



IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SD AND THE SDGs IN EUROPE

Stock-taking to share experiences and support
peer learning

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Introduction

This ESDN Quarterly Report continues the work started and undertaken by the ESDN on several issues relating to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Moreover, it deals with the 2016 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) and the Voluntary National Reviews as a form of support for national implementation, sharing of experiences, and peer learning for countries.

The report has the following structure: Chapter one provides a brief overview of how the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) came into being. It then offers a more in-depth exploration of what has occurred over the first months after the adoption of this global agenda, with particular attention given to the progress made towards reaching the SDGs. The chapter also looks at the results of the first High-Level Political Forum (July 2016, New York), and further reflects on the future steps that countries will be taking in 2017 and beyond in terms of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

Chapter two provides an analysis and comparison of the reports written by the seven European countries, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Montenegro, Norway and Switzerland, that took part in the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) at the UN 2016 HLPF. These reports were analysed, and from there four main categories were developed to structure the most relevant content from the VNRs. The four categories that this report will focus on are: 1) Basic information about the 2030 Agenda Voluntary National Reviews; 2) Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs): rationale and involvement; 3) Means of implementation of 2030 Agenda and SDGs; and 4) Monitoring and evaluation. For each of these macro-categories, several guiding questions were introduced to further understand and describe the governance mechanisms involved in implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

Chapter three concludes, summaries and provides the key messages from chapters one and two. It can be seen and used as Executive Summary.

Chapter 1: Recent developments on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for SD implementation

Chapter one provides a brief overview of how the United Nation’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) came into being, as well as a more in-depth exploration of what has occurred over the past few months, in terms of progress towards the SDGs. This chapter will also be looking at the results of the first High-Level Political Forum since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, and where the world will be heading in 2017 and beyond.

1.1 THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: THE FIRST YEAR

The United Nation’s Sustainable Development Summit, which took place from 25-27 September 2015, formally adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This Summit was convened as a high-level plenary meeting of the 70th UN General Assembly (UNGA). Previous to this event, the Outcome Document, “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, was agreed upon by consensus on 2 August 2015 after months of intergovernmental negotiations. The adopted 2030 Agenda contains 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are accompanied by 169 targets.



Although the SDGs are not legally binding, governments were expected to create frameworks for their respective countries, taking into account the specific context of the country with respect to their sustainable development policies and plans¹, in order to strive for meeting the 17 SDGs. In order to reach the SDGs, countries need to evaluate the progress made in Goal implementation, which requires quality, accessible, and timely data collection.² It seems as if the data that is required in measuring the SDG indicators, however, is more complex and harder to grasp than the SDGs themselves, presenting an enormous challenge for all

¹ United Nations Economic and Social Council. *Implementing the post-2015 development agenda: moving from commitments to results*. May 2016. Paragraph 3. Retrieved from: http://www.un.org/qa/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/2016/64 on 02.09.2016.

² United Nations. Retrieved from: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/> on 02.09.2016.

countries. The building of national statistical capacities will, therefore, become vital to accurately measuring the progress made towards reaching the SDGs³.

1.2 PROGRESS TOWARDS THE SDGs ON THE NATIONAL LEVEL

The United Nations published the *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2016* as its inaugural report on the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): this report represents “a first accounting of where the world stands at the start of [its] collective journey to 2030”. The SDGs Report 2016 presents an overview of the progress countries have made, with respect to the 17 SDGs considering the first months from the start of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda (1st January 2016). The report analyses selected indicators from the global indicator framework for which data are available as **examples to highlight some critical gaps and challenges**⁴.

Table 1.1 below highlights statistics from each one of the SDGs in the years leading up to 2016, suggesting that, **although much more is needed for the SDGs to become a reality, progress is being made**. Although many of the following statistics make the 2030 Agenda seem exceptionally daunting and unlikely to be realized, there have already been great improvements across indicators. Countries, however, need to remain vigilant, in order to reach the Goals, and to ensure that no one is left behind, especially those who are already the furthest behind.

Table 1.1: Selected data on the 17 SDGs

Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere	<i>1 in 8 people lived in extreme poverty in 2012</i>
Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture	<i>Nearly 800 million people still suffer from hunger</i>
Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages	<i>Estimated 5.9 million children under the age of 5 died in 2015</i>
Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all	<i>757 million adults (aged 15 and over) unable to read and write, of whom two-thirds were women in 2013</i>
Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	<i>23% of parliament seats held by women in 2016</i>
Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all	<i>Water stress affects more than 2 billion people around the globe, a figure that is projected to rise</i>
Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all	<i>1.1 billion people lacked access to electricity in 2012</i>
Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all	<i>Average annual growth rate of real gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in the least developed countries (LDCs) declined from 4.7 per cent over the period 2005-2009 to 2.6 per cent in 2010-2014. This was less than half the target rate of 7 per cent per year</i>
Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation	<i>In 2015, manufacturing value added per capita was less than 100 US dollars a year in the LDCs versus nearly 5,000 US dollars in developed regions</i>
Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries	<i>In 56 out of 94 countries with data for the period 2007-2012, the per capita income of the poorest 40 per cent of households grew more rapidly than the national average</i>

³ United Nations. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2016*. United Nations, 2016, New York. P. 2.

⁴ The list of SDG indicators agreed upon by the UN Statistical Commission in March 2016 will be subject to refinements and improvements as methods and data availability improve.

Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable	<i>In 2014, 880 million people lived in urban slums, or 30 per cent of the global urban population, compared to 39 per cent in 2000</i>
Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns	<i>In 2010, domestic material consumption per capita in developed regions was 72 per cent higher than in developing regions</i>
Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts	<i>In April 2016, 175 Member States signed the historic Paris Agreement, which sets the stage for ambitious climate action by all to ensure that global temperatures rise no more than 2 degrees Celsius</i>
Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development	<i>From 2000 to 2016, the share of marine key biodiversity areas that were completely covered by protected areas increased from 15 per cent to 19 per cent</i>
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	<i>The percentage of global terrestrial, inland freshwater and mountain key biodiversity areas covered by protected areas increased from 16.5 per cent to 19.3 per cent, 13.8 per cent to 16.6 per cent and 18.1 per cent to 20.1 per cent, respectively, from 2000 to 2016</i>
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	<i>The births of more than one in four children under age 5 worldwide go unrecorded. In the LDCs, one in two children have not been registered by their fifth birthdays</i>
Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development	<i>Official development assistance totalled 131.6 billion US dollars in 2015, which was 6.9 per cent higher in real terms than in 2014 and represents the highest level ever reached</i>

Source: [The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2016](#)

In July 2016, the Bertelsmann Foundation performed a study of 149 countries based on their progress towards meeting the 17 SDGs, from which a ranking of the countries was performed. The Bertelsmann report was one of the first rankings to appear on the topic of tracking progress made by countries in reaching the 17 SDGs. The report focused on the challenges that regions face, and noted that **OECD countries are struggling with inequality, sustainable consumption, climate change, and ecosystems**. From the study, it appears that **all countries face challenges in their ability to achieve the SDGs by 2030**. Even top-scoring Sweden underperforms on several of the Goals⁵. The Scandinavian countries (Sweden, Denmark, and Norway) hold the top three places in the ranking, demonstrating that they are the closest to achieving the SDGs. European countries occupy the first 12 positions within the ranking with Germany and the UK, as the only members of the G7 group of countries among the top ten performers, coming in 6th and 10th place respectively⁶. According to the Bertelsmann report, Europe is leading the world in progress towards achieving the 17 SDGs.

