

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

COUNTRY:	FINLAND
AUTHORITY:	Government of Finland
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FUNCTION:	Ms. Lindblom: Secretary General of the National Commission on SD, Ministerial Adviser, MoE Ms. Mikkola: Deputy Director Unit for UN Development Affairs, Senior Adviser Development Cooperation, MFA
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REMARKS:*	Ms. Lindblom has answered to the questions related to national implementation plans; Ms. Mikkola to those related to UN system

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?

The Finnish Government has the primary responsibility for the national implementation of the Agenda2030. According to the Government Program of Prime Minister of Finland, Mr. Juha Sipilä, **a National Agenda2030 Implementation Plan** will be drawn up by the end of 2016.

The National Agenda2030 Implementation Plan will outline, among other things, how Finland in various policy sectors and in international cooperation will carry out the principles, goals and targets of the Agenda2030, and how the progress in the implementation will be monitored and reviewed. It identifies Finland's strengths as well as major gaps and challenges and offers solutions and tools to improve the performance.

In addition and to complement the National Implementation Plan, the Government has adopted a **White Paper on development policy** in February 2016, based on the priorities outlined in the Government Program and in the Agenda2030.

The civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders will be involved in the national implementation process, as well as in follow-up and review. One important multi-stakeholder voluntary means of implementation in Finland is Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development, the national sustainable development strategy adopted in 2013. Finland's starting point is to use the existing mechanisms, but we are open for new participatory arrangements if needed to reach out especially the sub-national level and ordinary citizens.

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?

The first step in the preparation of the National Agenda2030 Implementation Plan is to conduct a **survey to all Government Ministries** in February-March to find out those policies and measures that contribute to the implementation of the Agenda2030 in sectors. This applies to national and EU legislation, sectorial or thematic strategies and action plans, as well as implementation of the international agreements and commitments. The survey compiles all relevant policies and measures, indicates the state of play and budgetary status, and analyses areas of insufficient action or potential for cross-sectorial cooperation.

To guide further the preparation of the National Agenda2030 Implementation Plan, **an external gap-analysis** will be conducted in March-June to look into Finland's readiness to implement the global Agenda2030. The objective of the report is to draw a baseline for Finland's implementation measures, and in particular, to point out those goals and targets where Finland has most to catch up. The report also enables an appropriate scheduling and allocation of activities and resources to issues that have most relevance for Finland.

Various **international studies and reports** have already examined and analysed various countries, including Finland, on their preparedness to meet the ambitions of the Agenda2030 and implement the SDGs and its targets (for instance "Sustainable Development Goals: Are the rich countries ready?" by Christian Kroll and "Universal Sustainable Development Goals. Understanding the Transformational Challenge for Developed Countries" by Stakeholder Forum). These international studies have also indicated some strengths and weaknesses Finland is facing vis-à-vis the goals and targets.

The findings of the national and international assessments will guide the national discussion and identification of Finland's potential priority areas for the implementation.

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”)?

Finland is of the view that the Agenda2030 is an integrated whole, and therefore we are cautious to prioritize any of the goals or targets at the expense of others. However, Finland recognizes that the relevance and urgency of the goals and targets vary from one country to another. Finland can and should therefore show particular commitment to goals and targets where it most lacks behind. On the other hand, Finland can lead the way in those goals and targets where we can share good results, practices and experiences.

Finland’s main tool to translate the global goals and targets into national and local objectives and action is *Society’s Commitment to Sustainable Development “The Finland We Want 2050”*, adopted in December 2013. It is Finland’s strategic sustainable development framework with a vision, principles and objectives in a transition to sustainable development. Compared to conventional national sustainability strategies, the Society’s Commitment also contains the implementation mechanism. By the end of 2015, over 200 organizations from companies to ministries, schools, municipalities and CSOs, as well as individual citizens had already joined the Society’s Commitment by launching their own operational commitments and thereby contributing for their part to the achievement of sustainable development in Finland. The strategic part of the Society’s Commitment will be updated by May2016 to meet the spirit and ambition of the Agenda2030.

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?

The Government of Finland prioritizes the implementation of the Agenda2030 in its Programme: preparation of the National Implementation Plan is one of its core undertakings in 2016.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is in charge of the coordination of the national implementation and drawing up the implementation plan. The PMO acts as the **Coordination Secretariat** which includes representatives from the PMO, Ministry for Foreign Affairs and National Commission on Sustainable Development. The Secretariat, being an operational hub for the national coordination, will work closely together with the **Coordination Network**, comprising all Government Ministries. The Network will support and guide the work of the Secretariat.

Prime Minister's Office will allocate adequate resources for the coordination as well as for the preparation of the National Agenda2030 Implementation Plan. Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Ministry of the Environment will allocated resources to support the national coordination and international outreach, for instance by means of presenting Finland's model and good practices in the global, EU and regional fora.

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?

It is on the responsibility of the state officials to design the national Agenda2030 implementation plan and ensure the implementation proceeds according to the plan. However, there are two major multi-stakeholder committees in Finland to which the broader societal engagement and partnerships will be built.

