

Integrating SDGs into national SD policy frameworks and governance structures – activities in 4 selected EU Member States

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Introduction

This case study is a continuation of the work done by the ESDN Office on the SDGs policy framework in Europe that started with the [ESDN Conference 2014](#), 'A renewed policy framework for sustainable development – The international SD agenda and its impact on Europe', Rome/Italy, 6-7 November 2014, and the [ESDN Quarterly Report No. 36](#), 'The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their impact on the European SD governance framework', from January 2015. While the final decision on SDGs in September 2015 is approaching, the international and EU policy agendas are increasingly confronted with incorporating SDG objectives and setting up appropriate implementation mechanisms.

In addition, EU Member States are gradually facing the need of integrating SDGs in their national sustainable development (SD) policy agendas. Therefore, the ESDN Office decided to take a closer look at four countries (Belgium, Germany, Latvia and Slovenia) in order to find out what SDGs related activities have been undertaken so far on the national level. Based on a survey on national SDGs activities, conducted between November 2014 and January 2015, we undertook telephone interviews with representatives of four selected EU Member States and asked them how they take up the challenge of integrating SDG topics into the national SD policy framework and in the existing SD governance mechanisms.

The aim of this case study is to briefly outline the international background of SDGs and, consequently, to highlight its importance at the national level. Thereby, we want to portray what has been happening and planned until now in selected EU Member States and to what extent the international framework on SDGs is exerting an impact on national SD policy structures. This case study has the following structure:

Firstly, the international framework for national SDGs implementation is shortly outlined. The following chapter presents the results of the survey of 2014 on SDGs activities, and the telephone interviews from May 2015 on governance mechanisms for integrating SDGs into national policy agendas (please find the questionnaire for the telephone interviews in the Annex). In the concluding chapter, similarities and differences of national approaches towards integrating the SDGs contents into national policies are shortly summarized.

1 Framework for national SDGs implementation in Europe

This chapter briefly delineates the international framework for launching SDGs as guideline for national implementation.

In a nutshell, the SDGs are a continuation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and are supposed to serve as foundation for the UN development agenda beyond 2015 which was decided at the Rio+20 Conference in 2012. The Rio+20 Outcome Document, [‘The future we want’](#), represents a crucial milestone in the development of SDGs, not only because it mandated the development of SDGs and designed their conceptualization. The document also devotes a special section on SDGs: Chapter V, ‘Framework for action and follow-up’, Section B. In this section, UN Member States agree on the importance of SDGs in regard to future international sustainable development policies.¹

In July 2014, the UN General Assembly’s Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG) published a ‘zero draft’ proposal containing 17 goals (see Box 1 below), accompanied by 169 targets. The list of goals, however, remains temporary, until the final decision on the SDGs and the post-2015 agenda will be taken in September 2015 at the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly.²

Box 1: List of proposed SDGs

- Goal 1:** End poverty in all its form everywhere
- Goal 2:** End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Goal 3:** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Goal 4:** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Goal 5:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Goal 6:** Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Goal 7:** Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- Goal 8:** Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Goal 9:** Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Goal 10:** Reduce inequality within and among countries
- Goal 11:** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Goal 12:** Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 13:** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- Goal 14:** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Goal 15:** Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
- Goal 16:** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Goal 17:** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Source: UN DESA. 2014.

¹ UN. 2012. The future we want – final outcome document. A/CONF.215/L.1. Available at: http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/rio20_outcome_document_complete.pdf

² UN DESA. 2014. Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform: Open Working Group Proposal for Sustainable Development Goals. Available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgsproposal>

At first glance, the list of SDGs may appear to be destined primarily for developing countries rather than for developed countries. Indeed, it is stressed that least developed and developing countries require special and differentiated attention for SD. However, the proposal for SDGs by the Open Working Group (2014) clearly emphasizes the global character of SDGs and, therefore, also addresses developed or industrialized countries. In the following paragraphs of the SDGs proposal, the importance of developed countries in the realization of SDGs becomes evident:

- ❖ In *Paragraph 8*, the OWG underscores that the global nature of climate change requires the widest possible cooperation by all countries. International participation in accelerating the reduction of global greenhouse gas emissions and protecting the climate system for present and future generations should be based *on common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities*.
- ❖ *Paragraph 10* identifies that *each* country faces specific challenges to achieve SD. However, more vulnerable countries, for instance, nations in situations of conflict require differentiated attention compared to developed countries.
- ❖ *Paragraph 12* addresses – among others – the *importance of development strategies*. It underlines that *each* country has primary responsibility for its own economic and social development and that the role of national policies, domestic resources and *development strategies* cannot be overemphasized enough.
- ❖ *Paragraph 13* refers to the phrase ‘*common and differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities*’. It stresses the different approaches, visions, models and tools available to *each* country, in accordance with its national circumstances and priorities in order to achieve SD in its three dimensions.³

Of course, there is further room for interpretation when it comes to the importance of SDGs implementation in developed countries and the crucially global role of SDGs. Interestingly, the *importance of development strategies* is stressed in paragraph 12. Therefore, it can be argued that the national integration of SDGs should be dealt with in national sustainable development strategies (NSDSs). However, the main message in this chapter is that SDGs have an inclusive and global character with the mission to implement SD in its three dimensions globally and in *each* country. Therefore, indeed they address developed countries as well.

³ UN DESA. 2014. Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform: Open Working Group Proposal for Sustainable Development Goals. Available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgsproposal>

2 Four national experiences of SDGs activities: Belgium, Germany, Latvia and Slovenia

In this chapter, we illustrate the results of the survey on SDGs activities in 2014 and the interviews which were conducted in May 2015. Thereby, we identify what national efforts and preparations for integrating the SDGs framework in national agendas have been undertaken so far. From the survey in 2014, which was an immediate follow-up of the ESDN 2014 Conference⁴, we found out that some EU Member States have been already starting their preparations for integrating the SDGs agenda in their respective national policy environments. For this case study, we revisit the results of the survey and selected four countries (Belgium, Germany, Latvia and Slovenia) that have been particularly engaged in preparation processes for the post-2015 agenda.

Whereas the survey in 2014 was about SDGs related activities, in the telephone interviews of May 2015 we extended the scope on the complementation of SDGs contents in national policy documents and objectives, the appropriate institutional set-up for SDGs, and already undertaken and future activities to integrate SDGs in the national policy agenda. We interviewed three colleagues on the phone and our Slovenian colleague sent us the answers to the questions in written form. In the following pages, we portray four country experiences with SDGs activities, based on the survey from 2014 and the telephone interviews from May 2015.

2.1 Belgium

In Belgium, the responsible government body for the negotiation of the SDGs is the Ministry for Foreign Affairs which is leading through coordination mechanisms at the horizontal (federal ministries) as well as the vertical level (sub-national authorities). Their inputs feed the Belgian position in European or multi-lateral organisations.

According to the survey from 2014, SDGs related activities in Belgium mainly took place within the context of the existing coordination structures in charge of SD and development cooperation. In 2015, the Federal Institute for SD organized several internal seminars for federal public servants on SDGs. Furthermore, it was also planned to foster instruments of the federal SD strategy and build up coherence between the different time horizons of the various documents: the Belgian federal long-term vision is setting goals towards 2050, Belgium's federal and regional plans or strategies up to 2020, and SDGs are addressed towards 2030.

⁴ ESDN Conference 2014: A renewed policy framework for sustainable development – The international SD agenda and its impact on Europe.

2.1.1 Status quo and challenges for SDGs activities

Since November 2014, Belgium has continued its work on the national SDGs implementation and is finding itself in the middle of preparations for the national SDGs integration – as became evident from the telephone interview in May 2015. Our Belgian interview partner is working in the unit ‘Strategy and Planning’ of the Federal Institute for Sustainable Development and consulted his colleagues from Wallonia, Brussels and Flanders in order to provide us their perspectives as well. He stated that, at the moment, the federal level is mainly investigating **how to integrate SDGs in already existing mechanisms and instruments**.

