

COMPONENTS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BY THE EU AND ITS MEMBER STATES

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Political leadership to push the agenda forward

The 2030 Agenda provides a unique opportunity to reinvigorate the EU's and Member States' commitments to sustainable development. Sustainable development is an approach combining greater coherence and effectiveness with long-term human development without degrading the planet on which that development depends. The nature of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development **calls for an approach to sustainable development which involves everyone, starting with political leadership from the highest levels of government at EU and Member level** and extending to every member of the population. At the EU level, First Vice-President Timmermans has been given horizontal responsibility for the Better Regulation agenda and Sustainable Development. His leadership and active involvement are crucially needed for outlining an overarching and cross-cutting vision of European sustainable development and building momentum across the Directorates-General of the Commission. In Member States, the leadership of Heads of State and Governments will be crucial in bringing the political weight sustainable development requires.

Overarching strategy to implement the integrated 2030 Agenda at home and abroad

Overarching strategies should be adopted at EU and Member State level covering the implementation of the 2030 Agenda domestically as well as the EU's and Member States' contributions to helping partner countries achieve the Goals globally. **Universality** means all countries should achieve all Goals and clearly applies to the EU where it has competence. Within the overall strategy, however, prioritisation may be necessary to identify which issues need to be tackled first, based on a relevant and participatory analysis, but there should be no cherry-picking of the easiest or preferred Goals. The EU and European governments should be prepared to **go beyond business-as-usual** by aiming for the highest level of ambition in all the targets, ensuring that no-one is left behind. It should be stated clearly which new and additional measures are to be taken to reach the ambitious Goals.

The **integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development** is another critical and potentially transformative element of the 2030 Agenda to which all governments agreed. This must not be lost in implementation. Thus the strategy will need to ensure that a good balance is maintained between the social, economic and environmental dimensions of any Goal area, even where some Goals are prioritised for attention before others. The strategy should capture the **spirit as well as the letter of the 2030 Agenda** and the Sustainable Development Goals. That 'spirit' is largely contained in the Declaration, which sets out the principles that must underpin the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, such as leaving no one behind, ensuring that we respect intergenerational equity and do our utmost to respect planetary boundaries.

It is critical that **Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD)** is fully incorporated into any strategy as one of the key enabling factors for realising this ambitious Agenda. It must take into account the impact of EU/national policies and actions on other people's prospects for sustainable development and other countries' ability to realise their people's human rights.

A timeframe should be established with a **long-term vision** to 2030 **and with intermediate plans** of, for example, three to five years in order to allow for revisions in response to external factors or where monitoring indicates that things are off-track. The sustainable development strategy must be the **main strategy for the EU/MS** and **steer the EU and national planning and budgeting processes**. It must not be seen as ancillary to or an optional extra alongside an EU or national development or economic plan.

An in-depth gap analysis

The overarching implementation strategy will need to be underpinned by an **analysis of the different existing EU and Member State policy frameworks, processes and mechanisms**, as well their strengths and weaknesses, to deliver on the 2030 Agenda. In addition, an overview should be provided by Eurostat and national statistical offices, on the basis of the agreed indicators, of **how far the EU and its Member States are from achieving the Goals and targets and from identifying and allocating the requisite means of implementation**. Given the complex division of – and sometimes overlapping – spheres of competence between the EU and Member States, such a gap analysis should happen in close coordination. Stakeholders should be engaged to enrich and further interpret the findings on the basis of which clear recommendations can be formulated for the implementation process and mechanisms.

Adequate financial resources

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the EU as well as the contributions of the EU to its global achievement require **adequate financial resources**. *“Cohesive nationally owned sustainable development strategies, supported by integrated national financing frameworks, will be at the heart of our efforts”* (Addis Ababa Action Agenda, July 2015). The EU and Member States’ **multi-annual and annual budgets must therefore be aligned with the 2030 Agenda** on the basis of an independent assessment of the financial resources required. The 2016-2017 mid-term review of the EU’s Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020 provides an important occasion to ensure such alignment with the 2030 Agenda from 2018 onwards, within each of the budget headings across the whole EU budget. Clearly, negotiations on subsequent Multiannual Financial Frameworks must take such alignment still further. National, sub-national and local budgets will also need to be revised. The financing needs must be assessed on the basis of a comprehensive, correct and disaggregated costing of the entire overarching implementation strategies at EU and Member State level. The financing plans should list which measures are already in place and how much additional finance is needed to fill the gaps.