⁵ <https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/topics/aktuelle-meldungen/2016/juli/countries-need-to-act-urgently-to-achieve-the-un-sustainable-development-goals/>

⁶ http://www.sdqindex.org/assets/files/sdq_index_and_dashboards_compact.pdf

1.3 REFLECTION ON THE HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM (HLPF)

1.3.1 Description of the HLPF

To better enable the coordination, experience sharing, and learning between countries in reaching the 17 SDGs, the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) was adapted to **serve as a meeting ground and platform for countries to meet, share, and discuss** what they are doing to reach the 17 SDGs.

The HLPF has existed since June 2012 and its main purpose was to act as a follow-up mechanism for the implementation of sustainable development within countries, which sought to prevent duplication efforts in countries in an effort to reduce the costs associated with sustainable development. The HLPF, in its 2012 form, met three times: 2013, 2014, and 2015, and focused on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and themes of the future and a post development agenda, because the 2015 deadline for the MDGs was approaching.

The 2016 HLPF – the fourth HLPF – marked the first meeting since the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, and **served as an important transition point between the MDGs to the SDGs**, but also as the **first progress report and benchmarking mechanism for countries in achieving the SDGs**. The 2016 HLPF, under the auspices of UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), met during 11-20 July 2016 and focused on the theme “Ensuring that no one is left behind”. It was attended by almost 1,500 stakeholders, ranging from Member States, Major Groups and other stakeholders (MGoS), intergovernmental organisations, and UN organisations⁷.

1.3.2 Role and purpose of the 2016 HLPF

The HLPF held broad-ranging interactive discussions and functioned as the **central platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda**. Among others, the HLPF included discussions on:

- how to ensure that no one is left behind;
- means of implementation;
- mainstreaming the SDGs and
- creating ownership at the national level, as well as regional experiences,
- the role of multi-stakeholder engagement for implementation
- 22 voluntary national reviews on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The purpose of the HLPF was also to **bring together a diverse group of stakeholders and afford them the opportunity to hold moderated plenary talks and discussions**, which lasted for three days and were comprised of sharing experiences related to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Many stakeholders from different countries were not only able to share their experiences, challenges, and concerns over the development of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, but also in the areas they think will have the greatest impact or importance in attaining the SDGs, ranging from acquiring enough finance for sustainable development and relieving income inequality, to more cooperation between stakeholders. These plenary

⁷ Ibid. P. 1.

meetings showed that there is a plethora of challenges that all countries, stakeholders, and citizens face in trying to reach the SDGs.

1.3.3 Voluntary national reviews on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

During the last three days of the 2016 HLPF, 22 countries presented national voluntary reviews at the 2016 HLPF, in which countries had devoted considerable time and resources into analysing the implications of the 2030 Agenda and the relation between the SDGs and their national priorities; in putting in place consultation and coordination processes around the SDGs; in integrating the SDGs in their national strategies, plans and budget processes; and in setting up monitoring and evaluation systems.

Many of the presentations by the volunteer countries showed **similarities in terms of visions, goals, and priorities**, as well as **differences in priority areas stemming from varying national contexts**.

In preparing their voluntary reviews for the HLPF, many countries used **broad consultation mechanisms**, ranging from inter-ministerial coordination to wider inclusion of civil society and public consultations. Several volunteering countries acknowledged the support provided by the UN system for the preparation of their HLPF reviews. For many countries, the **reviews were the occasion to take stock of their institutional framework in support of sustainable development**. All countries included a description of the institutional framework for sustainable development in their presentations.

All reviews focused on national processes that are ongoing to 'nationalize' the SDGs and integrate them with national priorities and in national strategies and plans. The reviews highlighted a broad range of priority issues. Many countries described how they are setting up monitoring and evaluation systems at the national level, including revising or creating sets of national indicators. Discussions in other sessions of the forum highlighted that the national reviews for the HLPF should: (i) be inclusive and participatory; (ii) reflect bottom-up evaluation processes and be open to inputs produced at the subnational level; and (iii) include disaggregated data. The need for support from the UN system to enhance data collection capacity was mentioned in many reviews.

1.3.4 Key messages at the HLPF

Following the 2016 HLPF, the President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) released a [Summary Report](#), focusing on the importance of the HLPF. We summarized the key messages of this report in the following paragraphs.

The summary **report emphasizes the role of the HLPF in follow-up reporting on the SDGs, and encourages sustained political attention on the 2030 Agenda.** With respect to the VNRs, the President mentioned that presenting countries showed a good measure of ownership of the 2030 Agenda. Many of these countries shared their national monitoring and evaluation systems, which include the creation and revision of indicators. All participating countries included the means by which they would be implementing the 2030 Agenda, signalling that countries are taking the Agenda and the SDGs seriously.

The summary also touches upon the **importance of governance and transparency** within countries as being a very important aspect in reaching the SDGs. The HLPF has done well in being able to reach a broad

range of stakeholders and address major groups within its discussion platforms and plenary meetings. The summary stresses that this level of inclusivity and transparency should be carried through to future HLPFs.

In addition to mentioning the successes of the 2016 HLPF, the report also has key messages and suggestions for countries:

Creating ownership

Some of the key messages include the concept of **creating ownership at the national level**, which should focus **on the incorporation and use of the inter-linkages of cultures and values at the national and local level** on the one hand, and, on the other hand, **building upon them and relating them to the SDGs**. However, the report warns that **countries should avoid using blueprints or one size fits all strategies in the realisation of the SDGs**, because local contexts are varied across regions, countries, and the local level. This is particularly important, because the SDGs will need to be taken to the grass-root level, where many different cultures exist together. The **design of national 2030 Agenda strategies should not only be inclusive, but also allow all groups within a society to participate, especially those groups who are most vulnerable**. This aspect emphasizes the core message of the 2016 HLPF of ensuring that no one is left behind.

Governance mechanisms, incorporation of the SDGs and their inter-linkages

Another focal point of the President's summary was the **incorporation of the SDGs and their inter-linkages** into policy, programmes and institutions spanning different levels of government, strong **commitment** and **leadership** as being prerequisites in achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda. This stresses the point that **dialogue** will have to occur among line ministries, among scientists and experts, among civil society, and most importantly with people on the ground. In addition, a variety of **governance tools and policy instruments** should be used in the implementation, including legal and market instruments and network solutions, such as partnerships. An increasing number of governments are **integrating the SDGs in national visions, such as national sustainable development strategies, plans and roadmaps**. Many countries reported that they have "nationalized" targets for the SDGs agenda in their national strategies and plans, including financing strategies. Several countries have undertaken **mapping exercises** to explore the linkages among goals and targets, as well as between SDG targets and national objectives. Many countries have gone further, having established **institutional mechanisms for implementing the SDGs**, including national sustainable development councils, dedicated ministries for SDG coordination, inter-ministerial committees, commissions or committees at different geographical levels and other coordination mechanisms, as well as national councils for development cooperation. Many countries have also worked on principles and standards to guide ministries in the implementation of the SDGs, which includes taking inter-linkages into account. In addition to **horizontal policy integration, vertical policy integration, taking into account the regional, sub-regional, and local levels**, will also be important, and should be included in the development of national strategies.