Currently, the main work on SDGs at the federal level consists of checking whether the goals of the Federal’s long term SD vision and the forthcoming federal plan are coherent with the medium-term objectives of SDGs. As mentioned by our interview partner, there are also discussions at an early stage about **monitoring the SDGs and what indicators to use**.

Furthermore, several activities on SDGs are in process at the moment in other federal entities:

In the Brussels Region, for instance, they have no specific SD policy, but they are looking into how sectoral policies could contribute to SDGs. Therefore, they are trying to **link existing or new strategies or documents to the SDGs agenda**, for instance, the climate/energy plan and a sustainable food strategy.

In Wallonia, consultation processes with colleagues from other departments have been taken place to talk about the proposal of SDGs and targets, and how to integrate and implement them. This consultation also contributes to **awareness raising among ministries**. The current priority is dedicated to the finalization of the SD regional strategy.

Within the activities on SDGs so far, our interview partner identified **two main challenges** in regard to SDGs implementation:

- ❖ On the one hand, *choosing, prioritizing and organizing indicators* represents a difficulty because the choice is immense, ranging from UN indicators to national ones. Our Belgian interview partner pointed out that “for us, it is really important to work on this because it will be needed to monitor the progress”.
- ❖ On the other hand, there is a strong need to *communicate the SDGs* to the political leaders as well as to civil society. Since SDGs have a wide scope, it will be challenging to communicate and mobilize as well as integrate the various contributions to the process.

2.1.2 Governance mechanisms for SDGs

As far as SD governance mechanisms in Belgium are concerned, our interview partner states that there is a **huge existing institutional structure on SD**. He is convinced that the existing mechanisms are working well and that they are indeed appropriate for integrating the SDGs agenda in the national policy agenda. According to his view, this does not undermine the importance of the cooperation between the federal and the sub-national entities. Therefore, he believes that new agreements at the political level will be needed to foster stronger cooperation.

Please find more information on Belgium's perspectives on supporting stronger cooperation within the context of the SDGs agenda:

Box 2: Belgium's plan for stronger governance cooperation through SDGs agenda

Due to the fact that Belgium is a federal country with a federal system (including federal and subnational entities), (SD) policies and, hence, also the integration of SDGs vary from federal entity to entity. There are no hierarchical relations between federal and subnational entities and they are all cooperating towards objectives. However, they have different competences. Therefore, the federal SD plan is only valid for the federal state and each subnational entity has its own SD strategy.

Besides the federal and subnational entities, Belgium has relaunched a formal framework for cooperation between entities in October 2013 (Inter-ministerial Conference for SD) in order to build a national strategy. While the federal entities are discussing how to implement SDGs in their agenda, considerations have been made to launch a national strategy fostering cooperation and harmonizing contents and objectives of federal and subnational entities. In this regard, our interview partner also emphasized the importance of building up a common approach between the various government levels in Belgium and that the **SDGs agenda may be a tool to foster this harmonization**. The aim of this national strategy – being deeply rooted in already existing strategies and aimed at delivering the SDGs agenda – should be to implicate more actors and *placing SD into the core business of the government as well as to involve all ministers*, such as the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. “We hope that the SDGs agenda will give a boost to cooperation and extend the scope of SD and SD cooperation within the country”, our interview partner states.

As a first step, the Inter-ministerial Conference for SD decided in April 2014 to establish a common framework for SD containing long-term objectives on SD valid for each level. However, this framework does not contain strict commitments, but rather proposes long-term goals. The next step will include a public consultation work on indicators and identification of thematic priorities for cooperation among federal levels.

