



The Role of European Parliaments in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs

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Introduction

This Quarterly Report will primarily focus on the role of European national parliaments in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but will also briefly include the European Parliament and the European Commission, as they also play a role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in Europe. This Report will seek to determine what actions parliaments and parliamentarians are taking in order to deal with this ambitious agenda and the highly integrated and interrelated nature of the SDGs.

Firstly, this Report will look at the UN level and to the 2030 Agenda document regarding how it sees the role of national parliaments when it comes to implementation and the SDGs. This section will also include the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), which works closely with the UN and is made up of parliamentarians from around the world. The IPU has worked with the SDGs and published a report on how parliamentarians can, and should, become involved with the SDGs. This will be covered in more detail in Chapter 1.

Chapter 2 of this Report will then centre on the European Union level and focus on how the European Parliament and the European Commission are dealing with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. As the two bodies work very closely with one another, it is very important to see how both institutions are addressing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

Chapter 3 of this Report will take a closer look at what European national parliaments are doing regarding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. A comprehensive table will, therefore, be developed, that documents how national parliaments are involved in the implementation process. Country specific information has been compiled from a survey that was sent out to the National Focal Points (NFPs) of the European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN), where NFPs were asked about their national parliament's involvement in implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. In order to receive the relevant information from the ESDN's NFPs, a survey was made and distributed to the NFPs. Based on the information that the NFPs provided, a more in-depth analysis of a few case examples will be chosen to elaborate upon. In addition to the information provided by the NFPs, the same survey was sent to a group of parliamentarians from national parliaments around Europe. The answers from these parliamentarians will also be included in the analysis of European national parliaments.

Chapter 1: UN and International Level

The Role of National Parliaments in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda

Before looking into the individual cases of European countries and how their national parliaments are dealing with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, it is important to understand how the 2030 Agenda, itself, sees the role of national parliaments.

Within the 2030 Agenda, there are two paragraphs that directly mention the role that national parliaments should have with respect to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs¹:

§45 We acknowledge also **the essential role of national parliaments through their enactment of legislation and adoption of budgets and their role in ensuring accountability for the effective implementation of our commitments**. Governments and public institutions will also work closely on implementation with regional and local authorities, subregional institutions, international institutions, academia, philanthropic organizations, volunteer groups and others (2030 Agenda, p. 11).

§79 We also **encourage Member States to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and subnational levels** which are country-led and country-driven. Such reviews should draw on contributions from indigenous peoples, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders, in line with national circumstances, policies and priorities. **National parliaments as well as other institutions can also support these processes** (2030 Agenda, p. 33).

Based on these two paragraphs of the 2030 Agenda document, **national parliaments have three main responsibilities** when it comes to implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs: **1) pass laws that will aid their country in fulfilling the SDGs; 2) approve budgets that allow their government and government agencies to carry out the actual implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs; and 3) hold government agencies accountable to their implementation responsibilities by demanding and reviewing reports on implementation mechanisms, monitoring, and indicators**. Only through these three responsibility feedback mechanisms can national parliaments and governments improve their efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda and have a chance at meeting the SDGs. Each one of these responsibilities plays an important part in parliament's role regarding their responsibilities to the 2030 Agenda.

¹ Text in bold was done by the ESDN Office and does not appear in the 2030 Agenda document.

Inter-Parliamentary Union

The IPU supports the efforts of, and works in close co-operation with, the United Nations, whose objectives it shares. The Union also co-operates with regional inter-parliamentary organizations, as well as with international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations which are motivated by the same ideals (<http://www.ipu.org/english/whatipu.htm>).

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is the focal point for world-wide parliamentary dialogue and works for peace and co-operation among peoples and for the firm establishment of representative democracy. To that end, it:

- Fosters contacts, co-ordination, and the **exchange of experience among parliaments and parliamentarians of all countries**;
- Considers questions of international interest and concern and expresses its views on such issues in order to **bring about action by parliaments and parliamentarians**;
- Contributes to the defence and promotion of human rights - an essential factor of parliamentary democracy and development;
- Contributes to better knowledge of the working of representative institutions and to the strengthening and development of their means of action.

On January 25th, 2017, the IPU published a report, "Parliaments and the Sustainable Development Goals", which outlays how parliaments and parliamentarians can interact with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The report stresses that **the SDGs are an opportunity for parliamentarians to demonstrate their commitment to improving people's lives and the health of the planet**, upon which all human existence depends. The report states that **the SDGs are a robust framework around which parliaments can base their strategic plans and pursue their own oversight and accountability work** (Parliaments and the Sustainable Development Goals, p. 10).

The report continues to describe how **parliamentarians can, and should, become involved with the SDGs, such as by being a part of high-level bodies and councils, as many countries have set up, or will set up, SDG working groups or similar bodies to coordinate and guide SDG implementation**. Parliamentary representatives should be included in any such high-level body, so that they can contribute their constituents' views and **provide institutional support**. Parliaments should demand that the governments draw up or update a national SDG plan, as well as other such plans and strategies, as this will ensure that national policies and plans will be developed or reviewed, thereby making parliament's part in achieving the SDGs more effective. Parliaments should be able to contribute to this plan through a wide-ranging public consultation process. Parliaments should formally adopt the national SDG plan after a comprehensive review and formal debate. Finally, parliaments should ask governments for a regular progress report on the

implementation of the national plan (Parliaments and the Sustainable Development Goals, IPU p. 10).

The remainder of the IPU report sets out how parliaments can run self-assessments regarding progress towards the integration and implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, which consists of building up the understanding of parliamentarians for the SDGs, localizing the SDGs to fit specific country and sub-national contexts, mainstreaming the SDGs, and, finally, enacting laws, deciding on budgets that include funding for SDG implementation, and the monitoring, reporting, and decision-making that occurs based on those reports.

One can see that the IPU and the UN 2030 Agenda document prescribe the same responsibilities to national parliaments regarding implementation of the SDGs.

Chapter 2: European Union

Although the main responsibility for implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs remains with individual UN Member States, the EU and EU institutions, like the European Parliament and the European Commission, still play an important role regarding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in Europe. As the world is looking increasingly towards Europe and the European Union to be leaders when it comes to sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, it is important for Europe to serve as a beacon and guiding light to the rest of the world. This is not only important for non-European countries looking towards Europe to lead, but also to European countries, some of which are waiting for more robust and concrete actions to come from the EU level, such as an EU-wide sustainable development strategy that integrates the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, which helps to ensure that Europe is working towards common goals as one entity, rather than 28 separate ones.

However, pending a comprehensive European sustainable development strategy that takes into account the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, it is important to understand how the European Parliament and the European Commission are involved in the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs; what are they working on, how are they cooperating, are these sustainability issues regarding the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs being discussed, are there concrete plans to integrate them into an existing strategy, or craft an entirely new strategy that would be solely based on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs? The European Council has been purposefully left out of this Report, as the national level will be represented in the following chapter and the European National Council is the institution that represents the national points of view of the EU Member States.

In being able to discuss and understand how the European Parliament and the European Commission function, it is important to discuss the differences between the European Parliament and the European Commission in terms of powers to enact legislation, such as legislation and decisions that would dictate the development of an EU sustainability strategy that is rooted in the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

The preliminary overview of how the European Commission and the European Parliament function is such: The European Commission is the executive branch of the EU and the European Parliament is the legislative branch. However, the European Commission is the only EU body to have legislative initiative, meaning only the European Commission is allowed to make formal legislative proposals. The European Council and the European Parliament are, however, able to make legislative requests of the European Commission. Once the European Commission formulates a legislative proposal, it is sent to the European Parliament for review. If legislation is adopted after debates, and all new drafts of the legislation have been accepted by all parties, the European Commission is then responsible for the legislation's implementation.