Role of civil society

Although horizontal and vertical integration play important roles in reaching the SDGs, the summary also stresses the **pivotal role that civil society has in pushing and delivering the 2030 Agenda**. Civil society, however, can only serve in this critical role if they are given **participation** as a basic need. To this effect, efforts are required, in order to enhance the voice of all stakeholders in decision-making, by engaging in active outreach and providing adequate resources for their participation in relevant platforms. All people need to be included, meaning that all people can participate as partners, rights-holders and full citizens, not solely as subjects or mere beneficiaries of services. In order for citizens to fully participate, public information needs to be available and accessible. **Multi-stakeholder partnerships** will also be important, as they serve as a pillar of institutional arrangements for the implementation of the SDGs. With respect to citizen and multi-stakeholder participation, many countries have created **mechanisms for social dialogue among stakeholders** to follow the implementation and review the 2030 Agenda, such as **multi-stakeholder platforms and multi-stakeholder committees**. These institutions foster regular dialogue and the exchange of information and knowledge with civil society.

After the first HLPF since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, there has been progress that has been made towards reaching the SDGs. Many countries have already implemented, are planning, or will begin planning the incorporation of the SDGs into their National Development Strategies. However, as the President of ECOSOC pointed out in the summary report, there are still areas in which all countries need to improve.

1.3.5 Towards the 2017 HPLF

In concluding the 2016 HLPF, a date has already been set for the fifth session of the HLPF, and the second sessions since the UN adopted the SDGs. The HLPF 2017 will take place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from July 10-19 2017. The theme of the upcoming session will be “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world”, focusing on **SDG 1** (end poverty in all its forms everywhere), **SDG 2** (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture), **SDG 3** (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages), **SDG 5** (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls), **SDG 9** (Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation), **SDG 14** (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development), and **SDG 17** (Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development). This theme couples well with the theme from 2016, because it targets those populations that are most vulnerable and most at risk of being left behind as countries try to reach the SDGs.

Chapter 2: Analysis of European countries' Voluntary National Reviews at HLPF2016

Chapter two provides an analysis and comparison of the reports by the seven European countries that took part in the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) at the UN 2016 HLPF, which consisted of Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Montenegro, Norway and Switzerland. We looked into these reports and used four main categories to structure our work: 1) Basic information about the 2030 Agenda Voluntary National Reviews; 2) Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs): rationale and involvement; 3) Means of implementation of 2030 Agenda and SDGs; and 4) Monitoring and evaluation. For each of these macro-categories we used several further guiding questions that we will introduce and describe in the following four sections.

2.1 BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE 2030 AGENDA VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS

Table 2.1, below, shows the basic information on the VNRs of the seven European countries previously mentioned. The length of the reports varied, ranging from 28 and 29 pages of the Swiss and Norwegian reports respectively, to the 163 pages of the report from Montenegro.

In terms of the ministry, or ministries, responsible for drafting the VNR, we can see that each country followed a different way to approach this issue. While **Norway** and **Montenegro** assigned the responsibility to draft the report to their ministries that are in charge for Sustainable Development (Montenegro) or Foreign Affairs (Norway), the other countries used either an inter-ministerial working group, as in **Switzerland** and **France**, or showed a cooperative effort among different bodies, as in **Finland**, or **Estonia** with the involvement of the governmental office.

Table 2.1 Basic information on the Voluntary National Reports of 7 European countries

	Estonia	Finland	France	Germany	Montenegro	Norway	Switzerland
Title and link to the report	REVIEW ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA IN ESTONIA	National report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development FINLAND	Report on the Implementation by France of the Sustainable Development Goals	Report of the German Federal Government to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2016	VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS AT THE HLPF 2016 MONTENEGRO	INITIAL STEPS TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA	Switzerland's initial steps towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
Length of the report	60 pages	64 pages	53 pages	59 pages	163 pages	29 pages	28 pages
Ministry/ ministries responsible for drafting the Review Report	Strategy Unit of the Government Office coordinated the VNR (VNR ratified by SD Working Group and Estonia's Commission for SD)	- Secretariat General of Finnish National Commission on SD - Prime Minister's Office - Ministry for Foreign Affairs	Inter-ministerial Representative for SD General Commissioner for SD (tasked by the Prime Minister)	- <i>not clearly specified</i>	Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Inter-ministerial working group

2.2 VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS (VNRs): RATIONALE AND INVOLVEMENT

In this category of our comparison, we aimed at understanding and analysing a number of important characteristics that the VNRs could share. We believe that such categories and contents could also **support other countries in the preparation of their reviews**, as well as towards the participation in future High-Level Political Forums. Additionally, we imagine that this comparison of VNRs, which is ultimately about the sharing of experiences, could **facilitate peer learning and the establishment and improvement of practices** in the context of the implementation of strategies and policies that further the cause of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.

First and foremost, we analysed the seven VNRs to discern the **reasoning behind** such an exercise, the **expected use** that countries had imagined, and the **added value** that it could bring. In the majority of countries, the report was mostly aimed at describing **first steps and future plans** towards 2030 Agenda implementation that countries had started considering, were about to undertake, or were already employed. In **Montenegro**, for example, the VNR related especially to the **drafting** of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSSD) and its corresponding action plan, adopted in July 2016 almost in conjunction with the HLPF. Countries reported about the added value and about a numerous of beneficial effects that the exercises brought to them. In **Finland**, for instance, the VNR clearly served as an **interim report** towards the realisation of the Finnish **national implementation plan for the 2030 Agenda for SD** that will be prepared by the end of 2016. In **Estonia**, the VNR functioned as a **preliminary gap analysis**, while in **France**, the VNR worked as a first review for each SDG. In **Norway**, the main benefit can be summarised by the fact that the VNR acted as a **catalyst for the 2030 Agenda implementation**: the review, therefore, contributed to **greater political and public awareness** about the SDGs and gave **greater coherence and ownership of follow-up process** within the government. In several cases, the VNRs were seen as important exercises, because they promoted and supported a process of **mutual learning** and **experience sharing**. Additionally, VNRs were used as key tools to understand and identify **main issues and challenges** with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

