

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:	Germany
AUTHORITY:	
NAME OF FOCAL POINT:	Harriet Ludwig (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development) and Alena White (Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety)
FUNCTION:	
TELEPHONE:	
E-MAIL:	Harriet.Ludwig@bmz.bund.de Alena.White@bmub.bund.de
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:
Mr. Michael KUNZ, UNECE secretariat, Geneva
(michael.kunz@unece.org; +41-22 917 24 45)

Ms. Liudmila BARCARI, R-UNDG secretariat, New York
(liudmila.barcari@undp.org; +1-212 906 5440)

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?

Sustainable development is a guiding principle of the policies pursued by the Federal Government. Joint efforts across all policy fields at national, regional and municipal levels, and including all stakeholders, will be needed for effective national implementation. Germany already put in place a National Sustainable Development Strategy in 2002 and established the architecture and mechanisms for its monitoring and regular updates/revisions. In line with our cabinet's decision, the National Sustainable Development Strategy provides an essential framework for the national implementation of the 2030-Agenda. The Federal Chancellery is leading a process to revise this strategy in order to adapt the strategy to the 2030-Agenda by the end of 2016. All ministries, parliament, federal state and local level, civil society, private sector and academia are involved in this process.

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 process of adapting the German National Sustainable Development Strategy to the 2030-Agenda is still underway. However, some preliminary remarks can be given: it will be structured along the 17 SDGs in a comprehensive manner. It will cover national implementation measures with both internal and external effects as well as measures aiming at progress at international level. We are also reviewing our existing bilateral cooperation portfolios so as to ensure that all dimensions of sustainability are

adequately addressed, that interlinkages are adequately reflected through integration, and that they reflect support for the global common good.

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”)?

National targets and indicators will be oriented along the global goals and indicator set but will be modified to match the German context. We will consider in our National Sustainable Development Strategy also the global impacts of domestic actions and contribute to resolving global challenges.

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?

Sustainable development is a guiding principle of any policy of the German government. Therefore, the responsibility for the National Sustainable Development Strategy does not lie with one of the ministries, but with the Federal Chancellery. Within the framework of our Sustainable Development Strategy, we have already set up various institutions, mechanisms and instruments to ensure that the goals of our Strategy will be effectively implemented. The central institution is the State Secretaries’ Committee on Sustainable Development, chaired by the Head of the Federal Chancellery, which oversees the updating and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Strategy. The international reporting processes are coordinated by the development and environment ministries. Nevertheless, for the purpose of transparency, it is critical to assign line-responsibilities for every target.

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?

The German Federal Government has carried out regular consultations with a broad range of stakeholders since before the Rio+20 Conference in order to inform stakeholders of developments at the multilateral level and receive stakeholders' comments on the government's negotiating strategy in the area of sustainable development. A regular Dialogue-Forum on the 2030-Agenda will continue to be held 2 to 3 times per year also during the implementation phase of the 2030-Agenda.

Also, the Federal Government has set up a broad consultation process both preceding and accompanying the preparation of the new National Sustainable Development Strategy. This includes 5 major dialogue conferences launched by the Head of the Chancellery and held across Germany. Here, citizens, politicians, local/country/federal administrators and representatives from NGOs, academia and the business sector have discussed the necessary means for a successful ambitious national implementation of the 2030-Agenda, including the challenge and potential of a closer and more effective multi-stakeholder-collaboration the 2030-Agenda envisages. The public will also be asked to comment on a first draft of the new Strategy.

Recognizing the pivotal role that stakeholders will play in the Agenda's implementation, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) also launched a national dialogue process called "Charter for the Future" in 2014. The Charter was jointly elaborated with civil society stakeholders, representatives from business, science, churches and political foundations. It is a national multi-stakeholder-vision for development cooperation and sustainable living, that shall be considered in the elaboration of the new strategy. In 2016 the BMZ will be on tour with the Charter throughout Germany in order to further raise awareness of the 2030-Agenda and to catalyze action at all levels.