The European Parliament

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the European Parliament has been engaged in various activities that support the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs at the level of the European Union. However, as previously stated above, only the European Commission can make formal legislative proposals, leaving the European Parliament to make legislative requests, which it has done in the form of Reports and Motions for Resolutions, as well as in plenary meetings. As the European Parliament has been using different means, via the different mechanisms it has at its disposal i.e. reports, plenary sessions, and resolutions, the European Parliament has been attempting to elicit a response at the European Union level for the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The reports that will be looked at are documents that are handled within parliamentary committees. The motions for resolutions, and the resolutions themselves, are also put forward by the European Parliament to the European Commission and signal to the European Commission that the European Parliament would like to see legislation passed that addresses the focus of the specific resolution. However, it must be stressed that these documents are non-binding, and, as such, the European Commission is not forced to act upon them by drafting legislation. Over the course of the past 2 years, since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs by the UN and UN Member States, the European Parliament has been attempting to signal to the European Commission that it needs to address the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

For the purpose of this chapter, this Report focuses on the European Parliament's Committee for the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, as many of its members are actively engaged with, and support, the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The members of European Parliament that are members of this committee have been involved in the SDG Watch Europe's #SDGAmbassadors Campaign, which identified over 30 members of the European Parliament who are actively trying to integrate the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs into their parliamentary work.

Rather than focus on a type of document prepared by the European Parliament, or the Committee for the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, the focus will be based chronologically, as many of the reports, amendments, and motions for resolutions are based as responses to other documents, earlier versions of documents, or answers to documents put forward by the European Commission. The European Commission documents, however, will be dealt with in more detail in the next subsection, and will be placed in the context of the European Parliament's reports, resolutions, and plenary sittings.

One of the documents that was prepared by the European Parliament in a plenary sitting, which is a meeting in which all members of the European Parliament are present, on May 9th, 2016, was in regards to "[the follow-up to and state of play of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals](#)". This Plenary sitting generated resolutions that mentioned, in particular, the 2030

Agenda and the SDGs. The excerpts taken from the proceedings show that the European Parliament is increasingly trying to hold the European Commission to account for the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs by asking for mutual cooperation, information sharing, coherence, and EU Member State engagement in realizing the 2030 Agenda. By drawing focus to these points in a resolution, the European Parliament signalled to the European Commission that it wants to have more concrete actions regarding the EU's involvement with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

- §12 Calls on the Commission and all other relevant EU institutions and the Member States to cooperate in an effective manner in order to collect and share data and to periodically consider the state of play of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs;
- §13 Urges the Commission and all other relevant EU institutions to periodically report to Parliament on the state of play of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs;
- §14 Asks the Commission to provide Parliament with a first follow-up on the state of play of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs on the occasion of the first anniversary of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda;
- §16 Urges the EU institutions and the Member States to act in a coherent and effective way in the fight against poverty and in pursuit of the SDGs, taking due note of the achievements and setbacks experienced in this first year of cooperation in the framework of the new Agenda; urges all state and non-state actors to adjust their methods and actions in a proactive and holistic way that takes into consideration the outcome of this follow-up (European Parliament resolution on the follow-up to and state of play of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (2016/2696(RSP), p. 5-6).

In a [Draft Report “on EU action for sustainability”](#) from March 15th, 2017, the European Parliament’s Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety made a “motion for a European Parliament resolution on EU action for sustainability”, which directly references the 2030 Agenda, as well as a Communication from the European Commission from November 22nd, 2016 on ‘Next steps for a sustainable European future - European action for sustainability’, which will be addressed in the next subsection under the European Commission. The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety stated in the Draft Report that it:

- §1 Welcomes the communication on a European action for sustainability, which serves as the EU's response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

- §2 Welcomes the Commission's commitment to mainstreaming SDGs into all EU policies and initiatives, guided by the three pillars of sustainable development, social, environmental and economic;
- §3 Welcomes the Commission's commitment to mainstreaming the SDGs into its Better Regulation strategy
- §5 Recognises that in order to meet the SDGs, multi-stakeholder engagement will be required from the EU, Member States, civil society, businesses, and third partners;
- §6 Welcomes the inclusion of the SDGs in the Environmental Implementation Review; **calls for a series of annual reports to Parliament on the EU's progress in SDG implementation; asks that Parliament become a partner in the process, particularly in the second work stream post-2020; calls for annual dialogue and reporting between Parliament and the Commission resulting in the production of a report; urges that the results should be both transparent and easily understandable and communicable for a wide range of audiences**
- §18 Considers that **any future vision of Europe must embrace the SDGs as a key principle, and that in doing so Member States should be moving towards the sustainable models of industry, employment and environmental and climate management** referred to in the Commission's White Paper of 1 March 2017 on the Future of Europe (COM(2017)2025) (Draft Report on EU action for sustainability (2017/2009(INI), p. 4-5).

The [Draft Report on EU action for sustainability was further amended by this particular committee on April 25th, 2017 \(2017/2009\(INI\)\)](#), before subsequently hearing the opinions and suggestions from other Committees of the European Parliament, and publishing this [report on June 27th, 2017](#). At the beginning of the published version of this report, the responsible committee, the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, directly draws attention to the European Commission's lack in establishing an EU-wide strategy that would implement the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. If this report can be said to represent the opinions of the European Parliament, then the European Parliament realizes that the EU, and Europe, has a very large part to play in realizing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in Europe.

- §E **whereas the Commission has not yet established a comprehensive strategy to implement the 2030 Agenda encompassing internal and external policy areas with a detailed timeline up to 2030, as requested by the European Parliament in its resolution on the follow-up to and review of the agenda, and has not fully taken up a general coordination role for the actions taken at national level; whereas an**

effective implementation strategy and a monitoring and review mechanism are essential in order to achieve the SDGs;

§F **whereas many of the SDGs directly concern the powers of the EU in addition to the national, regional and local authorities and their implementation therefore requires a true multi-level governance approach with an active and broad-based civil society engagement (Report on EU action for sustainability (Report on EU action for sustainability, p. 4).**

In the remainder of the Committee's report, one can observe that the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs are in some way referenced or alluded to in almost all of the 128 paragraph points, which seek to highlight the importance of the EU in integrating and implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. **The European Parliament commends the European Commission for finally taking a stance on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, §1 below, but points out that much more is needed from the side of the European Commission.** Considering that the European Commission's Communication was released in November 2016, more than a year after the 2030 Agenda was agreed upon, and more than four months after the first 22 countries, 7 of which were from Europe, presented their Voluntary National Reviews at the UN High Level Political, the EU should have been prioritizing the development of its own comprehensive strategy to not only incorporate the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs into existing strategies, but also provide leadership for EU Member States on how they, too, should be implementing the 2030 Agenda. As the 2030 Agenda is not legally binding from the UN side, having in place a European Union wide strategy, which could be legally binding would send a more powerful signal to EU Member States.

§1 **Takes note of the Commission communication on European action for sustainability, which maps existing policy initiatives and instruments at European level and serves as a reaction to the 2030 Agenda; stresses, however, the necessity of a comprehensive assessment, including policy gaps and trends, inconsistencies and implementation deficiencies as well as the potential co-benefits and synergies, of all existing EU policies and legislation in all sectors; underlines the need for coordinated action for this assessment at both European and Member State levels; calls, therefore, on the Commission, on the Council, in all its formations, and on the EU agencies and bodies, to pursue this work without delay;**

§2 **Highlights that the aim of the 2030 Agenda is to achieve greater well-being for all and that the three equal pillars of sustainable development, namely social, environmental and economic development, are essential for achieving the SDGs; underlines the fact that sustainable development is**

a fundamental objective of the Union as laid down in Article 3(3) of TEU and should play a central role in the debate on the future of Europe;