Regarding **monitoring and reviewing mechanisms for SDGs**, there is not yet an established framework and discussions are only at an early stage. However, as our Belgian interview partner referred to, there is a clear **preference to work with existing structures**. The cooperation between the federal and sub-national level as well as the communication to the international level, however, will be new. Until this moment, each level is monitoring and reporting its own progress concerning its own federal and subnational strategy. Our interview partner argued that Belgium is waiting for an EU position on monitoring, accountability and reviewing in order to find out how to deal with the cooperation of federal and sub-national level and the following communication to the international level.

2.1.3 Outlook on further SDGs activities

Since the scope of SDGs is very broad, our Belgian interview partner pointed out that “there is the need to mobilize civil society and to look for other structures outside of the usual suspects working on SD or the SD strategy. Usually, we deal with well-known civil society organizations, the Council for SD with representatives of CSOs, but it will be interesting to look for new partnerships, too.”

Here are some activities which are in the planning process for this year:

- ❖ Looking for new partnerships;
- ❖ Update of the existing strategies from each level;
- ❖ Enforcement of interaction between the various levels of governance;
- ❖ Debate on SDGs implementation in the federal structures will take place in October and November 2015: for example, each federal public service will have to adopt an action plan for SD in the beginning of 2016 in which it will among others explain how its policies will contribute to the implementation of the goals of the long term vision/SDG;
- ❖ Awareness raising campaign on SDGs; and
- ❖ Subsidies for the civil society and the private sector to foster SDGs.

As mentioned by our interview partner from Belgium, the **SDGs are a topic for the whole government and not only the minister responsible for SD**. He also said: “The SDGs agenda and its implementation at the national level is an opportunity to push SD at the political agenda as well as to place it in the core of the government and not only to the ministers responsible for SD. Therefore, it will become important to push for an inclusive strategic approach on SD, not only in the daily functioning of the administration (procurement, building, etc.), but also to link existing or forthcoming policies with the SDGs.”

2.2 Germany

Since 2014, Germany is remarkably engaged in the national implementation of the SDGs agenda, as the survey from last year as well as the telephone interview from May 2015 prove. The responsible government body responsible for SDGs processes in Germany are the Ministry for Environment and Building and the Ministry for International Cooperation that also coordinate SDGs issues in the negotiations for Germany. On the other hand, the Federal Chancellery is in the lead for the national implementation of SDGs and defined the national SD strategy as the main frame for implementation on the federal level.

In 2014, following SDGs activities have already taken place:

- ❖ Dialogue-workshop with civil society, organized by the Ministry for Environment and Building and Ministry for International Cooperation (19 September 2014)
- ❖ Two meetings of Secretary of States Committee on the post 2015-agenda as well as on indicators and 2030 perspectives (September 2014)

- ❖ The “Future Charta” (*Zukunftscharta*) which is related to the post-2015 agenda was developed by the Ministry for International Cooperation in order to enhance the dialogue with the civil society.

2.2.1 Status quo and challenges for SDGs activities

As mentioned by our interview partner from the German Chancellery, Germany is trying to **bring in line its NSDS with the goals of the post-2015 agenda** since last year.

He also stated that there were nine activities and one meeting of the Secretary of States Committee for SD which has decided that SDGs will be a crucial reference point for the further elaboration of the NSDS. Following up on this, a **reviewing process** is currently being carried out by the Council for SD. According to our interview partner, this process started last year and is planned to be concluded by May 2015 with a position paper to the Federal Government.

For further information on this aforementioned review process, we refer to the following box:

Box 3: Review Process for SDGs and Post-2015 Agenda in Germany

The Council for Sustainable Development in Germany consists of 80 experts from associations, ministries and civil society organisations and acts as consultant to the Federal Government of Germany providing advice on the use of indicators and the National Sustainable Development Strategy linked to SDGs contents. It was commissioned to find out which conclusions to draw from the first discussions on SDGs implementation.

The review process is supposed to compare and link single indicators to specific targets in order to define a comprehensible structure for SDGs. Following that, SD objectives are checked whether they are addressing SDGs contents and whether certain gaps have to be filled, if data is missing or certain objectives have to be complemented.