With regard to statistical cooperation and partnerships, the German Federal Statistical Office has a long-standing experience, especially in the area of capacity building. It would be highly appreciated if the UNECE would get in touch with national governments and take advantage of national experiences and knowledge in this area. From our experience, twinning projects are particularly valuable instruments for capacity building as they allow countries to work on an equal footing.

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.

SDG planning and implementation should be country-led and country-driven, as a high level of engagement and accountability rests on the national level. For a successful translation of the agreed global agenda into a nationally owned vision, contributions from various stakeholders at national and sub-national levels need to be mobilized. To minimize the need for additional structures and resources, there is a need for overall coordination of the regional commissions and regional organizations participating in the review.

The regional commission should decide, through their intergovernmental process, how they could best support regional reviews, especially support mutual exchange and peer learning and review processes. Within the UNECE region, there is ample experience with regional review processes which can be built upon, e.g. the reviews carried out by UNECE in the environmental or social (e.g. BPfA) field, the OECD peer review, voluntary Peer Reviews of the national sustainable development strategies carried out by international experts (so far twice in Germany, 2009 and 2013). For UNECE-Member States it will be also be critical to mobilize non-UN entities - such as the OECD-DAC or the European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN) - to contribute to follow-up and review processes at the global level, so as to draw on existing mechanisms while avoiding the creation of parallel structures.

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.

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.

Question 7:

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

Monitoring is a challenging and yet indispensable task. The monitoring system should build on established statistical standards and practices, avoid duplication and parallel structures, and take into account the availability of data, disaggregation of data and national statistical capacity. For the strengthening of statistical capacities, existing cooperation arrangements and partnerships should be utilized (e.g. PARIS21) and statistical institutions should be strengthened if appropriate. There could be both a needs assessment and an efficiency review in advance of the monitoring system and indicator definition, to identify the challenges in data collection and focus the monitoring on actual feasibility. An analysis of cross-linkages between goals and targets is needed to adequately reflect these through indicators and also to avoid duplications and to sharpen goals and targets. The follow-up at global level can also open new avenues for inclusive review of progress drawing on big data techniques and the development of new standards, which can serve to increase quality and comparability of national official statistics, in line with the decision of the 46th Session of the Statistical Commission.

The German Federal Statistical Office regularly identifies emerging needs for data and data gaps whereby new demands from politics is the main driver. In Germany, every statistical survey needs to have a legal basis. Costs and burden have to be weighed in this regard. However, additional requirements are often met by updating and supplementing existing surveys instead of introducing new ones. In this respect, new data sources, especially administrative data, become more important. In comparison to private statistics, official statistics are produced in accordance with international principles and guarantee a high level of quality and comparability. The integration of new data in the overall programme of official statistics ensures that surveys are conducted on a regular basis.

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?

An effective and efficient monitoring and accountability mechanism for the 2030-agenda on global level under the HLPF shall track commitments, results, enable sharing of experiences and reciprocal learning, and focus development and transformation efforts. Our National Sustainable Development Strategy will provide an

important framework for monitoring our contribution to implementing the 2030-agenda on the national level. Relevant mechanisms in this regard include: (1) the Federal Statistical Office monitors progress made in achieving the specific national goals every two years, (2) the Government issues Progress Reports to the National Sustainable Development Strategy every four years, hereby updating and revising it in accordance with newly arisen requirements and lessons learned, and (3) subjecting the Sustainable Development Strategy to peer-review.

