

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

COUNTRY:	The Netherlands
AUTHORITY:	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NAME OF FOCAL POINT:	Saskia Tjeerdsma
FUNCTION:	Policy advisor
TELEPHONE:	+31 703484526
E-MAIL:	saskia.tjeerdsma@minbuza.nl
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?

The 2030 Agenda calls on countries to implement the agreements nationally, where necessary, through policy initiatives, consulting with stakeholders and producing progress reports. The Netherlands is expected to achieve many of the SDGs. Current Dutch and European policies will be analysed to see to what extent they are up to the task and where the goals present challenges for Dutch policy.

An exploratory study by the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL) shows that many of the Netherlands' existing policy goals to improve the living environment are sufficiently ambitious. The PBL advises the government to adjust or supplement policy on a number of components (nationally or at European level) so as to achieve the goals by 2030. Examples include sustainability education, raising awareness of climate mitigation and adaptation, and early warning on climate change.

The starting point in implementing the SDGs nationally is that it is a government-wide responsibility. The seventeen goals can only be achieved if they are addressed together in an integrated strategy. Ministries are responsible for implementing the goals that lie within their own policy areas. The Netherlands is in favor of a pragmatic approach towards implementation of the 2030 Agenda. To avoid increasing the administrative burden, efforts to achieve the goals will tie in as far as possible with existing consultation fora, policy processes and reporting procedures.

In the aftermath of the SDG negotiations, the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation has been given a temporary and light coordinating role in the implementation process in the Netherlands. A national implementation coordinator has been appointed at senior management level, to coordinate the efforts of the different social partners to implement the agenda. The coordinator is at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and he has been asked to present an action plan in June 2016 and to advise on a permanent base for national coordination. The various ministries are therefore taking the next steps in the policy areas for which they are responsible, such as designating focal points and elaborating existing and proposed policies to meet the 169 targets. In essence, the national coordinator will:

- oversee and drive the actions of the government and all relevant stakeholders in society on implementation and monitoring.
- give advice on a permanent structure for coordination of the national implementation by this summer.
- analyse current policies and initiatives of ministries relevant for national implementation, and opportunities and ambitions for extra efforts in the future by executing a mapping exercise. Line ministries each have a focal point that is in contact with the Coordinator for national implementation.

Besides its efforts at national level, the Netherlands is also contributing to worldwide implementation of the 2030 Agenda through its policy on foreign trade and development cooperation, as presented in the policy document 'A World to Gain'. This will be supplemented by implementing the Plan of Action for Inclusive Development and Growth, which introduces twenty measures to promote work for women and young people and a political dialogue to increase efforts to benefit the poorest and most vulnerable groups in developing countries. The government will report to parliament on the progress of the Plan of Action in the autumn of 2016. In addition, the Netherlands will aim to increase attention for deprived groups in current programmes. The stricter agenda for policy coherence for development also strengthens the conditions for achieving the SDGs worldwide. In this context, the Netherlands is focusing on seven policy areas: trade and investment, reducing the costs of remittances, food security, access to medicines, tax evasion, making value chains sustainable, and climate change. The government will report on progress in these areas in the summer.

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?

A mapping exercise is currently conducted by the Coordinator for national SDG implementation in close collaboration with all line ministries and stakeholders. The objective of this mapping exercise is to identify current policies relevant for SDG implementation, and opportunities for priority actions needed to reach the SDGs. Conversations with the various stakeholders, in combination with broader stakeholder meetings and events, form the basis for this exercise.

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”)?

This will depend on the outcome of the mapping exercise that is currently being performed.

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?

Not at this moment.

Currently, the ministry of Foreign Affairs has a light coordinating role in the implementation process. By this summer, the Coordinator for national SDG implementation will give advice on a permanent structure for coordination of the national implementation. Expected is that the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment, in conjunction with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, will continue the coordination of the national SDG implementation.

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?

In the Netherlands, many businesses, civil society organisations, philanthropists, knowledge institutions and government authorities are willing to help implement the SDGs using their knowledge and through innovation and investment.