- §3 Welcomes the Commission's commitment to mainstreaming SDGs into all EU policies and initiatives, based on the principles of universality and integration; **calls on the Commission to develop, without delay, a comprehensive short-, medium-, and long-term coherent, coordinated and overarching framework strategy on the implementation of the 17 SDGs and their 169 targets in the EU, recognising the inter-linkages and parity of the different SDGs by taking a multi-level governance and cross-sectoral approach; underlines, furthermore, the necessity of integrating all aspects of the 2030 Agenda into the European Semester and of ensuring Parliament's complete involvement in the process;** calls on the First Vice-President, who has cross-cutting responsibility for sustainable development, to take a lead on this; **stresses the fact that the EU and its Member States have made a commitment to fully implementing all SDGs and targets, both in practice and in spirit;**
- §5 Welcomes the Commission's commitment to mainstreaming the SDGs into its Better Regulation agenda and underlines the potential of using the Better Regulation tools strategically in order to evaluate EU policy coherence with regard to the 2030 Agenda; calls on the Commission to establish an SDG check of all new policies and legislation and to ensure full policy coherence in the implementation of the SDGs, while promoting synergies, gaining co-benefits and avoiding trade-offs, both at European and Member State levels; underlines the need to include sustainable development as an integrated part of the overarching framework of impact assessments, not as a separate impact assessment as is currently the case according to the Commission's Better Regulation toolbox; calls for the tools designed to measure and quantify medium- and long-term environmental outcomes in impact assessments to be improved; calls on the Commission, furthermore, to ensure that evaluations and fitness checks carried out within the framework of the Regulatory Fitness and Performance (REFIT) programme assess whether certain policies or legislation contribute to the ambitious implementation of the SDGs or actually hinder it; **calls for the clear identification and differentiation of the governance level at which the targets should be implemented, while stressing that the principle of subsidiarity should be respected; calls for the establishment of clear and coherent sustainable development pathways at national and, if necessary, subnational or local levels for those Member States which have not done so already; stresses that the Commission should provide guidance for this process in order to ensure a harmonised format;**
- §9 Recognises that in order to meet the SDGs, multi-stakeholder engagement will be required from the EU, Member States' local and regional authorities,

civil society, citizens, business and third partners; **calls on the Commission to ensure that the multi-stakeholder platform announced in its communication becomes a model of best practice for facilitating the planning, implementation, monitoring and review of the 2030 Agenda**; stresses that the platform should mobilise the expertise of different key sectors, promote innovation and contribute to ensuring effective links with stakeholders, encouraging the bottom-up promotion of sustainable development; stresses, moreover, that **the platform should be much broader in scope than a peer-learning platform and allow for a real engagement of stakeholders in the planning and monitoring of the implementation of the SDGs**; calls on the Commission to promote synergies with other related platforms such as the REFIT platform, the Circular Economy Platform, the High Level Working Group on Competitiveness and Growth and the High Level Expert Group on Sustainable Finance, and to report to Parliament and the Council on how the recommendations of the platform will be followed up;

- §10 **Calls on the Commission to step up efforts to facilitate the governance of the SDGs to ensure the following: i) Multi-sector: by setting up a national co-ordination structure responsible for the follow-up of Agenda 21 which would benefit from the expertise of NGOs; ii) Multi-level: by establishing an effective institutional framework for sustainable development at all levels; iii) Multi-actor: by facilitating and encouraging public awareness and participation by making information widely available; iv) A focus on improving the science-policy interface; v) Establishing a clear timetable that combines short-term and long-term thinking.**

Asks the Commission, therefore, to ensure that the multi-stakeholder platform results not only in pooling, but also in the dissemination of working knowledge on SDGs, and to ensure that the platform influences the policy agenda. As such, requests that the Commission, with input from Parliament and the Council, create a multi-stakeholder platform that engages actors from across a range of sectors. Business and industry, consumer groups, trade unions, social NGOs, environment and climate NGOs, development cooperation NGOs and local government and city representatives should all be represented in a forum of no less than 30 stakeholders. The meetings should be open to as many actors as possible and designed to be expanded if interest increases over time. The platform should, in its quarterly meetings, identify issues which present impediments to delivering on the SDGs. Parliament should consider the establishment of a working group on the SDGs so as to ensure horizontal working within Parliament on the topic. This forum should consist of MEPs representing as many of the Committees as possible. The Commission and Parliament should both be active in the meetings of the multi-stakeholder platform meetings. The Commission should

produce an update to the platform each year on its future plans to help with SDG implementation, as well as a document that would be accessible at all levels in all Member States about best practice in implementing SDGs ahead of the UN SDG high level meetings in June/July. The Committee of Regions should act as a bridge between local actors and national actors;

§13 Urges the **Commission to develop effective monitoring, tracking and review mechanisms for implementing and mainstreaming the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda** and calls on the Commission, in cooperation with Eurostat, to establish a set of specific progress indicators for the internal application of the SDGs in the EU; calls for the **Commission to carry out annual reporting on the EU's progress in SDG implementation**; stresses that the Member States should be supported by the Commission in their coherent reporting; calls for Parliament to become a partner in the process, particularly in the second work stream post-2020, and **calls for annual dialogue and reporting between Parliament, the Council and the Commission, culminating in the production of a report; urges that the results should be both transparent and easily understandable and communicable for a wide range of audiences**; highlights the importance of transparency and democratic accountability when monitoring the 2030 Agenda and therefore underlines the role of the co-legislators in this process; **considers that the conclusion of a binding interinstitutional agreement under Article 295 of TFEU would provide an appropriate arrangement for cooperation in this regard**;

§31 Underlines that the 7th EAP is, in itself, a key instrument for the implementation of the SDGs, although action taken in some sectors is still not enough to ensure that the SDGs will be met; calls on the Commission and the Member States to take all the necessary steps to fully implement the 7th EAP, to incorporate in the evaluation of the 7th EAP an assessment of the extent to which its goals correspond to the SDGs and, by taking these outcomes into account, to come up with a recommendation for the successor programme; calls on the Commission to propose in a timely manner a Union Environmental Action Programme for the period after 2020, as required by Article 192(3) of TFEU, as such a programme will contribute to achieving the SDGs in Europe;

§47 Stresses the **role of the High-Level Political Forum in the follow-up and review of the SDGs, and calls on the Commission and Council to honour the EU's leading role in designing and implementing the 2030 Agenda by agreeing joint EU positions and joined-up EU reporting**, based on coordinated reporting from the Member States and the EU institutions, ahead of the High-Level Political Forum under the auspices of the General Assembly; invites the Commission to take stock of existing actions during the upcoming High-Level Political Forum and the specific SDGs that will be under review;

§77 Considers that any future vision of Europe must embrace the SDGs as a key principle, and that in doing so Member States should be moving towards sustainable economic models, and the role of the EU in achieving sustainable development should therefore be at the heart of the reflections launched by the Commission's White Paper of 1 March 2017 on the Future of Europe (COM(2017)2025), where a stronger dimension of sustainability in the context of economic growth is needed; **considers that achieving the SDGs and 2030 Agenda is crucial for the EU and that achieving the SDGs should be Europe's legacy to future generations; recognises that the 2030 Agenda is in line with the principles and values of the Union and that achieving the SDGs therefore naturally follows the European Union's plans to create a better, healthier and more sustainable future for Europe** (Report on EU action for sustainability (2017/2009(INI))).

The report further goes on to reiterate and reinforce the Committee's and European Parliament's view towards the future of the European Union in terms of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The European Parliament demonstrably values the efforts that Europe has made so far in attempting to honor and implement the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, but further states that the report has a further purpose in providing the EU level with a guide, so as to assure that the SDGs become the center of any policy initiatives. This shows that the European Parliament is dedicated to seeing a change in how the European Union develops in the short-term and long-term to further integrate and implement the SDGs (Report on EU action for sustainability (2017/2009(INI), p. 28).

As a part of this integration, the European Parliament is increasingly calling upon the European Commission to do more, and focuses on the Commission's planned proposal of a formation of a multi-stakeholder platform, as it is of the utmost importance for the EU's achievement of the SDGs, because multiple layers of government and civil society need to be taken into account. Because the local level will be mainly responsible for reaching the targets of the SDGs, the multi-stakeholder platform would need to include the local level, local stakeholders, and citizens, where best practice cases, experiences, and challenges are shared in a mutual dialogue that does not flow from the top downwards, but flows in both directions (Report on EU action for sustainability (2017/2009(INI), p. 28).