We then tried to understand and compare the type of **participatory arrangements** that were undertaken in the preparation of the Voluntary National Reviews. To do so, we used three different 'lenses': first, we looked for the involvement of the administrative machinery at the national level, and inquired about the involvement of ministries. Then, we looked into the inclusion of stakeholders. And finally, we searched for the participation at the sub-national level. A main result of our analysis is that participatory arrangements in the preparation of VNRs are not always clearly specified in the different documents that were looked into: **in many cases, it was not possible to differentiate between these three levels of analysis**. It appears, however, that pre-existing mechanisms for consultation, most probably developed in the context of SD policymaking, were often used. **Switzerland** reported that existing mechanisms for **fostering policy coherence for sustainable development at the federal level** would be strengthened: "[t]he preparation of Federal Council decisions in consultation with various offices or in inter-ministerial working groups on specific topics is central to ensuring policy coherence at the federal level. These consultation and coordination processes examine the Confederation's initiatives in specific sectors to ensure that they are congruent with sustainable development. The task here is to make greater use of synergies between different policies and to mitigate any conflicting

aims and negative side effects. The research and groundwork that is required to set up an observation system for the various aspects of foreign policy, and the relevant monitoring instruments, is currently under way". With respect to the involvement of ministries in **Switzerland** and **Estonia** it was reported that there was **clear cooperation between them**, or there was cooperation that took place using **an 'inter-ministerial working group'**. In **Switzerland**, the **inter-ministerial working group was** comprised of representatives from federal offices and was led by Federal Office for Spatial Development and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. In **Germany**, each coordinating ministry provided input on its respective goal(s). In **Montenegro**, the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism conducted public consultations. With respect to the participation of **stakeholders**, broad consultations took place in almost all countries, especially with the **inclusion of civil society organisations**. Only in **Germany**, consultation of the **sub-national level** was clearly specified in the report, and saw, in particular, the inclusion of parliaments, federal states, and local authorities among others.

TABLE 2.2 VNR rationale and involvement

	Estonia	Finland	France	Germany	Montenegro	Norway	Switzerland
Reasoning, expected use and added value of the VNR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Describes the main measures and plans for implementation - Functions as preliminary gap analysis of governments' policies relating to SDGs - Tracks implementation of SDGs and targets - Highlights challenges - Shares positive examples 	Serves as interim report on Agenda 2030 implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First review of the implementation of each of the SDGs in France - Identifies main issues and challenges, government courses of action, and good practices and model measures already in place - Experience sharing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Describes current and future plans for 2030 Agenda implementation - Promotes and supports a process of mutual learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relates to drafting of the NSSD (adopted in July 2016) and corresponding action plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outlines initial steps to incorporate SDGs - Contributes to greater political and public awareness about the SDGs - Results in being a catalyst for 2030 Agenda implementation - Gives greater coherence and ownership of follow-up process within Government 	Presents first steps towards 2030 Agenda implementation
Participatory arrangements in the preparation of VNRs: Ministries involved	Cooperation with several ministries and Estonian SD Commission	<i>- not clearly specified</i>	<i>- not clearly specified</i>	<i>- not clearly specified</i>	Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism conducted the public consultations	Each coordinating ministry provided input on its respective goal(s)	Inter-ministerial working group
Participatory arrangements in the preparation of VNRs: Stakeholders involved	<i>- not clearly specified</i>	In the context of Finland's Gap analysis, a participatory stakeholder process and expert assessments was used to outline key themes requiring urgent attention	- Consultations with civil society (i.e. National Council for Ecological Transition, the National Council for Development and International Solidarity and the National Advisory Commission on Human Rights)	Broad discussion with stakeholders (i.e. NGOs, churches, local authorities, Academia, business community and trade unions) through the 'dialogue forum' on the 2030 Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public consultations - National Council for SD and Climate Change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business sector, CSOs and Sami Parliament participated in informal consultations with politicians and officials preparing the review - CSOs held meetings, submitting input to VNR preparation 	VNR was discussed within pre-existing participatory consultation mechanisms
Participatory arrangements in the preparation of VNRs: Sub-national levels involved	<i>- not clearly specified</i>	<i>- not clearly specified</i>	<i>- not clearly specified</i>	Consultations with other governmental actors e.g. parliaments, federal states, local authorities	Existing coordination mechanisms of National SD Council enabled participation of interested parties at the national/local level (in NSSD preparation)	<i>- not clearly specified</i>	VNR was discussed within the pre-existing participatory consultation mechanisms

2.3 MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF 2030 AGENDA AND SDGs

In this section we analyse which initiatives have started, are about to start, or are planned to start with regard to the **implementation of the 2030 Agenda for SD and the related SDGs** within these seven countries. To do so, we set several categories that would help in understanding:

- 1) What is the leading ministry/institution in the 2030 Agenda implementation? Who is in charge? Who is responsible?
- 2) Are there any other ministries involved? If yes, which ones and how? Does it happen through coordination mechanisms?
- 3) Is the sub-national level involved? If yes, which ones (i.e. regions, municipalities)? And how?
- 4) Are stakeholders involved? If yes, which ones ((i.e. CSOs, business, academia)? And how?
- 5) Is there a link between the implementation of the 2030 Agenda/SDGs to existing SD policy strategy documents (i.e. National SD Strategy)
- 6) How are SDGs and targets approached and implemented? Is the country addressing all SDGs? Only a few? Is there some sort of prioritisation?
- 7) What challenges to implementation?

Leading ministry/institution in the 2030 Agenda implementation

With respect to which institution is in charge, leads, or coordinates the national implementation of the 2030 Agenda, we see that there is no common way to approach this matter. However, we see that **four out of seven countries have assigned the leading/coordinating role to a high political level, close to governments**: in **Finland**, the **Prime Minister's Office** coordinates the 2030 Agenda implementation as part of the secretarial duties of the Finnish National Commission on SD. In **Switzerland**, although implementation of the NSDS is primarily a matter for the federal offices concerned, the **political responsibility lies with the Federal Council**. In **Germany**, the **State Secretaries Committee for Sustainable Development** steers the implementation of the National Sustainable Development Strategy that incorporates the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs: such a Committee comprises representatives from all federal ministries and is chaired by the Head of the Federal Chancellery. In **Estonia**, the **Strategy Unit of the Government Office** is coordinating the work of both the **sustainable development working group** as well as the **Commission for Sustainable Development**.

France and Montenegro have established responsibility for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in **one ministry**. In **France**, the Ministry of the Environment, Energy and the Sea is in charge of SD. In **Montenegro**, the responsibility seems to be assigned to the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism. In **Norway**, the approach seems rather different, because individual ministries are responsible for follow-up on the SDGs, and they should coordinate amongst themselves.