- At the UN Sustainable Development Summit last September, the Dutch prime minister called for businesses to play a major role in implementing the SDGs. Paul Polman, CEO of Unilever, was closely involved in developing the 2030 Agenda. A number of major Dutch companies (e.g. DSM, Unilever, Heineken, Akzo, KLM and Philips) and banks (ABN, Rabobank, ING and ASN) have signed an international Business Manifesto.
- A number of social initiatives have been instigated. The Netherlands is proud to already have in place a broad coalition of over 75 different stakeholders referred to as the 'Global Goals Charter NL', from companies to banks to civil society organizations, which have signed a charter and will contribute to the implementation of the SDGs and to achieving the goals in areas like water, food, health and sustainable cities. Please see the following website for more information: <http://www.worldconnectors.nl/en/themes/post-2015-agenda/>. Besides companies, the partners include many civil society groups with a good international reputation in a wide range of areas. Central, provincial and municipal governments and the water authorities are exploring how they can best contribute to implementing the new Agenda.
- Dutch knowledge institutions have an important role to play. As a member of the UN Statistical Commission, Statistics Netherlands (CBS) is helping to develop indicators to monitor progress on achieving the new goals. The Commission will publish its advice in a report in March 2016. The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) will initiate a research programme focusing on the SDGs, and several universities are involved in implementing the new agenda as well.
- Moreover, Partos, the Foundation Max van der Stoep (FMS) and Woord en Daad initiated The Dutch Project *Ready for Change? Global Goals at home and abroad*, co-financed by the European Commission. In cooperation with a large number of Civil Society Organisations, knowledge institutions, environmental organisations and (social) entrepreneurs, they advocate during the Dutch EU presidency for a coherent and ambitious implementation of the SDGs in the Netherlands and in the EU. The implementation of the SDGs requires a common approach of governments, research institutions, the private sector and CSOs.

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 UNECE should play a role in the facilitation of voluntary peer-reviews at the regional level, so countries can learn from each other and share their experiences. UNECE could possibly also assist countries that are finding difficulties in providing a national progress report. UNECE should build upon existing regional review processes, including the work of the European Commission, the OECD peer review, reviews of OECD-DAC and reviews of the European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN). Thereby, we should be careful not to create overlapping or 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.

Question 7:

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

The National Statistical Bureau of the Netherlands, or Statistics Netherlands (CBS), was very much involved in the process of formulating the SDG indicators, as a member of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDGs. In that capacity the Netherlands will continue to contribute to the international work on refining the indicators, implementing the measurement framework and ensuring quality data in the upcoming year, as agreed last March in the annual meeting of the Statistical Commission in New York.

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.

The Netherlands is exploring the different options for strengthening statistical capacities and is a member of the board of Paris21, the partnership in statistics for development data.

The Netherlands has initiated steps to build the 230 global indicators into the long-standing '*Monitor Duurzaam Nederland*' ('Sustainability Monitor of the Netherlands'). The Sustainability Monitor is established by Statistics Netherlands (CBS) and the three planning agencies of the Netherlands. It provides information based on the latest available data for sustainable development in the Netherlands. Policy analysis and policy advice is then given by the planning agencies. The first edition of the Monitor including the SDGs will be published by the Central Bureau for Statistics in September 2016. This is intended to contribute to the analysis of whether Dutch and, where applicable, European policy is sufficiently equipped to enable the SDGs to be achieved in 2030.

The Netherlands is not seeking to set up new institutions and agree on new competences, but to strengthen networks that promote cooperation between governments, businesses, civil society organisations, philanthropists and knowledge institutions in implementing the agenda. One important measure is to set up an overarching internet platform, where all stakeholders can upload initiatives aimed at achieving the goals.

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 Netherlands is in close contact with its three planning agencies (PBL, CPB and SCP) that will be able to provide the relevant analyses based on the national reporting and data from the National Statistical Office.

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 Netherlands is exploring the option of using the existing '*Monitor Duurzaam Nederland*' ('Sustainability Monitor of the Netherlands') for the national SDG reporting, as this monitor included all three pillars of sustainability. An analysis of the extent in which the monitor covers all the SDGs is currently undertaken. A consultation with all relevant stakeholders on the national SDG report will take place.

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?

The UNECE should play a role in the facilitation of voluntary peer-reviews at the regional level so countries can learn from each other and share their experiences. UNECE could possibly also assist countries that are finding difficulties in providing a national progress report.

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

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

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 UNECE should play a role in the facilitation of voluntary peer-reviews at the regional level so countries can learn from each other and share their experiences. UNECE could possibly also assist countries that are finding difficulties in providing a national progress report.

⁴ A/RES/67/290, para 13.