The Finnish Development Policy Committee is a parliamentary body whose mission is to follow the implementation of the global sustainable development agenda in Finland from the development policy perspective and to monitor the implementation of the Government Program and the Government's development policy guidelines. The secretariat of the Development Policy Committee is located in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The National Commission on Sustainable Development is a Prime Minister led partnership forum that has operated in Finland for 23 years without interruption with the aim to integrate sustainable development into Finnish policies, measures and everyday practices. Both committees encompass a membership with a large variety of non-governmental stakeholders, the private sector actors, interest groups and civil society organizations. The work of the National Commission on Sustainable Development is coordinated by the Prime Minister's Office, but the Secretary General of the Commission is placed in the Ministry of the Environment.

Both committees' mandates were renewed from the beginning of the 2016 for the next four years. In order to improve the policy coherence, the collaboration of the two committees will be intensified, for example through joint meetings, workshops and discussion papers.

In addition, a ***Sustainable Development Expert Panel***, comprising eminent professors from different disciplines, challenges and boosts the work of the National Commission on Sustainable Development and adds a critical voice in sustainability debate, when needed. The panel is facilitated by the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra.

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 region² in assisting with SDG planning and implementation? Please highlight possible areas of improvement as well as any suggestions you may have.

Finland sees the role of the UN system in the region to provide well-coordinated and efficient technical support to planning and implementation for countries requesting it within the country or regional programmes agreed between the governments and UN agencies concerned. Such support should take into account the experiences and lessons learned from other national reviews and recommendation and policy guidance provided by the HLPF

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?

² UNECE, R-UNDG, regional or subregional offices or units of UN entities, specialized agencies, funds and programmes, UN Country Teams active in the region.

Finland is committed to provide a systematic, open, transparent, inclusive and participatory follow-up and review for the implementation of the Agenda2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals and targets at all levels. Monitoring the progress and reviewing the achievements on a regular basis is essential for ensuring accountability to citizens and the global community.

The state and trends of sustainable development in Finland is being monitored and reviewed by 39 ***national sustainable development indicators***. They were identified in 2014 to measure the progress of the eight strategic objectives of the Society's Commitment. These indicators will be revised and updated to lend themselves to the follow-up of the Agenda2030 and thereby complement the global sustainable development indicators. The indicator work will be part of the national monitoring and reviewing scheme of the implementation of the Agenda2030.

Assessment of progress

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

Question 8:

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

The national monitoring and assessment framework will be identified as part of the National Agenda2030 Implementation Plan. The starting point is that Finland will follow-up and assess the SDG progress by applying the global and national SD indicators. The EU indicators for sustainable development (Eurostat) might add up to this effort.

One of the key functions of the Prime Minister led multi-stakeholder National Commission on Sustainable Development will be to oversee the national implementation process and assess the progress made. National, global and possibly also regional indicators and assessment schemes will be key tools for the National Commission in this follow-up. The results of the assessments will be discussed and published widely. In addition, the Finnish Development Policy Committee follows the implementation of the Agenda2030 in Finland from the development policy.

Despite the existing monitoring and accountability mechanisms, the Government of Finland recognizes the need to strengthen the accountability to and dialogue especially

with the Parliament and the local citizens on the progress in the implementation of the Agenda2030.

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?

The reporting schemes and timetables are to be defined as part of the National Agenda2030 Implementation Plan, to be finalized by the end of 2016. However, it is certain that there will be regular national reporting based on indicators and possibly other assessment frameworks, and all the progress reports will be publically available via internet.

Finland will carry out at least two Voluntary National Reports at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) during the 15 years of implementation cycle, as has been recommended in the Secretary General's recent report on follow-up and review at the global level. In addition, Finland is one of volunteering countries to report on its institutional Agenda2030 implementation structure and plans in the upcoming HLPF in July 2016.

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?

Finland expects the UN system in the region to provide, within existing structures and avoiding duplication, such complementary regional contributions to the global level follow up and review that may be required by the UN system.

Such contribution should focus on provision of regional level added value to the global data based on national reports, new and emerging regional issues/trends, be based on peer learning and reviewing among other things . The frequency of regional follow up and review should be carefully considered (may not be required annually).

In the spirit of partnership, it is very important that the follow up and review at regional level is conducted in close collaboration with relevant actors (incl. the OECD, relevant EU institutions and others) to ensure coverage of all three dimensions of sustainable development to capitalize on synergies and to avoid duplication.

Regional platform

The 2030 Agenda highlights the opportunities of follow-up and review at the regional level for peer learning, including through voluntary reviews, sharing of best practices and discussion on shared targets. Regional reviews should draw on national-level reviews and build on existing review mechanisms. Member States are encouraged to identify the most suitable regional forum in which to engage, supported by the Regional Commissions.³ Earlier, the General Assembly had invited the Regional Commissions to hold annual meetings in preparation of the High-level Political Forum (HLPF).⁴

Question 11:

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

Finland is of a view that regional level cooperation is the most appropriate and attractive for peer learning and reviewing. Finland is tentatively interested in developing and participating in peer learning or review exercises, but the forum or platform should be carefully considered to make it most useful for the peering countries.

³ See outcome document of UN Sustainable Development Summit “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, paras 80 and 81.

⁴ A/RES/67/290, para 13.

One platform where Finland is already involved is the European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN), which has plans to design the 'ESDN Peer Learning Platform' and thereby provide a learning platform for national policy-makers tasked with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs in their respective countries, especially in the EU region. Finland is a member of the ESDN Steering Committee.