Involvement of other ministries in the 2030 Agenda implementation

Apart from France, for which we were not able to meaningfully understand which ministries were involved in implementing the 2030 Agenda and how they were involved in implementing it, the remaining six countries touch upon this matter in their reports. The picture is different in each instance, but we can report at least one very indicative similarity: **four countries, Estonia, Finland, Germany and Switzerland, have established a type of coordination mechanism at the inter-ministerial level**. In **Switzerland**, for example, the implementation of the NSDS is coordinated by the Interdepartmental Sustainable Development Committee (ISDC), which is comprised of representatives from all federal offices whose activities are of relevance to

sustainable development. The ISDC is chaired by the Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE) of the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications (DETEC). In **Germany**, the State Secretaries Committee for SD is another example, in which representatives from all federal ministries are included: ministries are responsible for their own contributions to the NSDS and the 2030 Agenda, but must cooperate with other ministries. In **Estonia**, a **coordination system** includes the **Intra-Ministerial Sustainable Development Working Group** and the **Commission for Sustainable Development** (that is composed of NGOs). In **Finland**, as mentioned, the Prime Minister's Office set-up a **coordination secretariat** that is responsible for planning, preparing, coordinating and ensuring the national implementation of Agenda 2030. The secretariat is comprised of representatives from the Secretariat General of the **Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development**, the **Ministry for Foreign Affairs**, and the **Prime Minister's Office**. Also, consisting of representatives of other key Ministries, the **Sustainable Development Coordination Network** supports and guides the work of the coordination secretariat. This is very unique in Finland and it is also one of the key success stories concerning SD policymaking's enhancement of governance for SD: the network has been responsible for the coordination of SD between various administrative sectors for almost **twenty years**. It prepares, develops and coordinates SD efforts in Finland, with the **objective of increasing policy coherence with regard to mainstreaming sustainable development as part of Government policy**. Members of the coordination network act as contacts and people in charge of SD within their respective branches of Government. Each member of the network coordinates and integrates the views of their administrative branch with the National SD Plan and SD work. The network convenes around ten times a year. It is very important, with respect to the 2030 Agenda, the **national parliament and policy makers** participate in drawing up the implementation plan. Finally, the **National Commission on SD** and the **Development Policy Committee** play a key role in the national implementation, assessment and monitoring of Agenda 2030.

In **Norway**, each ministry coordinates with other ministries regarding the SDGs, and submits an account in its budget proposal for its respective goal(s); it is then the Ministry of Finance that sums up the main points in the national budget and presents it annually to the Parliament. In **Montenegro**, the process of drafting the NSDS until 2030 involved the work of an **expert team and a participatory process**, which included ministries, expert institutions, and institutions in the public sector, local self-governments, the parliament, academia, civil society organizations and the business community, which took an active part in the development of NSDS until 2030, which is focused on the SDGs

Involvement of the subnational level in the 2030 Agenda implementation

Regarding the **involvement of the subnational level**, the overview is not clear. In fact, only three countries specifically mentioned the subnational level in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In **Finland**, **regions and municipalities will play a key role in the implementation of Agenda 2030**. To enhance participation in the preparation of the national implementation plan, a regional tour of Finland should disseminate information on Agenda 2030, while developing cooperation and regional implementation models in the spirit of Agenda 2030: regional tours are being planned in cooperation with cities, municipalities, regions, NGOs and signatories of the regional operational commitments to sustainable development. In **Germany**, the federal government is engaged in **regular dialogue with the 16 federal states** on matters relating to SD, and, in particular, on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The federal states, for example, participated in the new edition of the National Sustainable Development Strategy. In **Switzerland**, the sub-national level is involved

through **implementation partnerships between the Confederation, cantons, communes and stakeholders.**

Involvement of Stakeholders in the 2030 Agenda implementation

We then looked into whether and how stakeholders were involved or planned to be involved in 2030 Agenda implementation. **All countries involve and intend to keep involving stakeholders.** However, it seems that **different grades of involvement** are expected **from a consultation typology to a more institutionalised and structured** kind of involvement. For instance, in **France**, **consultative workshops** on the implementation of the SDGs are organised whilst a **committee of international experts** was set up to inform government thinking. In **Germany**, citizen and various interest groups are involved especially **through the updating of the NSDS i.e. via Internet and through hearings.**

At least three countries seem to use a **more structured way to involve stakeholders:** in **Switzerland**, stakeholders are included **through implementation partnerships** between the Confederation, sub-national level and representatives of business, civil society, politics and academia. In **Estonia**, NGOs are included in Estonia's **Commission for SD**, and the so-called **"Code of Good Engagement"** works to involve interest groups and the general public on decisions that would affect them. In **Finland**, broad-based participation of stakeholder groups in preparing the implementation plan and then implementing 2030 Agenda is a key objective through i.e. **creation of partnerships, institutional arrangements, open internet surveys, mobilisation of private sector resources, long-term and integrated approach to SD in early education/schools/universities, involvement of a broad spectrum of Finnish citizens.**

Awareness raising initiatives and **outreach activities** were also specifically mentioned: for instance, in **Estonia**, the report talks about a SD Forum and the [European Sustainable Development Week](#)⁸.

Link of 2030 Agenda/SDGs to existing SD policy strategy documents

All countries but Norway **linked the implementation of 2030 Agenda and SDGs to existing SD policy-strategy documents in a clear direct way.** Most countries **have revised or about to revise their national SD strategy to incorporate 2030 Agenda:**

- In **Finland**, *Society's Commitment to SD* – the Finnish NSDS – was **updated in April 2016** to better correspond to the principles, SDGs and targets of 2030 Agenda: its vision, principles and eight strategic objectives serve as a political framework for SD work among various administrative branches and societal actors, and are now related to all SDGs;
- In **Montenegro**, the *National Strategy for Sustainable Development until 2030* **adopted in July 2016** seems already to establish the basis for the integration of SDGs into other relevant national policies, plans and programs;
- In **Germany**, the revision of the NSDS is scheduled to be completed in **Autumn 2016**, and will reflect the 2030 Agenda and SDGs;
- In **Estonia**, the Estonian NSDS will be reviewed by **Autumn 2016** to incorporate 2030 Agenda;
- **France** is in the **planning stages of its new strategy** that will incorporate the SDGs.

Also in **Switzerland**, the NSDS is mentioned and is thoroughly described, because it consists of a **concrete action plan**, structured into nine thematic areas of action that relate to all the SDGs within the Swiss context.

⁸ The ESDW is a European-wide initiative to stimulate and make visible activities, projects and events that promote sustainable development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It takes place every year from 30 May until 05 June.

In the Swiss case, there will be a **transition phase** from 2016 to 2017, during which the alignment of the Swiss sustainability policy to the 2030 Agenda will be developed further through the following measures: (i) preparation of **baseline study and gap analysis** to identify and define future areas for implementing the 2030 Agenda; (ii) developing **future processes** to implement the 2030 Agenda; (iii) definition of **internal structure and responsibilities** within the Federal Administration; (iv) **expansion of the existing sustainable monitoring system** (MONET); (v) determining ways in which **stakeholder participation can be enhanced**; (vi) preparation for the **2018 HLPF Swiss' VNR**.

Some countries also clearly refer to the development of an '**Action Plan**' or '**Implementation Plan**', such as in **Finland**, where a national implementation plan for the 2030 Agenda is set to be completed **by the end of 2016**. In **France**, a national action plan will also be developed, working with all players at each stage (definition, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and regular reviews). Although **no separate implementation plan** for its NSDS is foreseen in **Estonia**, the integration of SDGs into various thematic development plans is guaranteed via a **strategic planning system**. In fact, government regulations require that when drawing up development plans, the SDGs must be taken into account. Reaching the goals is achieved via various thematic development strategies and their implementation plans, such as the Action Programme for 2015-2019 or the State Budget Strategy 2017-2020. In **Norway**, no direct mention of any SD policy-strategy document is made in the VNR. However, the report affirms that the Norwegian Government already developed a **plan for national follow-up of the SDGs**, which is **linked to the budget process**.