The parliamentary report also emphasizes the role the European Parliament wants to play in planning for the future of the European Union regarding the SDGs, and proposes that an annual round-table be held between the Parliament and the Commission to discuss about the progress of the EU towards fulfilling the SDGs, as well as agreeing on future actions to take to better aid the EU in reaching the SDG targets (Report on EU action for sustainability (2017/2009(INI), p. 30).

The conclusion of the parliamentary report and plenary sitting refocuses on the **need for a joint European Union approach to meet the SDGs across the entirety of the Union's work, and further emphasizes that the European Commission, working together with the EU Member States, will be faced with deciding the future of Europe and the European Union in the long-term.** This long-term future must be based on the successful integration of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs across all levels (Report on EU action for sustainability (2017/2009(INI), p. 30).

The European Parliament, when it comes to addressing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, has been attempting, as can be evidenced by the many draft reports and parliamentary resolutions surrounding the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs that have been made over the last year, to convince and spur the European Commission to take a pronounced stance on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. As the European Parliament can only make solutions and draft resolutions to send to the Commission, they are unable to enact legislation themselves. Based on the documents that were examined for this Report, the European Parliament wishes that the European Commission would do more than it is currently doing, but at the same time, however, acknowledges that the European Commission is trying to take steps in the right direction regarding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, such as by having communications and integrating the SDGs into its current plans, which will be discussed below, as well as the development of the Multi-Stakeholder Platform.

The European Parliament has also made it clear that it would like to be more involved in the 2030 Agenda and SDG process by having representatives within the Multi-Stakeholder Platform, as well as setting up other bodies with the European Commission and the Council of Europe to have a forum to discuss more about how the European Union can best innovate, integrate and implement the SDGs in EU policies.

The European Commission

Although a lot of information about the European Parliament has much to do with the European Commission, as the two bodies are closely linked to one another, it is worthwhile to look closer at the communications the European Commission has released regarding the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The documents that will be presented in this chapter will also be presented in a chronological fashion, which will seek to weave them in with the European Parliament's resolutions and reports from the previous subchapter, as the reports by the European Parliament are often in response to documents, in this case the Commission's two communications, and vice versa.

The first communication by the European Commission dealing with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs came on November 22nd, 2016, which is about 6 months (May 9th, 2016) after the European Parliament increasingly called upon the

European Commission to address the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in a plenary session.

The Commission's communication serves as the EU's answer to the 2030 Agenda and will include two work streams: the first is to mainstream the Sustainable Development Goals in the European policy framework and current Commission priorities; the second is to launch reflection on further developing the Commission's longer term vision and the focus of sectoral policies after 2020 Next steps for a sustainable European future European action for sustainability, 22.11.2016, p. 3)

This Communication provides a framework for the EU and its Member States to implement the 2030 Agenda. **In line with the principle of subsidiarity, the EU will only act in areas outside its exclusive competences when the objectives can be better achieved at Union level than by action of Member States.** Close cooperation with Member States is therefore necessary and **many issues affecting sustainable development will need to be addressed by Member States themselves, who are currently in the process of establishing their own national frameworks for the achievement of the SDGs and for reporting to their own citizens and to the UN** (Next steps for a sustainable European future European action for sustainability, 22.11.2016, p. 16).

To create a dynamic space bringing together the different stakeholders of the public and the private sphere, the **Commission will launch a multi-stakeholder Platform with a role in the follow-up and exchange of best practices on SDG implementation across sectors** (Next steps for a sustainable European future European action for sustainability, 22.11.2016, p. 17).

It becomes more apparent in this communication that there is slight discord between the European Commission and the European Parliament regarding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The European Commission has stated how its current work program is already addressing the SDGs, but stops far short of taking any responsibility for drafting an EU-wide strategy, and clearly states that the subsidiarity principle should be taken into account, which absolves the European Commission of having to create an overarching strategy for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The Commission believes that EU Member States should address implementation and monitoring itself.

However, the problem with this method would become obvious as there would be no streamlining or standards on implementation, data collection, and reporting between the EU Member States. This would then lead to incoherence and inefficiencies, as every Member State would be doing their own implementation and reporting. The EU would, therefore, not appear as a united

entity in addressing the 2030 Agenda, which values coherence and efficiency in setting up strategies in which overlaps are avoided.

In a Commission Decision by the European Commission On May 22nd, 2017, the European Commission elaborated on its idea of the Multi-Stakeholder Platform that was mentioned in its November communication. This Commission Decision comes a year after the European Parliament began pressing the Commission to take action regarding the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, and also comes 6 months after the Commission made it known it would set up this Multi-Stakeholder Platform, has the Commission only very recently, May-June 2017, begun its set-up phase and has only recently been seeking applications for members to serve on it.

The Multi-Stakeholder Platform will consist of the Platform itself and a Management Committee, which is responsible for the day-to-day activities of the Platform.

The Platform should help to develop cooperation and coordination between the Commission and stakeholders on matters relating to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals at Union level and should help to bring about an exchange of experience and good practice in the field of the Sustainable Development Goals. (COMMISSION DECISION of 22.5.2017 on setting up the multi-stakeholder platform on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the EU, p. 2)

The Platform's tasks shall be:

1. Support and advise the Commission and all stakeholders involved on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at Union level through, inter alia, contributing to the reflection work preparing for the long term implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals as mentioned in the Commission Communication of 22 November 2016 on "Next steps for a sustainable European future: European action for sustainability", as well as to the assessment of the progress made and making suggestions for more effective implementation on this basis. (COMMISSION DECISION of 22.5.2017 on setting up the multi-stakeholder platform on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the EU, p. 3)
2. Support and advise the Commission in relation to Commission events on sustainable development and help to prepare the selection process of an annual sustainability award. (COMMISSION DECISION of 22.5.2017 on setting up the multi-stakeholder platform on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the EU, p. 4)
3. Provide a forum for exchange of experience and best practice on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals across sectors

and at local, regional, national and Union level, where stakeholders can engage in debates about sustainable development and provide information about related successful initiatives, mobilising expertise of key sectors. (COMMISSION DECISION of 22.5.2017 on setting up the multi-stakeholder platform on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the EU, p. 4).

There are six eligibility criteria to become a member of the Platform, three of which state that the Platform and the Management Committee should each be composed of a maximum of 30 members and that those members should be individuals appointed in a personal capacity, individuals appointed to represent a common interest, organisations, as well as the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. The members shall have proven and relevant competence and experience, including at European level, in areas relevant to one or more of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The members should also have demonstrated commitment to sustainable development, as an inclusive and balanced stakeholder representation shall be sought, including civil society, non-governmental organisations and the private and corporate sector, and covering the social, economic and environmental as well as the internal and external policy dimensions of sustainable development (COMMISSION DECISION of 22.5.2017 on setting up the multi-stakeholder platform on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the EU, p. 4).

What is striking between the European Commission's vision for the Multi-Stakeholder Platform and that of the European Parliament is the number of participants allowed to join in both groups of the Platform. The European Parliament set a standard of a minimum of 30 different representatives from as wide a variety of stakeholders as possible, whereas the European Commission stated a maximum of 30 representatives. The European Parliament also stated in that the Platform should be expanded to include as many stakeholders as possible in this process. However, the Commission does not make any such mention of expanding the number of members, which 30 for the whole of the European Union is not very many to accurately compile the views and opinions of a multitude of stakeholders. Also, the Platform is only set up until 2019, with a possible chance of renewal, which reflects the duration of this particular Commission's term in office.

It appears, therefore, that the European Parliament wishes that the EU would take a more proactive role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, but is unable to act upon those desires without the European Commission. The documents from the European Parliament and the European Commission show that the European Parliament has been attempting, from fairly early on after the ratification of the 2030 Agenda, to encourage the European Commission to do more in addressing the Agenda, but the European Commission has been slow to act upon the European Parliament's suggestions.