Furthermore, in November 2014, it was decided by the Secretary of States Committee to make SD goals in the NSDS towards 2015, 2020 and 2030 coherent with the 2050 Agenda and to develop appropriate indicators. Consequently, a second review process by the inter-ministerial working group was initiated to follow up on this decision. This process has been started and is carried out at the moment. To sum up, two review processes are currently in place in Germany with the aim to develop a coherent **system integrating the SDGs agenda in the NSDS**.

The most recent process on SDGs implementation in Germany is the Resolution of the German Federal Parliament (February 2015) on the implementation of SDGs which should be dealt with the NSDS drawing on the report of the Cabinet from December 2014 on **using the NSDS as reference point to deal with SDGs issues**.

As far as **challenges and lessons learned from SDGs processes** are concerned, our German interview partner mentioned the following major issues:

- ❖ In his view, it has become clear that the *majority of the SD objectives within the NSDS in Germany already addresses the SDGs*. However, there are three target areas that have to be complemented with SDGs contents: poverty, water, and the protection of the marine environment. For those areas, objectives are still required.
- ❖ On the other hand, our interview partner emphasized that Germany has learned that the *existing review processes for SD are indeed appropriate for the implementation of SDGs contents*. So, the basic machinery is there as well as the impact assessment for SD for laws and regulations which is anchored in the NSDS.
- ❖ However, it is *still open whether the existing institutions and processes have to be adapted*, further developed and strengthened in order to achieve the expected level of ambition for a comprising implementation.

2.2.2 Governance mechanisms for SDGs

It seems that Germany is confident about the existing governance processes for SD and, therefore, feels fit for SDGs implementation. As argued by our interview partner, “we have learned that the German NSDS addresses almost all issues concerning SDGs and that our institutional framework is considered as being appropriate for implementing SDGs contents, even if there are still some minor things which will be needed to adapt”.

As mentioned above (see chapter 2.2.1.), there are reviewing mechanisms on the integration of SDGs into the national agenda already in the process. Additionally, Germany publishes progress reports every four years and an indicator report is done by the Federal Statistical Office every two years. Our interview partner mentioned that “at the moment, we are considering if further progress reports and complementing review mechanisms make sense for the future. In the context of implementing the SDGs in the NSDS’ structure and further developing the German NSDS, we have to keep in mind that the national strategy should remain practical in terms of implementing and monitoring its objectives. Therefore, we need to maintain the balance between the expectations and prioritisation of the post-2015 agenda and keeping the NSDS easily manageable.”

However, our interviewee underlined that the implementation of SDGs may not only work with setting objectives. **Goals and targets are just one policy instrument among others.** One can also think of regulations, law and inter-ministerial cooperation. However, it still remains open how the further reporting processes will look like and that the German Chancellery is still thinking about to design reporting systems. The possibility of policy platforms or cabinet reports is also taken into consideration. In order to link contents, SDGs topics should provide a structure for NSDS objectives in the future and, as pointed out by our interview partner, “Eventually, the NSDS should remain the essential framework for SDGs implementation”.

2.2.3 Outlook on further SDGs activities

As our German colleague mentioned, the dialogue on the development of the NSDS starts in autumn 2015 and, also in 2015, the next NSDS progress report is planned to be published. From October 2015 on, Germany has various SDGs conferences and events on the agenda:

- ❖ Conference in Berlin with the Federal Minister for Special Affairs and the Chief of Staff of the German Chancellery, Minister for the Environment, State Secretaries and other representatives of the Federal Government.
- ❖ Four Regional Dialogue Conferences (in the South, North, West, Eastern parts of Germany)
- ❖ Expert Dialogues (i.e.: Dialogue for the National Sustainable Development Strategy) which will ground the foundation of the next progress report in 2016.

2.3 Latvia

In Latvia, the Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre is the central body responsible for SD issues. It was established in 2011 and is under direct supervision of the Prime Minister which should ensure policy coordination, consistency and compliance between all national planning documents as well as the coordination of long-term and mid-term national development planning documents, such as the National Development Plan and the NSDS. From the survey undertaken in November 2014, it became evident, that Latvia is planning to update its NSDS, evaluate, revise and ensure its coherence with the SDGs and the post-2015 agenda.