Approach to SDGs and targets implementation

In terms of the **approaches used towards SDGs and target implementation**, we tried to understand if countries considered the 17 SDGs and targets as a whole, or only considered a few, or if there was a prioritisation of certain goals.

In general, we can see that the **majority of countries took all the SDGs**, and went a step further by showing in their reports how **each SDG was individually addressed and broken down into specific issues within the national context and how to address them**. Some countries performed **gap analyses** to understand how the country could relate to all SDGs and targets. For instance, in **Estonia**, estimations show that about one third of the 169 targets are covered either partly or via international cooperation. However, the adaptation of the SDGs and targets to national contexts also showed, that not all targets and international indicators are to be incorporated in the national SD strategy due to the national context, and partly countries have their own objectives and targets in some areas that are even more ambitious than the 2030 Agenda, which was the case for Germany. In some other cases, priorities are set. In **Norway**, for instance, although priority is given to 'ensuring quality education and employment', especially for young people and those at risk of marginalisation, each of the 17 goals has been identified for follow up by the respective ministries.

Challenges to implementing 2030 Agenda and SDGs

With regards to **challenges**, the majority of countries identified SDG-specific related challenges. The most common relate to the use of natural resources, resource efficiency, economic development, inequality, and unemployment. In **Germany**, for example, challenges are outlined in relation to each SDG and avenues to overcome them are provided.

Four out seven countries reported about **general implementation challenges**, the most common being: (1) increasing awareness and ownership; (2) development of indicators for SDGs, measuring and reporting on progress; (3) consideration of the Agenda 2030 as a new paradigm, and therefore adapting it into national policies and strategies; (4) inter-linkages between SDG areas.

Finland appears to be the one country that put the largest attention regarding the challenges of implementation. We report such challenges in their entirety, as they seem to offer interesting points for reflection and discussion:

- 1) Long chronological perspective of 2030 Agenda in relation to other political cycles;
- 2) Ensuring policy coherence;
- 3) Strengthening ownership and commitment and the Government's facilitating role;
- 4) Ensuring the synergy of implementation in execution at various levels;
- 5) Achieving transformation and in-depth changes;
- 6) Transforming abstract objectives into tangible, practical activities;
- 7) Strengthening the discourse on SD (content and operating models);
- 8) Mobilisation of resources of various administrative branches and stakeholder groups;
- 9) Developing operating models for the use of indicators and the monitoring of implementation;
- 10) Integrating the various dimensions of SD, requiring the creation of a new mind-set;
- 11) Understanding the relationships between various goals;
- 12) Defining a suitable set of means of implementation;
- 13) Ensuring the correct timing of measures;
- 14) Bringing SDGs closer to citizens and making them tangible enough.

TABLE 2.3 Means of Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs

	Estonia	Finland	France	Germany	Montenegro	Norway	Switzerland
Leading ministry/institution in the 2030 Agenda implementation	Strategy Unit of the Government Office	Prime Minister's Office coordinates 2030 Agenda implementation	Ministry of the Environment, Energy and the Sea is in charge of SD	State Secretaries Committee for SD steers implementation of NSDS incorporating 2030 Agenda/SDGs	Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism	Individual ministries are responsible for follow-up on the SDGs	Political responsibility lies with the Federal Council
Involvement of other ministries involved?	A coordination system includes: - Intra-Ministerial SD Working Group - Commission for SD	- Coordination secretariat (in the Prime Minister's Office) - SD coordination network - National Parliament and policy makers - National Commission on SD and Development Policy Committee	- <i>not clearly specified</i>	- Representatives from all federal ministries are included in the State Secretaries Committee for SD - Ministries are responsible for their own contributions to the NSDS and the 2030 Agenda, but must cooperate with other ministries	The process of drafting the NSDS until 2030 (which is focused on the SDGs) involved the work of an expert team and a participatory process , including ministries, experts, public sector institutions, local governments, parliament, academia, CSOs and business	- Each ministry coordinates with other ministries regarding SDGs, and submits an account for its budget proposal for its respective goal(s); - Ministry of Finance sums up the main points in the national budget and presents it annually to Parliament	The Interdepartmental SD Committee (ISDC) coordinates NSDS implementation
Involvement of the subnational level	- <i>not clearly specified</i>	The regions and municipalities will play a key role in 2030 Agenda implementation	- <i>not clearly specified</i>	Federal government engages in regular dialogue with the 16 federal states on SD issues, and in particular on 2030 Agenda implementation	<i>Please see above</i>	- <i>not clearly specified</i>	Sub-national level is involved through implementation partnerships between Confederation, cantons, communes and stakeholders
Involvement of stakeholders	- NGOs are in Estonia's Commission for SD - Code of Good Engagement - Awareness raising initiatives (i.e. ESDW)	Broad-based participation of stakeholder groups to prepare implementation plan and in 2030 Agenda implementation is a key objective	- Consultative workshops on SDGs implementation - Committee of international experts was set up to inform government thinking	Citizen and interest groups are involved especially through NSDS updating i.e. via the Internet and through hearings	<i>Please see above</i>	Relevant stakeholders will keep engaging in a constructive dialogue with the Government on implementation and follow-up of the Agenda	Stakeholders are included through implementation partnerships between the Confederation, sub-national level, business, civil society, politics and academia