Chapter 3: National Parliaments

As the 2030 Agenda clearly states that the national level is primarily responsible for its, and the SDGs', implementation, this Report will look more closely at what national parliaments throughout Europe are doing to address the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

In order to collect and compile information regarding national parliamentary action, the European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN) developed a six-question survey to send to the Network's National Focal Points (NFPs), who are made up of civil servants in ministries that are responsible for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, asking them to provide information about the activities of their national parliaments regarding the 2030 Agenda. The six survey questions that were asked were as follows:

- 1) How are the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs dealt with in national, and sub-national, parliaments (e.g. debates in plenary, parliamentary committees, specific parliamentary mechanisms, etc.)?
- 2) Has the national (or sub-national) parliament passed any resolution, recommendation, or inquiry regarding the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs to the national government? If yes, what was the content?
- 3) Has the national Government, or individual Ministries in charge of the 2030 Agenda implementation processes, or respective national policy strategies, addressed the national Parliament on the general issue of national implementation challenges and efforts, or sought parliamentary advice and support on corresponding political approaches and decisions?
- 4) What is the role of specific parliamentary mechanisms (e.g. court of audits) in the 2030 Agenda/SDGs implementation process?
- 5) For those countries that wrote, or are in the process of writing, Voluntary National Reviews: In what way did the national, or sub-national, parliament contribute to the Voluntary National Review (in the VNR 2016 and 2017 countries)?
- 6) Has the national, or sub-national, parliament initiated or organized any SDG specific activities (e.g. workshops, parliamentary inquiry, outreach activities, etc.)?

Given that 9 countries of the ESDN's 33 member countries provided the ESDN with information regarding national parliamentary involvement with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, all 9 countries will be given their own subsections, and include Belgium, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Slovakia, Switzerland and The Netherlands. The information provided by these countries comes not only from the ESDN's NFPs, but also from a select group of national

level parliamentarians who are known to have been active in engaging with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. In the case of Greece there is information from both the ESDN NFP and a parliamentarian. In the case of Italy, the information was provided solely by a member of the Italian Senate. 3 of the countries that provided information were only able to provide limited information, whereas the other 6 were able to provide a little more.

Apart from separating this section by European country, the Report also separates the answers given based on the survey questions that were asked. The survey questions are highlighted in the following paragraphs to show which survey questions are being addressed.

Belgium

In asking the Belgian National Focal Point for information about national parliamentary activities regarding the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, the NFP did not receive information from the Parliament of the French Community (*Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles*) and the German Community. Due to a lack of manpower, the Walloon Region could not answer the questions in detail but their progress report (*le 1er rapport Wallon sur la mise en œuvre des ODD* – the first Walloon report on the implementation of the SDGs) will be sent to their parliament and will most likely be discussed in the regional parliament. However, no further information is available.

When it comes to what national and sub-national parliaments are doing in terms of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs (**survey question 1**), the federal level in Belgium has **had debates that have taken place in the External Relations Committee (RelEx) and the Special Committee on Climate & Sustainable Development of the Belgian Chamber of Representatives**. However, there is **no specific new mechanism in place since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for parliaments to engage with the 2030 Agenda or the SDGs**. The Special Committee primarily follows Multilateral Conferences and the respective national implementation processes.

Looking at the sub-national level in Belgium is important, as the different regions have strong autonomy. In the Brussels Capital Region, members of the Brussels-Capital Parliament have the ability to address the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs at debates in plenary, parliamentary committees, or within any specific parliamentary mechanisms. One Member of Parliament made a parliamentary inquiry in 2015 asking the state of the issue and the involvement of the Brussels-Capital Region. This debate took place in the Parliamentary Committee for the Environment.

In Flanders, one of Belgium's regions, there has been no debate on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in the plenary meeting or in the parliamentary commissions. However, through the system of written questions, an individual member of parliament asked for information on the efforts of the Flemish

Government in implementing the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. The Flemish Government provided a comprehensive answer, including an extensive list of current policies and realizations, as well as good practices in a policy mapping exercise.

The Flemish Government approved the framework text of the National Strategy on Sustainable Development (NSSD), which mentions the commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Because this text stems from the executive power, it does not mention an active role for the legislative power. However, the NSSD does envision communication and proof of accountability to the public and the parliament with a frequency of two times during each legislature period, with the first time being in September, 2017. Therefore, as far as the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs serve as a framework for new legislation, the SDGs are part of the discussions in the parliamentary commissions and the plenary meetings.

When it comes to the parliaments in Belgium passing resolutions, recommendations or inquiries regarding the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs to the **national government (survey question 2)**, the **federal level has sent a parliamentary inquiry to the Minister for Sustainable Development regarding the 2030 Agenda and the updated NSSD. The committees: External Relations and Climate & Sustainable Development also debated the 2030 Agenda and the related Belgian policies.**

In the Brussels Capital Region, there has been no initiatives taken to the national government. In Flanders there have also been no special resolutions, recommendations, or inquiries into the 2030 Agenda apart from the Climate Resolution, which was approved in plenary and takes into account SDG 13: Climate Action.

When asked if the national government or individual ministry responsible for implementing the 2030 Agenda or the national policy strategy has addressed the national parliament on issues regarding implementation (**survey question 3**), the Belgian NFP shared that at the federal level, the Minister for Sustainable Development, who is responsible for the internal implementation of the 2030 Agenda, was invited, together with the Minister of Development Cooperation, who is, together with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, responsible for the external aspects of the 2030 Agenda, by the External Relations Committee of the Belgian Chamber of Representatives on March 1st, 2016 for a meeting. There, the Minister for Sustainable Development explained the Belgian approach towards the 2030 Agenda. There was another meeting on June 27th, 2016, where the Minister spoke to the Special Committee on Climate and Sustainable Development about the Parliament's follow-up on the 2030 Agenda. Both of these meetings were followed by a debate.

At the sub-national level, the Flemish Government has not addressed the Flemish Parliament on the issue of implementation challenge and efforts

regarding the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, nor have they sought parliamentary advice and support.

The role of parliamentary mechanisms in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs (**survey question 4**) at the federal and sub-national level have not been arranged. The power to decide how to organize, which means also how to implement the 2030 Agenda, is up to the legislative powers.

As some countries have prepared a Voluntary National Review (VNR) for the UN High Level Political Forum (**survey question 5**), either in 2016 or 2017, one of the survey questions asked for information about how national and sub-national parliaments were involved in its drafting. Belgium, which has prepared a VNR for 2017, has the following excerpt from its VNR that addresses the parliaments: Parliaments at the federal and federated levels are currently studying how to organize their work on this new global Agenda. The federal parliament, for instance, has, for several years, known an 'MDG Group of Friends', which has now been renamed 'SDG Group of Friends'. More efforts are underway, however, to make sure the universal and integrated character of the new Agenda can be more adequately reflected in the assemblies' roles in holding the respective executives as a whole to account, and not only the respective ministers in charge of the sustainable development portfolio, but also the international development efforts in a strictly North-South perspective. It is intended that from autumn 2017 and onwards, each federal parliamentary committee will integrate the SDGs relevant for its substantive policy area in its work. The committee for external affairs also plans to organize a focused debate at the rate of one SDG per parliamentary year, thereby discussing aspects of both domestic and external implementation, whereby interested colleagues and MPs from other committees would be invited to join in. The debate's conclusions would be channelled into a resolution that is subsequently debated in plenary in the presence of the Prime Minister.

The NSSD further helps, to some degree, by envisaging a national 2030 Agenda implementation report to be jointly issued to all parliaments twice per government term. The aim of this report will be to highlight progress made and gaps identified towards the realization of the SDGs, in order to spell out recommendations in terms of corrective action or reprioritization. In order to make sure this happens in dialogue with all concerned stakeholders, there will be a large-scale event that will be organized, whereby informed civil society organizations, local administrations, academia and experts can exchange experiences, views and advice with representatives of all involved governments. The first of these events is expected to take place in fall 2017, after the presentation of Belgium's first NVR report at the HLPF 2017. Apart from this VNR excerpt, the Parliament at the federal level was not involved in the VNR process. However, there were some questions posed by some parliamentarians on the elaboration process of the VNR, but this was more geared towards the parliament having a 'control function'.

The Brussels Capital Region is not directly involved in the process of writing the VNR, and the Flemish Parliament also did not contribute to the VNR in a direct way. However, the individual questions that were posed by a member of parliament urged the Flemish government to do a proper policy-mapping, which helped in an indirect way in the VNR's preparation.