2.3.1 Status quo of SDGs activities

In 2014, the National Development Council was established and set up by the Prime Minister. It was established with the aim of facilitating a long-term national development, evaluation and finance plan. Its work is supervised by the Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre, where our interview partner is working. So far, one introductory meeting has been taken place to gather ideas for the future agenda. Our interview partner argued that in the past few years, Latvia undertook a number of activities which were launched to enforce the development agenda.

- ❖ The Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia;
- ❖ The National Development Plan;
- ❖ The National Reform Programme of Latvia for the Implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy;
- ❖ Government Action Plan; and
- ❖ Latvia was opening the European Year of Development 2015 with a Conference on a vision for an inclusive and sustainable post-2015 world.

There was a discussion with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about how to proceed with the implementation of SDGs into national planning documents. At this occasion, it was decided that the **main national activities to address SDGs will start after September 2015** as soon as there is a clear

decision on SDGs by the UNGA. In addition to the above mentioned initiatives, no further specific national activities have been undertaken to address and implement SDGs in the meantime.

2.3.2 Governance mechanisms for SDGs

Since no decisions for national SDGs implementation have been taken so far in Latvia, it is **not clear how the institutional set up for the SDGs agenda will look like**. However, as our Latvian interview partner argued, it is planned to involve the Cross Sectoral Coordination Centre, the National Development Council and the Cabinet of Ministers. There is a clear tendency, so our Latvian colleague, that **no new institutions for the SDGs agenda will be established**. He is quite confident that the newly established Council for SD will be one of the institutional mechanisms with which the SDGs will be implemented.

As far as monitoring and reviewing mechanisms for SDGs are concerned, our interview partner stated that Latvia will try to provide additional indicators coming from the scope of SDGs. However, they will not yet be included in the official list of indicators approved by the parliament. Yet, it is likely that they will be integrated in the national planning documents for official monitoring and reviewing.

2.3.3 Outlook on further SDGs activities

As our interview partner points out, a meeting with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by the end of June 2015, is planned to talk about how the implementation of SDGs the post-2015 goals could be transferred to the national policy documents, mainly to the NSDS and the NSDP. As already mentioned, the National Development Council probably will be used to discuss how Latvia should approach SDGs and the post-2015 agenda. The following activities will be the next steps regarding the national SDGs implementation:

- ❖ After September, discussions with the Foreign Ministry as well as aligned ministries being responsible for sectoral policies, welfare and income inequality, will address issues such as implementation, time frame, priorities and urgent activities.
- ❖ Latvia will try to boost discussions on the NSDS and the National Development Plan based on SDGs and post-2015 agenda.

However, for Latvian's EU Presidency in the first half year of 2015, priorities lie rather on the digital agenda and competitiveness rather than on SD issues.

2.4 Slovenia

In Slovenia, post-2015 activities are coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with strong inter-ministerial cooperation. In the preparation for implementing SDGs on the national level, Slovenia (with Montenegro) has actively participated in the Open Working Group (OWG) on SDGs and activities in the OWG were coordinated through inter-ministerial coordination. Furthermore, in 2012 and 2013, the Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has presented and coordinated national priorities and positions for the post-2015 processes.

2.4.1 Status quo of SDGs activities

In the run-up for the SDGs agenda, Slovenia organized several events on different thematic SDGs issues, such as:

- ❖ The Water Partnership Slovenia (with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and a round-table discussion on water SDGs ;
- ❖ The European Year for Development as part of the process for preparing the Framework Programme for the Transition to Green Economy 2015-2016; and
- ❖ In May 2015, several Ministries (Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Affairs), the Office of the Prime Minister, and the Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia organised the Conference, “Potentials for a sustainable future”. The conference and accompanying events were aimed at raising awareness about the goals and processes of sustainable development and providing inputs and potentials for SDGs implementation in Slovenia.

