

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 UNDG (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:*	The information contained in this questionnaire is preliminary and should NOT be taken as a final consolidated government position. No objections to upload questionnaire.

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 sub national 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 Government of Malta will be revising the current Sustainable Development Strategy to take into account and incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs will update the Official Development Assistance Policy 2014-2020 to take into account the Sustainable Development Goals. Inter-Ministerial consultations on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals will start shortly.

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 identification of SDGs as priorities might depend on a number of social, environmental and economic issues, emerging areas of concern, and areas of national importance along with priorities determined by the EU for the incorporation of the 2030 Agenda into its agenda. The line Ministries are expected to play a pivotal role in identifying such priorities without however marginalising any of the SDGs.

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”)?

The following measures could be looked into:

- Assure policy cohesion and integration and communication between Ministries, NGO’s and the general public;
- Align the SDGs and the 169 targets with respective policies according to national relevance by initially addressing the core objectives which are outlined in the annual budgetary measures;
- Set up the necessary focal points within Ministries to create ownership over SDGs and raise awareness of aligning work with the 2030 agenda;
- Adopt the appropriate indicators as to reflect the unique national situation.

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 budgets are coordinated on a yearly basis by the Ministry of Finance.

As to the governance process in Malta, the financial requirements of each Ministry are submitted by line Ministries in accordance with their projected plans. Once each line Ministry identifies its’ SDGs, such budget will be allocated.

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 strengthening existing and building new partnerships with other stakeholders for the purpose of SDG implementation?

It is important to include all stakeholders, such as civil society, the private sector, academia and the general public and invite them to provide feedback on the process at regular and established intervals. It is also important to ensure that policies of public interest are well-publicized and submitted for consultation within appropriate timeframes to allow for all stakeholders to participate and that this feedback is then respected.

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.

The UN involvement will be essential especially through fora such as the High Level Political Forum. The EU will have an important role in the process however one will

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.

need to ensure that there is no duplication of processes at regional or international level with a higher level of synergy and interoperability.

Other possible areas of assistance by the UN could be to provide specific country advice and knowledge sharing and best practices.

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?

We will be working closely with the National Statistics Office (NSO) who will provide data based on the UN indicators to be agreed in the coming weeks/month.

Data for the SDG’s has to be extracted from existing data bases which are maintained by the NSO. Therefore, SDG data will be provided by the NSO to ensure that the data is verified and is of high quality. In the event where data is lacking, surveys have to be conducted in order to obtain the relevant information. Such processes have to be made jointly between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Ministry for Sustainable Development, Environment and Climate Change and NSO.

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?

This will be based on the data received from the National Statistics Office and will depend on the quality and quantity of the data available. Progress will be assessed depending on:

1. Whether interventions had effect on results or whether there were other reasons for change;
2. Whether the changes meet the realistic expectation of Government while nevertheless maintaining the ambition of the 2030 Agenda;
3. Whether results indicate that there has been progress across sectors in accordance with defined milestones.

Policy conclusions will be drawn on dependable and accurate data and will consider things holistically while taking into account lessons learnt.

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?

Our Preliminary idea is to create an inter-ministerial system for the collection of data via the National Statistics Office. One of the possibilities is to develop a common reporting system to ensure that the correct data is provided.

Whilst we believe that the national ownership of the reporting process is important one should bear in mind that there are reporting costs and therefore national reports should draw on existing information. Other constraints might include the availability and quality of the data.

The national reports are likely to be shared via EU channels, before being sent to the UN. However, every effort should be made to avoid a scenario whereby Member States would be required to repeat differentiated reporting exercises at EU and UN level. Homogenous reporting systems would be ideal.

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?

Although the role of the United Nations System is extremely important it is essential that there is no duplication of efforts or additional reporting obligations at EU, UN regional or international level.

Malta expects that the follow-up and the review processes will track progress, or lack of it, in implementing the universal goals and targets. The results of these processes should support policy makers in stepping-up their efforts to meet the targets by 2030.

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?

Regional platforms should build on existing follow-up. It is important that the regional process should feed into the global level.

The regional platform should be able to contribute and identify new and emerging regional issues, which should also give consideration to ensuring that the existing framework remains sufficiently ambitious and relevant. A level of efficacy and

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.

efficiency is essential in the review and follow-up process, and allows us to identify gaps that require further attention.