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 main responsibility for the existing National Sustainable Development Strategy rests with the Federal Chancellery in order to emphasise the significance for all policy areas and assure cross-departmental monitoring and control. The National Sustainable Development Strategy includes a Management Concept. It consists of management rules as well as targets and indicators that provide a basis for continuous monitoring. The management rules summarise the guiding principle of sustainable development and the associated requirements. With the aid of indicators defined for this purpose, progress in sustainable development is measured and communicated, which makes the strategy tangible and assessable. Also, all ministries are involved in shaping and implementing the strategy. Departmental reports, which are presented to the State Secretaries' Committee on Sustainable Development, reveal the specific ways in which ministries approach sustainable development issues, and form the basis for discussions within the Committee. The Federal Statistical Office publishes a report on the status of the sustainability indicators once every two years. It performs this evaluation independently and on its own account. The Federal Government reports to the public once every four years on the progress made in the implementation of the strategy during that time. The Reports evaluate the progress made, contain measures for the achievement of the stated goals, and contribute to enhancing the Strategy. The public is comprehensively involved in the preparation of the reports at an early stage.

As the primary accountability of the implementation of SDGs rests on the national level, we do not support the idea of aggregating national reviews. National reviews

should be channeled directly to the global level of the HLPF. The country reports therefore should be short and have a common format to make sure they are manageable as well as comparable. They should be guided by the principles agreed in the 2030-Agenda. Next to presenting the current national situation with regard to implementation, national reports should also analyze implementation measures and, in the interest of mutual learning and support, identify main challenges and questions they wish to see discussed in the HLPF. They should be made available to the public in advance, so that they can be read by those preparing for participation at the HLPF, and should remain accessible online.

Regarding the integration of statistical data into the reporting, the German Federal Statistical Office has a long-standing experience in monitoring sustainable development indicators and publishes regularly articulate/user-friendly indicator reports. These can be aligned with the SDGs and build the basis for their implementation. Comparability would be facilitated.

Every four years the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) should serve as science-policy-interface and inform the deliberations of our heads of state and government in the HLPF under the auspices of the General Assembly and the media worldwide. It should become a flagship report on successes and challenges in the implementation of the goals and targets and also contain recommendations on new and emerging issues. Besides the GSDR, an annual SDG-progress report should help us to assess where we stand globally with the implementation of the goals and targets.

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?

We believe that the regional level should focus on peer review, as states tend to compare themselves with their immediate neighbors. The results of this peer learning could also be made available at global level so more countries can benefit from it.

The regional level can also help prepare countries to take part in the global review.

The UN RECs could also provide harmonised reporting guidelines to support regional reviews, by providing harmonised reporting guidelines to support regional reviews, and technical assistance at regional level for the statistical needs arising from the follow-up and review framework. However national contributions should be the basis for exchange at the global level.

Reviews at the regional level can also help to track progress on trans-boundary issues and regionally shared targets. To minimize the need for additional structures and resources, there is need for overall coordination of the regional commissions and regional organizations participating in the review. The most suitable platform for this kind of regional review should be identified by Member States, with the support of the Regional Commissions.

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?

The UN regional economic commissions (RECs) could play a coordinating role, and also provide technical assistance, in close collaboration with other regional organisations and processes. It will be crucial to build at regional level on existing processes to avoid proliferation of monitoring frameworks and to minimise any potential need for additional resources.

At the international level, we support an effective follow-up and review process under the HLPF to verify implementation efforts at the national, regional and global levels and to learn from each other to better achieve our aims. As agreed in the 2030-Agenda, the follow-up and review processes at all levels should build on existing platforms and processes and avoid duplication. Further, it should allow for non-UN entities, such as the OECD or the European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN), to also contribute as appropriate to the follow-up and review processes. It will be essential to bring all stakeholders on board in an inclusive and transparent process. Germany is looking forward to exchanging experiences and presenting its own challenges and progress at the High Level Political Forum, which has the key oversight role in this regard. Process-wise, we would suggest that the various intergovernmental platforms would present succinctly their findings or contributions to the HLPF in those years in which the annual theme is particularly closely linked to their work. A synthesis of the inputs by various bodies feeding into the HLPF could be compiled into a report, for consideration by the HLPF.

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.
