indicated in the draft strategy.

Brussels-Capital Region:

The government of the Brussels-Capital Region has recently adopted the Regional Sustainable Development Plan (Projet de Plan régional de Développement durable (PRDD)) through which emerging challenges such as rapid demographic growth, jobs and training, poverty, environment or mobility will be addressed in a comprehensive and coherent manner. It will be the strategic tool through which the Brussels-Capital Region intends to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs by turning Brussels into a sustainable region – socially, environmentally and economically.

Prioritization

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

Question 2:

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

Federal level

In our view all the topics of the 2030 ASD are important due to its universality. A mapping exercise will be conducted by the Federal Public Services within ICSD and the Federal Planning Bureau. Objective is to identify where priority actions are needed to meet the SDGs commitments.

As far as the implementation of Agenda 2030 in our development cooperation is concerned, the emphasis will be on the special needs of LDCs and fragile environments, inclusive and sustainable growth including decent work, enhanced cooperation with the private sector and seizing the full potential of digitization for development.

Flanders:

Flanders defined its second position on the 2030 ASD, including priority targets and crucial modes of implementation for the 2030 ASD, in the running up to the Summit of the 25th of September, working through an interdepartmental group of experts. This position will be fed into the final design of the before mentioned Vision 2050 as one of its principal inputs.

In some ministries (the Environment, Nature and Energy Department of the Government of Flanders, among others) independent studies are conducted in cooperation with government experts to assess the current situation and have a state-of-play on how the existing policy documents fit into the SDG framework and how actual policy instruments work towards the attainment of SDG targets. From that basis, gaps are identified and an exercise to prioritize will start. The aim is for these studies to inform political decision making and to put the results of these studies together as much as possible, so that this work does not take place in silos.

Wallonia:

As part of the elaboration of the 2nd sustainable development strategy, a first mapping exercise was conducted. It aimed to identify for each target the commitments already made by our Government and also the policies and plans already put in place to act on this specific target.

This exercise will be completed through a consultation of the different stakeholders in order to avoid that any plans, policies or commitments which could contribute to the implementation of the SDGs in Wallonia are missing. In addition to this mapping exercise, a first evaluation of the situation in Wallonia with regards to the different targets will be carried out. Those two exercises will allow the Walloon government to have a clearer idea of the priorities for the region in the implementation of the 2030 ASD.

Brussels-Capital Region :

Considering the specific context of the Brussel-Capital Region, the Regional Sustainable Development Plan will focus on 4 overarching objectives (provision of good quality and adapted housing; urban development in view of improving the quality of life; development of sectors and services conducive to job creation, economic development and training; improved mobility as a factor for sustainable development).

Adaptation

When devising national and local policies, experience suggests that global goals and targets may be adapted to national circumstances and that objectives, targets and

indicators are developed and chosen that are in addition or complementary to the global agenda.

Question 3:

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

Federal level

On the basis of the UNSTAT reports we will look for existing indicators. Then, in function of priority actions and targets we will evaluate if we need to translate or develop some specific indicators. Coherence of indicator set of each Belgian political entity will be ensured within IMCSD.

Flanders:

An existing set of regional, national and subnational objectives, targets and indicators largely matches the objectives and targets of the SDGs. A team of experts coming from different departments and the statistical service of Flanders is currently assessing the compatibility of the indicators proposed by the IAEG with the indicators that are already used by the Government of Flanders, identifying needs for change, alternatives or proxy-indicators.

Referring to the studies mentioned earlier, the state-of-play will also indicate an ambition level that is realistic but signifies important steps forward for the specific targets, within the local context. Many of the SDGs are universal in their description, calling on “improvement”, no matter what the starting position. The studies conducted will make clear where the room for improvement lies and where to focus our efforts.

Wallonia:

The prioritization exercise mentioned under question 2 will help identify which targets are particularly relevant for our region. This could be for several reasons - because they are within the competences of Wallonia, they consist in a challenge for the region, they match the priorities of the Government.

Once this prioritization exercise is done, some targets would need to be adapted to match more clearly the specificities of our region. The idea is to adjust the target to the reality of the region especially when the target foresees a quantified commitment. To do so, different stakeholders and experts would need to be involved.

Governance and budgeting

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

Question 4:

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

Federal level

At the outset, reallocation of means to prioritize SDG implementation is underway. Furthermore, the Public Service for SD was granted permanent status as the Federal Institute on SD (FISD) in 2013, so today FISD supports other ministries and stakeholders to integrate SD in their core-business, coordinates SD activities within the Interdepartmental Commission on SD, and contributes to policies such as the long term vision, the federal plan on SD, etc.

Only change to internal governance structure is the reinvigoration of the already existing Interministerial governance model: for the coordination of the actions and policy adopted by the *different regional (subnational) and federal governments* the Interministerial Conference on Sustainable Development will be reinvigorated.

The Belgian development cooperation will focus especially on the needs of LDC's and fragile states/environments. At least 50% of ODA should be channeled towards LDC's and fragile states and the Belgian government recently decided on a list of partner countries for the Belgian development cooperation. In this list, 12 out of 14 partner countries are LDCs. 13 out of the 14 partner countries are African countries and 8 of the 14 countries are considered by the OECD as fragile states

Flanders:

Reallocation of means for SDG-realization within and outside of Flanders will follow priority-setting within the 2050 Vision and within the adapted policy for development cooperation

Wallonia:

Regarding the budgeting processes and governance structures, no changes are envisaged for the moment. Indeed, the structure of the public administration (Public service of Wallonia) was already changed in 2012 with the creation of a specific SD Department within the Secretary general in order to ensure a global approach as regards to SD challenges in Wallonia (including the implementation of the SDGs).