Governance: horizontal and vertical integration; clear roles and responsibilities

The **interlinkages and interdependence** between all Goals will necessitate **new, different and integrated ways of working across and between all ministries, Directorates-General and sectors** to ensure a comprehensive approach to implementation and the management of conflicting objectives (horizontal integration and policy coherence for sustainable development). At the same time, **actions will be taken at different levels – local, sub-national, national, regional – all of which need to be aligned and pulling in the same direction (vertical integration)**. The engagement of local and regional authorities is thus important from the start of the planning process. For both horizontal and vertical integration, **existing systems, roles and responsibilities, strengths and capacities, should be built on** in the first instance, in order to maximise ownership and effectiveness and move forward without delay. It is critical that **roles and responsibilities be clearly defined and identified** early on if accountability is to be made possible.

Legislation and policies revised or developed

In order for the EU and its Member States to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, policies and legislative acts will need to be reviewed and new ones may be needed. First of all, **forthcoming policies and revisions of existing policies – such as the Circular Economy Package, the Europe 2020 Strategy, the EU’s Global Strategy and the European Consensus on Development – are opportunities which need to be seized so that they are aligned with the 2030 Agenda’s Goals and targets**, as these policy frameworks will be in place for the next 5 to 10 years. Similar opportunities need to be seized at Member State level. Secondly, **where gaps in existing policies or funding frameworks are identified, they must be addressed**. Thirdly, the EU and its Member States need to **set up adequate tools to enforce Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development**. These tools should include ex-ante and ex-post impact assessments, inter-ministry (national level) or Inter-Service Group (EU level) consultations, corrective and arbitration mechanisms and a strong oversight by parliaments of legislative proposals.

Communication strategy (to the people)

The EU and its Member States need to invest in enhancing the **commitment of the general public to sustainable development**. The 2030 Agenda is a common responsibility. This will require behavioural change and social responsibility. The EU and European governments therefore both need to reinforce

efforts for **global citizenship and sustainable development education**. A **communication strategy** needs to be added to the national and European implementation plans for the 2030 Agenda. These comprehensive communication strategies must support progress to achieve the 2030 Agenda and actively inform the general public and encourage them to get involved. They should also explain the leadership and coordination structures that are being set up as well as the changes in policy and legislation, ensuring that the rationale is clear. Ultimately, they need to contribute to behavioural change by each and every person.

Participation of all people in planning, design and implementation processes

EU Member States and the EU institutions must show leadership in strengthening existing and designing new participatory processes, which will enable the public and organised civil society alike to contribute to and influence the design and implementation of the 2030 Agenda at all stages and to engage in a systematic way in monitoring, review and accountability processes.

With regard to people's **contributions to the implementation plans and monitoring and review**, all States must respect civil and political rights, including freedom of speech and assembly, freedom of the media and full transparency and availability of information to all actors. Consultations must be communicated sufficiently in advance and in a manner accessible to all people, including young people and people with disabilities. People must be able to contribute in different ways, without physical presence being obligatory. Furthermore, mechanisms must be put in place to ensure equal weight of all stakeholders participating in consultation processes. The creation of multiple participatory review mechanisms will be necessary to be inclusive of all people in the population, such as the disabled, those living in rural locations, and the ones who are the hardest to reach. Examples of such mechanisms include social audits, scorecards, surveys and online polling.

With regard to civil society's **participation in the implementation of the Agenda**, it is crucial to remember that the State remains the primary duty-bearer for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The State must therefore put in place clear guidance for partners to whom implementation is delegated or with whom it is officially shared, plus specific monitoring, review and accountability mechanisms. The State must hold its partners – whether civil society, the private sector or other actors – to account according to their responsibility, while the State is held accountable for overall progress.

Regular monitoring, review and accountability on the basis of relevant indicators

It is important to note that monitoring and review do not equate to accountability, which includes the **notion of responsibility and of redress**. Despite a laudable set of principles that countries should aspire to respect when developing “follow up and review” processes, the 2030 Agenda does not propose robust mechanisms which allow civil society and individuals to hold international institutions or their governments to account for implementation. Robust, independent accountability mechanisms from local to regional level are necessary. Additionally, recognising that sustainable development challenges and solutions rarely sit within national borders but require coordinated efforts, the EU must develop a **means to differentiate between parts of the 2030 Agenda for which Member States are primarily responsible versus those for which an EU lead is necessary**. Different processes and mechanisms will need to be put in place for each of these cases. **Accountability must also incorporate the concept of Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development**. It is key that **States remain the primary duty-bearers** for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, but that each and every actor, including the **private sector or civil society**, which is officially involved in any partnership to achieve the Agenda be held accountable – through appropriate, binding mechanisms – for their role.

Regional peer review should be considered between EU Member States for their internal implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as well as regional peer reviews from non-EU parties (e.g. UNECE). All reports should be fed in to the **global peer review** in the High Level Political Forum (HLPF).

The differentiation principle inherent to the 2030 Agenda expects different levels of achievement to be set by different countries for reaching the targets and thus differentiated **indicators** taking into account the different contexts and realities. It is therefore important that stakeholders are fully engaged in target- and indicator-setting to ensure the highest level of ambition towards global indicators.