	Estonia	Finland	France	Germany	Montenegro	Norway	Switzerland
Link of 2030 Agenda/SDGs to existing SD policy strategy documents	Review of the Estonian NSDS "Sustainable Estonia21" will incorporate Agenda 2030 (Autumn 2016)	- Society's Commitment to SD (April 2016-update to better correspond to 2030 Agenda) - End of 2016: National Plan to implement 2030 Agenda	Planning stages of its new strategy to incorporate SDGs - National action plan will be developed.	Revision of NSDS will reflect 2030 Agenda and SDGs (Autumn 2016). 2030 Agenda implementation linked to Federal Government budget	National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSSD) until 2030 establishes basis for SDGs integration into relevant national policies, plans and programs	Plan for national follow-up of the SDGs , linked to the budget process (<u>no direct mention of SD policy strategy document</u>)	- NSDS 2016-2019: concrete action plan funded via budgets approved for individual federal offices - Transition phase 2016-2017 to further align Swiss SD policy to 2030 Agenda
Approach to SDGs and targets implementation	Each SDG is individually addressed and broken down into specific issues within the national context and related measures to address them - Gap analysis of Estonian governments' policies and SDGs - Preliminary comparative analysis with SDGs and targets - Mapping of policy measures	- By end of 2016, decision on how SDGs will be phased as part of the preparations for the National Plan to implement 2030 Agenda - Update in April 2016 aligned Finland's SD policy fairly well with 2030 Agenda. Its eight objectives include all SDGs and involve extensive implementation of 11 SDGs	Each SDG (and related target) has been adapted to the French context and will be considered in the development of the upcoming national action plan	- Each SDG is individually addressed and broken down into specific issues within the national context and related measures to address them - Not all targets and international indicators are to be incorporated in the NSDS due to the national context, and partly because Germany's own objectives and targets in some areas are more ambitious	Prioritisation was carried out in NSSD , as follows: improving the state of human resources and strengthening social inclusion, support to values, norms and behavior patterns important for the sustainability of society, preservation of natural capital, introduction of green economy, governance for SD, and financing for SD	- Each SDG is individually addressed and broken down into specific issues within the national context and related measures - Each SDG was identified for follow-up by respective ministries; - Priority is given to 'ensuring quality education and employment', especially for young people and those at risk of marginalisation	- Addressing all SDGs - SDGs are integrated into nine thematic areas of action within the Swiss context
Challenges to implementation	- Challenges relate to SDGs and targets (i.e. developing an energy- and a resource efficient economy, lowering CO2 emissions per capita) - General implementation challenges identified	- SDG-specific challenges relate especially with combating climate change and the use of natural resources, and economic development and employment trends - General implementation challenges identified	- Challenges relate to SDGs and targets: Reduce inequalities, maintain healthy ecosystems, manage sustainably natural resources; reduce unemployment, especially among young people	Challenges are outlined in relation to each SDG and provides avenues to overcome them	- Challenges relate to SDGs and targets (i.e. maintain macroeconomic stability, accelerate economic growth by introducing green economy, strengthening resource efficiency)	- General implementation challenges identified - SDG-specific challenges relate especially with SCP, health and education, equality, employment, and migration	General implementation challenges identified

2.4 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

In terms of the quantitative aspect of SD monitoring, **indicators and monitoring** are approached with strong interest, especially when one considers the fact that each country has already set its system, or framework, of SD indicators and has been developed through the years, such as the Swiss SD monitoring system known as [MONET](#), which was recently amended in May 2016 with approximately 75 indicators, or the Finnish [FINDICATOR](#), with its 39 sustainable development indicators. All countries are, therefore, facing the **challenge to adapt, amend and translate the SDGs indicators into their national contexts**.

For instance, in [Norway](#), the proposed global indicators are seen as a good starting point, but there is the necessity to start adapting indicators that are most relevant for Norway's national context and, at the same time, define other indicators that would better ensure a comprehensive follow-up. Also, in [Germany](#), there is the idea that a number of indicators would need to be developed to better correspond to the goals set out in the German NSDS. In [Estonia](#), an **initial overview** of the 231 global SDG indicators found that approximately 14% of these indicators would already be measurable. Similarly, in [Finland](#), according to a **preliminary expert assessment** conducted during the **gap analysis**, basic data for 42% of the SDGs indicators would be found, while 43% of them would require separate data collection.

All seven countries **have amended, are in the process of reviewing, or are about to start the revision of their national SD indicators in light of the SDG indicators**, as proposed by the [UN Inter-agency Expert Group on SDG Indicators \(IAEG-SDGs\)](#) in March 2016. For instance, in [Finland](#), the national sustainable development indicators will be revised in autumn 2016 to correspond to the national sustainable development policy (Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development – updated in April 2016), and the national 2030 Agenda implementation plan; the indicators should be completed by the end of 2016⁹. In [Montenegro](#), a platform was established for translating SDGs and SD indicators into the national context. In [Estonia](#), in cooperation with an inter-ministerial working group, the Estonian Statistics Office and the Estonian SD Commission, SD indicators will be renewed in 2016 with the intention to take the SDGs into account and to reflect Estonia's challenges in fulfilling the SDGs. In [France](#), the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) is conducting a **feasibility study** on the SDG indicators.

With respect to the qualitative side, **Evaluation and Review** are clearly specified in all countries, excluding France and Norway. The remaining countries clearly refer to reviews, regular updates or progress reports that evaluate SD policies and strategies. For instance, the update carried out in April 2016 aligned [Finland's](#) SD policy fairly well with the 2030 Agenda: its eight objectives appear to include all 17 SDGs and involve the **extensive implementation of 11 SDGs**. The review of the [Estonian](#) NSDS - in light of 2030 Agenda – should be completed in fall of 2016. In addition, the Estonian Government Office, in co-operation with the Inter-ministerial SD Working Group, has initiated a compliance analysis related to the global SDGs. In [Switzerland](#), the Federal Council will produce an evaluation report on NSDS implementation in 2018, and it will serve as a proposal for the following NSDS 2020-2023. In [Germany](#), the next progress report of the NSDS is envisaged for 2020. In [Montenegro](#), an **upcoming two-year period review** of the national

⁹ Finland, however, reports that, as the proposed 231 SDGs indicators by IAEG will likely be completed in several years, the Finnish gap analysis project used two available, indicator-based comparisons: (a) Preliminary Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Index (published by Jeffrey Sachs' working group in spring 2016); (b) comparison published by the Bertelsmann Foundation in 2015 (Kroll 2015).

institutional system should confirm and elaborate mechanisms and measures set out in its NSSD in relation to the SDGs and indicators in the national context.

Finland considers **transparent monitoring and reporting on the 2030 Agenda** as prerequisites for accountability towards citizens. In Finland, SD national status and its strategic implementation were already evaluated in 2003, 2007, 2008 and 2012. In Switzerland, Federal Offices are required to include SD and work on the SDGs in their own reports, and **regular updates** on target achievement and implementation of measures should be foreseen under the NSDS Action Plan.

With reference to the UN system, some countries are already planning a **second review** in future High-Level Political Forums. **Germany** plans to participate with a second Voluntary National Review at the 2021 HLPF, while **Switzerland** foresees a second VNR in the 2018 HLPF based on the findings from the *transition phase*. **Finland** says it could report to the UN approximately every four years, although the reviews should be preceded by a general, national discussion of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, with Parliament playing a key role in the debate.