In Wallonia, the Sustainable development department will be in charge of the coordination of the SDG implementation.

Brussels-Capital Region

The government of the Brussels-Capital Region will take into account the SDGs in subsequent budgetary decisions, allowing its administrations to contribute to the implementation of the SDGs

Stakeholder involvement

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

Question 5:

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

Belgium has a long tradition of working with stakeholders through various participatory mechanisms, dating back to 1991 with the establishment of a National Council for Sustainable Development. These mechanisms have consistently been recognized as key actors on sustainable development in the respective subsequent Sustainable Development strategies at the various levels.

Federal level

Since 1997, each Federal Strategy for Sustainable Development recognized the Federal Council for Sustainable Development (successor of the National Council for Sustainable Development, and composed of representatives of the different stakeholder groups) as the main channel for broad multi-stakeholder participation in the implementation and review of the strategies. Building on that tradition, the 2030 ASD offers the opportunity to launch a new kind of interaction with civil society organizations, complementary with previous one, through partnership. But, to engage in this process we first need to ensure commitments from federal public services and then try to establish partnerships.

Flanders:

The Flemish Government has a tradition of engaging stakeholders into policy to create shared visions and goals. E.g.: the new strategic policy plan "Visie 2050" has been developed in co-creation with a wide range of stakeholders from civil society, private sector, academia and radical innovators. For the introduction of the 2030 ASD in its international policy on development cooperation, Flanders is in the process of organizing a stakeholders consultation that will culminate in a one day Stakeholder Conference (18/04/2016).

Wallonia:

The draft of the 2nd sustainable development strategy should be submitted soon for a public consultation. This consultation should also include a call for expression of interest through which stakeholders, associations and citizens could commit to become a partner in implementing certain actions of the strategy.

Brussels-Capital Region

The Regional Sustainable Development Plan has been developed in an inclusive manner, involving all relevant actors (regional institutions, local authorities and civil society). Its objectives are shared by all and all will have to be involved in the implementation of the Plan. A specific working group will be established shortly to ensure coordination and cooperation between all relevant actors involved.

UN role in planning and implementation

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

Question 6:

What are the expectations and needs of your Government regarding the role of the UN system in the region³ in assisting with SDG planning and implementation? Please highlight possible areas of improvement as well as any suggestions you may have.

Data and Monitoring

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

Question 7:

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

The newly established (in February 2016) Interfederal Statistical Agency brings together federal and subnational statistical departments. It will play a key role and is

³ UNECE, R-UNDG, regional or subregional offices or units of UN entities, specialized agencies, funds and programmes, UN Country Teams active in the region.

already examining the available data. It is expected that monitoring SDG progress will build upon valuable earlier initiatives by Governments, Institutions and Academia, including efforts to develop an alternative/complementary/supplementary indicator to GDP as a measure of economic progress.

Federal level

The Federal Planning Bureau publishes yearly updates of a set of 75 SD indicators and is now in the process of publishing a set of indicators complimentary to GDP. The yearly evaluation of the progress of indicators towards their targets allow identifying policy areas where progress is insufficient to reach objectives. Such evaluation, based on Eurostat methodologies, has been published since 2009.

As for the external dimension of our SDG related action: the Belgian development cooperation will henceforth require a digital component in every new program or project undertaken in our bilateral partner countries, thereby fully exploiting the developmental and pro-democratization potential of digitization. Some of these actions will indeed focus on improving data collection and statistical capacities in those countries, and will thus allow for better monitoring of SDG progress there.

Flanders:

Currently we are examining the availability of data to document the SDG indicators on a subnational level.

Wallonia :

The Sustainable development indicators developed in the framework of the Walloon SD strategy could help monitor the progress made by Wallonia in its transition to sustainable development. However, they will not allow measuring the implementation of every single target. Some data (collected through surveys) are not available for Wallonia. A diagnosis of its capacities to collect, treat and analyze the required data will be necessary. Indeed it will not always be possible to have data for Wallonia for all the indicators foreseen by the UN Statistical Commission.

Brussels-Capital Region

The Brussels Institute for Statistics and Analysis, which centralises and coordinates statistical activities at the level of the Brussels-Capital Region, will be responsible for tracking SDG progress in the Brussels-Capital Region.

Assessment of progress

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

Question 8:

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

Reporting

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

Question 9:

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

Federal level

It is considered of great importance to avoid parallel and duplicative processes in terms of monitoring and reviewing, hence a streamlined approach will be followed whereby priority is given to existing instruments and channels of reporting.

Wallonia:

As part of the draft 2nd SD strategy (and its action plan), the Walloon Government foresees the elaboration of a report every three years on the implementation of the SDGs. This report would encompass among others an overview of the situation thanks to indicators, an inventory of the existing action plans and good practices.

UN role in follow-up and review

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

Question 10:

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

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Regional platform

The 2030 Agenda highlights the opportunities of follow-up and review at the regional level for peer learning, including through voluntary reviews, sharing of best practices and discussion on shared targets. Regional reviews should draw on national-level reviews and build on existing review mechanisms. Member States are encouraged to identify the most suitable regional forum in which to engage, supported by the Regional Commissions.⁴ Earlier, the General Assembly had invited the Regional Commissions to hold annual meetings in preparation of the High-level Political Forum (HLPF).⁵

Question 11:

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

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⁴ See outcome document of UN Sustainable Development Summit “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, paras 80 and 81.

⁵ A/RES/67/290, para 13.