Regarding the national and sub-national level parliaments initiating or organizing SDG specific activities (**survey question 6**), there has been nothing from the federal level, but they are open to private initiatives or the initiatives of individual Members of Parliament. The Parliament of the Brussels Capital Region has not organized specific activities, nor has the Flemish Parliament, but the awareness there is growing.

Finland

With respect to **survey question 1**, the **government of Finland published a [Government Report](#) that was submitted to the plenary session of the Finnish Parliament in March 2017, which dealt with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda**. The Parliament and **nearly all Parliamentary Committees have discussed the government's national implementation of the 2030 Agenda** in spring 2017. The committees have heard multiple stakeholders, such as governmental officials, ministries, non-governmental organizations, scientific stakeholders and business. The process in the Finnish Parliament regarding this matter has been comprehensive and horizontal. As a result, based on expert hearings, the committees have given their reports and recommendations for the consideration and further action by the Government and Ministries regarding the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

The Committee of Future has taken the overall responsibility of the 2030 Agenda in Finland. It organized an open discussion event on the national implementation of the Government Plan, and on June 7th, 2017, it submitted a detailed report on the Government's implementation plan.

In Finland, the Government is responsible to its citizens for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The **Parliament supervises and reviews the activities of the Government and the administration**, thereby ensuring full accountability. In addition, the participation of Parliament in the discussion of sustainable development issues, and in the follow-up of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, is important to ensuring policy coherence.

The annual cycle of national follow-up and review, as well as the four-year cycle, with comprehensive evaluation of progress and global reporting, aims to ensure the fulfilment of the Government's commitments in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. **The cycles also provide Parliament with a stronger role in the follow-up of national implementation and raise the visibility of sustainable development issues in national discussions. An annual event addressing the current status and future of sustainable development in**

Finland is the yearly culmination point and main forum for this discussion, also for the members of the Parliament.

The discussion of sustainable development in the Government's annual report is an essential part of the annual cycle. This serves as a self-assessment mechanism for the Government and strengthens accountability to Parliament and citizens with respect to sustainable development issues. **The National Audit Office (VTV) provides a statement on the Government's annual report and regularly expresses its opinion on the effectiveness of administrative actions in achieving the 2030 Agenda goals.** The indicator data and related interpretations are one of the inputs for the "state and future of sustainable development in Finland", which is an event to be held every spring. The objective is to produce information on the current status of sustainable development, future scenarios affecting it, and the necessary development actions for public debates and Parliament's review of the Government's annual report.

The updated set of national sustainable development indicators were agreed in May 2017. The interactive and participatory mechanism to enable the best use of the new indicator set will be launched in early autumn 2017.

Regarding the Finnish Parliament passing resolutions or recommendations (survey question 2) **the various committees of the Finnish Parliament (Committee of Future, Committee of Foreign Affairs, Committee of the Environment, etc.) have given their reports, including recommendations, on the Government's report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. These reports provided comprehensive analysis of the state, gaps and strengths of sustainable development in Finland and gave several strong guidelines and proposals to Government.**

When looking at how the Finnish Government has been addressing the Parliament (survey question 3), the Government, in its report to Parliament, raised several issues, for example, follow-up and review, in which Parliament's role is essential and needed in the 2030 Agenda implementation and evaluation processes. Joint events with the Parliament have been organized. **Prior to the adoption of the Government's Implementation Plan, several joint meetings with the Members of the Parliament from all political parties were organized in order to build common understanding and ground for long-term, coherent, and inclusive national implementation.**

One of the specific parliamentary mechanisms that Finland's Parliament has in place (survey question 4), or rather the government has in place, so that it can hold itself accountable to the Finnish Parliament stems from the government's annual reports, which will begin from 2017 onwards. **These reports are designed to strengthen the accountability mechanism of the government, so that the Finnish Parliament can stay informed on the progress of the 2030 Agenda's implementation in Finland.**

Finland arranges the 'State and Future of Sustainable Development in Finland' event annually, which is part of a national follow-up mechanism that involves the members of Parliament, and provides them with information regarding the progress made and gaps identified in the implementation of sustainable development in Finland.

The National Audit Office (NAO) has been proactive and committed to auditing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, which was mentioned in a parliament report.

When Finland prepared its VNR for the HLPF 2016 (**survey question 5**), **the VNR was written in cooperation with multiple stakeholders, including members from the National Commission on Sustainable Development, which is comprised of members and deputy members from three Finnish parliamentary committees.**

The Finnish Parliament has organized events regarding the SDGs (**survey question 6**). **The Parliament held its first open debate and discussion about the SDGs and Parliament's role in November 2016.** This discussion was the first such discussion that **engaged all of Parliament.** In addition, the **Committee of Future organized an open hearing for all stakeholders in spring 2017, after the adoption of the Government Implementation Plan.**

The Parliament is also aiming to strengthen its role by making the SDGs visible in not only its core work, but also through communication.

Germany

Due to its crosscutting nature, the policies of the **2030 Agenda can be found both directly and indirectly on the agenda of every *Bundestag* (German Parliament) committee (survey question 1).** Apart from these "classic" legislative structures in Parliament, the **Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development has anchored the topic of sustainability in the Federal Parliament since 2004.** One of its main formal tasks is to evaluate the German Federal Government's sustainability policy. It is involved in the legislative process by way of **providing expert opinions.** It furthermore **issues opinions on current and longer-term sustainable development topics, as well as pushes for change and progress and makes concrete proposals.** It maintains contact to the relevant institutions on a federal, *Länder* (provincial), and European level, as well as conducts dialogue with civil society. **In short: the Parliamentary Advisory Council's work serves to firmly anchor the idea of sustainability in politics and society.**

On March 31st, 2017, the plenary of the *Bundestag* held a debate, the [minutes](#) of which are only available in German, on the new [German Sustainable](#)

[Development Strategy 2016](#), also only available in German, in which i.a. the Head of the Chancellery actively participated.

Besides other plenary debates (**survey question 2**), the **German *Bundestag* has passed a motion (Bundestag printed paper 18/7361) asking the *Bundesregierung* (federal government) to consequently implement the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in Germany.**

Although no answer was provided by the German NFP for survey question 3, one can already notice that the German federal government and the German parliament are working together closely on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

The role of the parliament in fostering activities relating to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs (**survey question 4**), can be most seen by the **decision by the Parliament on February 20th, 2014, to establish the Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development (Parlamentarischer Beirat für nachhaltige Entwicklung (PBnE))**. The *Bundestag* printed paper 18/559 tasked the PBnE with appraising whether the Federal Government adequately fulfils its obligation, stipulated in Rule 44 (1) in conjunction with Rule 62 of the Joint Rules of Procedure of the Federal Ministries (*Gemeinsame Geschäftsordnung der Bundesministerien* (GGO)), to give an account of whether the impact of a project keeps with sustainable development (“sustainability impact assessment”). **The PBnE submits the result of its appraisal to the respective lead committee of the German *Bundestag* in the form of an Expert Opinion for the latter to discuss and assess in writing. The ground for this appraisal is the German Sustainability Strategy that in turn is based on the SDGs.**

Germany prepared their VNR for the HLPF 2016 (**survey question 5**), and **within the VNR there was no formal consultation of, or contribution by, the Parliament. However, the two ministries in charge of the VNR closely informed the respective *Bundestag* committees.** In New York, the **VNR was presented by two Parliamentarian State Secretaries** (i.e. members of the *Bundestag*). Other members of the *Bundestag* were also present in New York.

When it comes to the German Parliament organizing specific activities or events (**survey question 6**) the **Parliamentary Advisory Council has been very in active in publicly advocating the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. For instance, the Advisory Council organized public discussion rounds and other events, issued numerous policy papers and initiated plenary debates on the topic of sustainable development, one of which is the *Bundestag* printed paper 18/12511.**

Greece

For the Greek case study, this Report received feedback from a Greek NFP and a Greek parliamentarian. Therefore, answers to the survey questions will come from both of these sources, and will be discussed by survey question, rather than by feedback person.