2.4.2 Governance mechanisms for SDGs

As far as *Governance Mechanisms for SDGs* are concerned, our Slovenian colleague outlined that **Slovenia’s existing Development Strategy will tackle issues of integrating the SDGs** topics and objectives, as well as define monitoring and reviewing mechanisms. However, the update of the Development Strategy is still in preparation.

2.4.3 Outlook on further SDGs activities

As regards future work on SDGs, the post-2015 process activities and the Slovenian membership activities in the Open Working Group on SDGs will be taken over by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. According to our interview partner, it is very likely that **ad-hoc inter-ministerial expert working groups** will be re-established, also for preparing national positions. Furthermore, she pointed out that “the Slovenian government will continue to actively participate in inter-governmental processes at the EU and UN level. We will follow the same path in developing our national positions through broad cooperation of all ministries.”

3 Conclusion: Similarities and differences of national SDGs approaches

This chapter briefly summarises the main similarities and differences of the preparation activities for integrating the SDGs agenda into national policy frameworks in four EU Member States.

All our interview partners from the four selected Member States are working towards the implementation of SD at the national level and highlighted that all their respective countries have already designed **activities of how to integrate the SDGs agenda in the national policy framework**. However, they are all at **different stages**: whereas Germany and Belgium are already in the middle of the preparation processes and consider how to institutionalize the SDGs in their country, Latvia and Slovenia are still dealing with content approaches finding out what gaps they are facing in their national objectives with regard to the SDGs. Especially our Latvian interview partner argued that they want to take the next steps regarding the integration of SDGs only after the final decision is taken in September 2015.

What is similar to all countries is that SDGs-related activities and initiatives have, so far, revolved around the **organisation of events, meetings and workshops**, but also on **dialogues with stakeholders** to exchange views and broaden the participation towards the post-2015 agenda process.

The survey and interview results show that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs will have a central role in transferring the SDGs agenda to the national level in all countries. Furthermore, all four countries intend to use **existing structures and governance mechanisms (including coordination and consultation mechanisms) for the implementation of SDGs**. Within this context, all interviewees agreed that the first reference point of **aligning SDGs with national goals was the NSDS and that they intend to use the NSDS for the SDGs implementation**.

All of our interview partners outlined the following important next steps in regard to harmonizing the SDGs agenda with the national one:

- ❖ Work towards **coherence in terms of time horizons** of national goals, documents and the SDGs; and
- ❖ **Complement national SD objectives** with SDGs.

To sum up, it is important to note that the countries included in this case study intend to **link SDGs mechanisms to NSDSs and other existing structures**, and **maintain already established processes**. However, the **approach and the focus of SDGs topics vary among the countries** as well as the extent of their preparatory activities.

Annex

QUESTIONNAIRE

National experiences with activities on sustainable development goals (SDGs)

I. CURRENT SDGs ACTIVITIES

1. Building upon the survey of October 2014 on SDGs – which **national activities** have been undertaken since then **in your country** to **address and implement SDGs**? Please provide us with examples.
2. Out of all the activities to address/implement SDGs, what were the **2-3 most important lessons learned** in terms of
 - (i) **integrating SDGs topics or objectives** into the national level (e.g. relation to national SD objectives, indicator sets, etc), and
 - (ii) the **existing SD governance mechanisms in your country**?
3. In addition to activities addressing SDGs, have you already developed ideas for **monitoring and reviewing mechanisms** for the SDGs?

II. OUTLOOK

4. Are there any **further activities planned to address SDGs** for the period after September 2015, i.e. after their launch?
5. In terms of **governance structures**, will you use the existing national SD mechanisms to address SDGs or do you plan to set up a new governance structure for SDG activities?
6. How will the **SDGs be linked to your existing NSDS processes** (in terms of integrating their objectives, and integrate them in institutional competencies)? Do you think the SDGs agenda will “boost” the NSDS processes in your country?



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