Table 2.4 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

	Estonia	Finland	France	Germany	Montenegro	Norway	Switzerland
Indicators and monitoring (Quantitative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initial overview of 231 global SDG indicators: approximately 14% are already measurable - SD indicators will be renewed in 2016 and take SDGs into account) to reflect Estonia's challenges in fulfilling the SDGs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government responsibility to monitor 2030 Agenda implementation is to be defined in national implementation plan for 2030 Agenda (end of 2016) - National SD indicators will be revised in autumn 2016 to match NSDS and 2030 Agenda plan of implementation 	<p>The French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) is conducting a feasibility study on the SDGs Indicators</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some indicators will be developed to better correspond to goals set out in the NSDS - The next indicator report on the strategy will be published in 2018 	<p>The NSSD established a platform for translating SDGs and SD indicators into the national context, in order to link them, already in the initial stage and to the monitoring of progress in the implementation of measures defined in the NSSD Action Plan until 2030</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The proposed global indicators are seen as a good starting point - Start adapting indicators that are most relevant for Norway's national context - Define other indicators of its own as required to ensure comprehensive follow-up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Swiss SD monitoring system (MONET) - Approximately 75 indicators (amended in May 2016)
Evaluation and review (Qualitative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review of the Estonian NSDS in light of Agenda 2030 (Autumn 2016) - Additionally, the Government Office, in co-operation with the Inter-ministerial SD Working Group, has initiated a compliance analysis related to the global SDGs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SD national status and its strategic implementation were evaluated in 2003, 2007, 2008 and 2012 - In preliminary discussions, Finland could report to the UN approx. every four years (but preceded by a general, national discussion of the implementation of Agenda 2030, with Parliament playing a key role in the debate) - Transparent monitoring and reporting of 2030 Agenda are seen as prerequisites for accountability towards citizens 	<p>- <i>not clearly specified</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Next progress report on the NSDS is envisaged for 2020 - Germany plans to participate in the VNR at the 2021 HLPF 	<p>Upcoming two-year period review of the national institutional system to confirm and elaborate mechanisms and measures set out in NSSD in relation to SDGs and indicators in the national context</p>	<p>- <i>not clearly specified</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Federal Offices are required to include SD and work on SDGs in their own reports - Regular updates on target achievement and implementation of measures under the NSDS Action Plan - Federal Council will produce an evaluation report on NSDS implementation in 2018 (as proposal for next NSDS 2020-2023) - Based on findings from transition phase, Switzerland will present at 2018 HLPF

Chapter 3: Conclusions and key messages

This ESDN Quarterly Report aimed at furthering ESDN's own interest in supporting the implementation efforts of European countries towards the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Chapter one provided a brief overview of how the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs came into being, as well as a more in-depth exploration of what has occurred over the past few months in terms of progress towards the SDGs. The chapter also looked at the results of the first High-Level Political Forum since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, and where the world will be heading in 2017 and beyond. The fifth session of the HLPF, and the second session since the UN adopted the SDGs, will take place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 10-19 July 2017. The theme of the upcoming session will be "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world".

Chapter two presented the analysis and comparison we undertook of the seven reports presented at the UN HLPF2016, known as Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), from the seven European countries that took part in this international exercise, more specifically: Finland, Switzerland, Norway, Germany, France, Estonia, and Montenegro. We looked into such reports and used four main categories to structure our work: 1) **Basic information** about the 2030 Agenda VNRs; 2) VNRs **rationale and stakeholder involvement**; 3) **Means of Implementation** of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs; and 4) **Monitoring and Evaluation**. For each of these macro-categories, we used several further guiding questions that were described during the analysis.

The main outcomes of our analysis can be described as follows: in the majority of countries, the VNRs aimed mostly at describing **first steps and future plans** towards the 2030 Agenda implementation that countries started considering, were about to undertake, or already employed. **The main benefits** of writing such a report can be summarized as:

- Being a **catalyst for 2030 Agenda implementation**
- Contribute to **greater political and public awareness** about the SDGs
- Provide **greater coherence and ownership of follow-up processes** within government
- Promote and support processes of **mutual learning** and **experience sharing**.
- Function as key tools in **understanding and identifying main issues and challenges**.

With respect to which **institution is in charge**, leads, or coordinates the national implementation of the 2030 Agenda, we see that there is no common approach on this matter. However, we see that four countries have assigned the leading/coordinating role to a high political level, often close to governments.

In terms of involvement of other ministries in the 2030 Agenda implementation, there is no common picture, but we can report at least one very indicative similarity: **four countries appear to have established a coordination mechanism at the inter-ministerial level**. With regards to **involving the subnational level**, the overview is not clear, because only three countries specifically mentioned such a matter. A **regular dialogue** and **implementation partnerships** among different levels could be seen as an interesting way of dealing with this issue. Although all countries involve, and intend to keep involving, stakeholders, it seems that **different levels of involvement** are used or expected **from a consultation typology** (i.e. consultative workshops, hearings, internet surveys) **to a more institutionalised and structured** kind of involvement (i.e. implementation partnerships and inclusion in regular commissions).

Almost all countries **linked the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs to existing SD policy-strategy documents** in a clear and direct manner. Most countries have revised, or are about to revise their

national SD strategies to incorporate the 2030 Agenda. Some countries also clearly refer to the **development of an 'Action Plan' or 'Implementation Plan'**, while others clearly make a **link to their budget processes**.

In terms of the **approach used towards the SDGs and target implementation**, we can report that the majority of countries not only took each SDG into consideration, but also showed in their reports how **each SDG was individually addressed and broken down into specific issues within the national context, together with related measures to address them**. Some countries performed **gap analyses, in order** to understand how the country could relate to all the SDGs and targets.

Regarding **challenges**, the majority of countries identified SDG-specific related challenges; the most common seem to relate to the use of natural resources, resource efficiency, economic development, inequality, and unemployment. Several **implementation challenges** were also described by countries, such as: (1) increasing awareness and ownership; (2) development of indicators for SDGs, measuring and reporting on progress; (3) consideration of Agenda 2030 as a new paradigm, and, therefore, its adaptation into national policies and strategies; (4) inter-linkages between SDG areas. In this respect, and with the intention to offer **interesting points for reflection and discussion**, we report several other implementation challenges as described by the Finnish report, which greatly focused on understanding such challenges:

- 1) Long chronological perspective of 2030 Agenda in relation to other political cycles;
- 2) Ensuring policy coherence;
- 3) Strengthening ownership and commitment and the Government's facilitating role;
- 4) Ensuring the synergy of implementation in execution at various levels;
- 5) Achieving transformation and in-depth changes;
- 6) Transforming abstract objectives into tangible, practical activities;
- 7) Strengthening the discourse on SD (content and operating models);
- 8) Mobilisation of resources of various administrative branches and stakeholder groups;
- 9) Developing operating models for the use of indicators and the monitoring of implementation;
- 10) Integrating the various dimensions of SD, requiring the creation of a new mind-set;
- 11) Understanding the relationships between various goals;
- 12) Defining a suitable set of means of implementation;
- 13) Ensuring the correct timing of measures;
- 14) Bringing SDGs closer to citizens and making them tangible enough.

In terms of the more quantitative aspect of SD monitoring, **indicators and monitoring** are approached with strong interest, especially in view of the fact that each country has already set its system or framework of SD indicators that has been developed during the years. All countries are, therefore, facing the challenge to adapt, amend and translate the SDGs indicators into their national context through i.e. preliminary expert assessment, gap analysis, feasibility studies. It appears that all seven countries **have amended, are in the process of reviewing, or are about to start the revision** of their national SD indicators in light of the SDGs indicators as proposed by the UN Inter-agency Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) in March 2016. With respect to **Evaluation and Review**, efforts are clearly mentioned in the majority of countries and refer to reviews, regular updates or progress reports that evaluate SD policies and strategies. With reference to the UN system, some countries are already planning a **second review** in future High-Level Political Forums (i.e. Switzerland in 2018 and Germany in 2021).