The implementation of the SDGs at the national level (survey question 1) has been coordinated by the General Secretariat of the Greek Government (GSG) since December 2016, ensuring political commitment, as it cooperates directly with the public administration and the Hellenic Parliament on legislative and regulatory issues. The ministry of Environment and Energy is responsible for the implementation of 7 out of the overall 17 SDGs, namely SDG6, SDG7, SDG11, SDG13, SDG 14, and partly SDG15. Greece is also committed to participate in the VNR in the HLPF 2018.

By assigning the coordination of national efforts to achieve the SDGs to the General Secretariat, with emphasis on enhancing inter-ministerial coordination and stakeholder engagement, the high priority given to the implementation of the SDGs by the Hellenic government, is confirmed in practice, as **the GSG is capable of ensuring a whole-of-government approach, coordinating the legislative work of the government, reducing silos across thematic policies from their design to their implementation, which ensures coherence and cooperation directly with all governmental bodies and line ministries.**

The Parliamentary Committees of the Hellenic Parliament elaborate and examine legislative proposals that fall within the various thematic areas of the SDGs (i.e. social economy, development, research and innovation, humanitarian crisis, environmental protection). These legislative proposals (bills) are then debated and adopted in plenary. Thus, the Hellenic Parliament, per se, can ensure legislation and policy coherence for sustainable development. Currently, the GSG is working with the Parliament on the specifics of the involvement of a parliamentary committee, where all political parties are represented, and in which the discussion on SDGs will be taking place on a regular basis, so as to contribute to, and guide, implementation at the national level. A progress report on the implementation of the National Action Plan on the SDGs (scheduled to be elaborated in 2018) and its reviews will be submitted by the GSG to the Parliament at regular intervals for review and political guidance.

Since the SDGs go far beyond the sole responsibility of the Greek government, strong partnerships are required with all stakeholders in the implementation process, ranging from the Hellenic Parliament, local authorities, and public administration to civil society and the private sector. Regular discussions in

parliamentary committees on issues touched upon by the SDGs are conducted on issues, such as the green economy, migration and climate change.

The Parliamentary Committee on Environment and Energy has extensively discussed the implementation of SDGs relevant to its proceedings. The designing of a roadmap for the sustainable development of the Mediterranean for the next ten years within the framework of the SDGs has been a focal point of conducted parliamentary discussions. A commitment to address the challenges related to the protection of the environment and the sustainable development of the Mediterranean Sea and coast within the 2030 Agenda has been reiterated in the Athens Declaration that was the outcome of the February 2016 UN meeting hosted by Greece that focused on the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025, the medium-term strategy of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) for the coming 6 years, other key action plans in the areas of offshore, pollution, biodiversity, coastal zone management and climate change adaptation.

When it comes to parliamentary resolutions that have been adopted (**survey question 2**), the Hellenic Parliament adopted, in December 2016, the law 4440/2016, art. 43 (2) which assigns to the Office of Coordination, Institutional, International and European Affairs of the General Secretariat of the Government the duty of coordinating and monitoring the implementation of SDGs at national level.

The involvement of the GSG both in law-making, generally in Greece, and recently in the implementation of the SDGs, can ensure greater coherence in legislation and addressing trade-offs from the policy design phase, right from the start, so that the legislation that is enacted and institutionalised can be complementary and aligned to the principles and objectives of the 2030 Agenda.

Since September 2015, **there have been certain cases in which members of the Parliament (not from the Government coalition but from other political parties represented in Parliament) have submitted written inquiries regarding the government's approach and actions to achieve the SDGs at the national level, directly addressing the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and of Environment and Energy.** In this context, competent services of the two Ministries were asked to provide detailed reports, information and input on activities carried out and planned, on the organisation and coordination mechanism followed, and on the next steps and priorities, which have been forwarded to the Parliament, and are accessible to any interested Member of Parliament.

In Greece, **there are Greek Ministers who are in charge of the 2030 Agenda implementation processes that have periodically addressed parliamentary committees on national implementation challenges and strategies seeking parliamentary advice (survey question 3).** Representative cases are those of

the Minister of Environment and Energy, who has informed the parliamentary committee on the implementation of SDGs related to green economy, the promotion of renewable energy resources like photovoltaic and wind farms, and is **seeking to engage parliamentarians in a multi-stakeholder dialogue so that proper action is designed with state and non-state representatives**. Additionally, the ministry of Foreign Affairs, as part of the SDG implementation process, has informed the relevant Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense on the prioritization of targets on behalf of the public administration and non-state organizations from the private sector and businesses.

One parliamentary mechanism for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs (survey question 4) that has already been touched upon is the General Secretariat of the Government (GSG) is working out the specifics with the Parliament about the involvement of a parliamentary committee, in which the discussion of SDGs will be taking place. A progress report on the implementation of the National Action Plan on the SDGs, scheduled for 2018, and its reviews will be submitted to the Parliament at regular intervals.

Members of the Hellenic Parliament participate in the Inter-parliamentary Union's (IPU) discussions (survey question 6) on the 2030 Agenda advocating for the SDGs. Members of the Parliament promote the SDGs through various institutions and networks, such as special task forces in the context of the World Economic Forum. **The Hellenic Parliament has held hearings from various ministries, which bring the SDGs to public attention.** Its role as an agent of change can be reinforced through the organization of public workshops to attract the public and media, which helps in ensuring a productive dialogue with civil society over the SDGs, so that development is driven forward for the well-being of the people.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, since May 2016, has organized a series of meetings with line ministries and the private sector, as well as several multi-stakeholder dialogues, in which parliamentarians and representatives of the Parliament participated. One of these multi-stakeholder events addressed the issue of how to achieve "Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development", an issue of high importance to the work of the Parliament. It is envisaged, that in due course, that the Parliament will undertake a more active role in the implementation of the SDGs' follow-up and review process. At the national level, such debates and awareness raising activities, particularly within the Parliament, will take place.

Italy

The answers to the survey questions were provided by a Member of the Italian Senate.

The Italian Parliament has constantly followed the process resulting in the definition of the 2030 Agenda (**survey question 1 and 4**). **The Chamber of Deputies' Foreign Affairs Committee set up a Post-2015 Agenda Sub-Committee at the very beginning of the present Parliament (2013). In continuity with that, and following approval of the 2030 Agenda on 25 September 2015, the Standing Sub-Committee on Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals was then set up.** The Committee has the **authority to establish facts and to trigger and orient public policies for realizing the SDGs**, with particular reference to both a monitoring of results and transparency in the use of financial resources to achieve the SDGs.

It is, moreover, quite clear that the universal nature, the multiplicity and the sheer complexity of the SDGs and their targets mean that the parliamentary remit for their achievement must be transversal, involving several different Committees and provisions. The 2030 Agenda presents itself as a strategy for comprehensively transforming the development model, indissolubly integrating social development, economic growth and environmental sustainability. It is Parliament in its entirety that must see to the task.

With respect to parliamentary inquiries, resolutions and recommendations (**survey question 2 and 4**), **the Standing Sub-Committee on Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals began, in June 2016, a fact-finding inquiry that is to be concluded by 31 December 2017.** The inquiry includes hearings involving government officials, international organizations and members of civil society participating in the Agenda's implementation process. The fact-finding inquiry is, in particular, monitoring the initiatives taken by the G7 countries (Italy holds the G7 Presidency for the year 2017). The inquiry is assessing initiatives, financial aspects and any possible relations with international institutions that may help to define Italy's position regarding the various issues and to identify the most appropriate ways of giving Italy's commitment to achieving the 2030 Agenda a greater visibility, especially in European contexts.

It should be remembered that the Italian Parliament is committed not only at a national level, but also to contributing to the definition of European policies on sustainable development. **On 14 March 2017, the Senate's Environment Committee approved a Resolution on the European Commission's Communication, "Next steps for a sustainable European future: European Union action for sustainability", which tackles the nexus between the European Commission's ten priorities and the Agenda's 17 SDGs.** The Environment Committee invites the European Commission to place the

2030 Agenda at the centre of its commitment to build the European Union of the future, also with a view to a review of the “Europe 2020 Strategy”, and it notes that the division of competences between the Union and the Member States in pursuit of the SDGs should be better specified. In addition, it emphasizes the central role that enterprises must play in pursuing the SDGs.

The Triennial Programming and Policy-Setting Document for International Development Co-operation (2016-2018) was recently presented to Parliament for its opinion, and was approved (**survey question 3 and 4**). On 31 May 2017, the Senate’s Foreign Affairs Committee expressed its favourable opinion of the text, with qualifications. It particularly appreciated the text’s strategic framework and its intention to place the 2030 Agenda and sustainable development at the centre of Italy’s foreign policy, with the objective of facing the profound political and demographic changes taking place, the increasing destabilization in certain areas of Africa and the Middle East and the intensification of the migration emergency.

The Italian Government is about to announce the new National Strategy for Sustainable Development. This has the task of shaping the policies, programmes and interventions directed at promoting sustainable development in Italy, whilst accepting the challenges posed by the new global agreements. The Strategy is to be updated every three years and is based on a shared process that involves all the relevant government departments, the public agencies, the world of research and knowledge, and civil society. **The Italian Minister of the Environment, Gian Luca Galletti, has reported to Parliament on the content of the Sustainable Development Strategy during the hearing conducted by the Senate’s Environment Committee on 16 February 2017.**

The Italian Parliament is not just a legislative forum, but also a place that informs, debates and formulates and, in these activities, it is open to civil society’s contributions and collaboration (**survey question 6**). **Amongst the various events, seminars and meetings dedicated to sustainable development, mention should be made of one that took place in the Senate on 31 January 2017.** It was organized by “ASviS” (the Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development), which brings together more than 140 of the most important figures in the economy and Italian companies and has Professor Enrico Giovannini as its spokesperson. The meeting was introduced by the President of the Senate, Pietro Grasso, and brought together important exponents of the main political parties and movements. It tackled the fundamental theme of the relationship between international and domestic implementation of the SDGs and the priorities and choices for Italian policy-makers.

Luxembourg

In the case of Luxembourg, there are two ministers, the Minister for the Environment, who under the law is the minister in charge for the coordination for national sustainable development politics, and the Minister for Cooperation and humanitarian Action, are **meeting the Parliament on regular basis for briefings and discussions on the implementation of the Agenda 2030.**

Slovakia

In the forthcoming draft resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic, which is expected to be adopted in July, the following involvement of the National Council of the Slovak Republic is proposed in the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda.

In order to meet the principles of implementing the 2030 Agenda, in particular the principle of immutability and indivisibility, it is **crucial that national priorities for the 2030 Agenda are also approved by the National Council of the Slovak Republic.**

The role of the National Council of the Slovak Republic is within the monitoring of the achievement of the SDGs and is an integral part of the ongoing implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Within the framework of the two-year monitoring cycle, the Government of the Slovak Republic, on the basis of the recommendation of the Deputy Prime Minister's Office, submits a report to the National Council of the Slovak Republic, **which is an opportunity for suggestions to improve the performance of the Government in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The findings resulting from the above-mentioned report, as well as relevant recommendations from the National Council of the Slovak Republic and other stakeholders should be reflected in the new state budget.**

Within the four-year monitoring cycle, the Deputy Prime Minister's Office will publish an **evaluation report** with the objective **to inform the National Council of the Slovakia and the public about outcomes of the leaving Government in delivering results regarding the national priorities within the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.**

Switzerland

In Switzerland, the **2030 Agenda has not been discussed in the Parliament prior to the adoption by the Federal Council (survey question 1).**

Regarding the national or sub-national level parliaments passing resolutions, or inquiries with respect to the 2030 Agenda (**survey question 2 and 6**) there were

some inquiries about how the federal administration wants to implement the 2030 Agenda and promote policy coherence. One motion demanded the setting-up of a SDG-Platform/Council. One motion demanded a strategy to finance the international Goals of Switzerland. Another Motion demanded a setting-up of institutional and procedural measures for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The offices responsible for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda (**survey question 3**), namely the Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), did not address the parliament, nor did they seek parliamentary advice.

There are currently **no parliamentary mechanisms in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs (survey question 4) in Switzerland, as the Parliament does not yet have a defined role.**

With respect to the VNR, which Switzerland prepared for the HLPF 2016 (**survey question 5**), the **Parliament had made no contribution, and it is foreseen that the Parliament will also not make a contribution for the Switzerland's VNR for the HLPF 2018.**

The Netherlands

The Parliament devotes about two to three parliamentary debates to the SDGs per year (survey question 1). The Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation is the responsible and coordinating minister, so the Permanent Committee on Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation is the committee dealing mostly with the implementation of the SDGs. Of course, the many different goals require attention by many of the other dedicated committees, but the SDGs and their implementation in general lie with the abovementioned committee. **Up until now, there have been no plenary debates dedicated specifically to the SDGs within the Parliament.**

One of the most important parliamentary debates of the year is the debate following Accountability Day. On Accountability Day, which is always the third Wednesday of May, the president of the Netherlands Court of Audit presents a report to the House of Representatives, scrutinising the Government's policy over the past year: have the desired policy goals been achieved and did the Cabinet observe the law (survey question 1 and 4)? Also on this day, the Government accounts for its plans that were set for the previous year. Then in mid-June, the **House of Representatives holds a debate on the financial reports and the reports of the Netherlands Court of Audit. Members of Parliament (MPs) discuss with the ministers the implementation of the various policy programmes, as well as the results and costs. After the debate in the House, the Senate also discusses the annual reports, so the ministers must account to both chambers.**

This year (2017), the **first annual national report on the implementation of the SDGs has been submitted to Parliament on Accountability Day**. This report is unique, in the sense that it has been drafted by not only the government (national and local), but also by five stakeholder groups: the private sector, the financial sector, civil society, knowledge institutions and youth organisations.

The House of Representatives has adopted two motions (25 Jan and 15 June, 2017) asking the Government to look at the possibilities, as well as at the pros and cons, of a general (obligatory) preliminary examination, testing all new or envisaged legislation on compatibility with the SDGs (survey question 2). The Government has not yet responded to these motions, but is in the process of doing so.

The House of Representatives has also adopted a motion (15 June 2017) asking the Government to look into ways of monitoring the impact of the SDGs on vulnerable people within marginalised groups. The Government will look into this issue.

The Government has, as mentioned above, reported on the progress that has been made in implementing the SDGs (survey question 3). On the whole, The Netherlands is doing quite well on the SDGs, but the Government has also acknowledged that in certain areas, more has to be done to realise the goals set for 2030. In most areas where these challenges lie, plans have already been made, or are being made, to speed up progress. The challenges have been clearly stated in the report submitted for Accountability Day, and have also been discussed at the parliamentary hearing (debate) in June.

The Netherlands has recently held national elections (in March), and a new Cabinet has not been formed yet. Talks are ongoing between several political parties. In this situation, the Government is officially under resignation, and will (and can) not take any decisions that would be controversial, or that (can) have a great future impact. The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs would fall under this category.

Regarding **The Netherlands' VNR for the HLPF 2017**, which was written on the basis of the extensive national report that was sent to Parliament in May, **there was no direct contribution made by the Parliament to the VNR**, other than their reactions to the national report (survey question 5).

Regarding Parliaments involvement in designing events based around the SDGs, there has not been much done in The Netherlands (survey question 6).

Conclusion

Parliament's role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is very important, as it conveys a very strong political will to seriously consider the implementation of the SDGs at not only the national level, but also at the EU and European level. Parliaments play a very important role in legitimizing the efforts of their governments in carrying through with implementation measures, as well as complimenting them by checking that the government is correctly implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. These positive and reinforcing feedback loops ensure that national parliaments and the national government's work together in a harmonious way to constantly improve upon their implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Inter-Parliamentary Union stresses this point when it instructs parliamentarians on how they can approach and address the SDGs in their parliamentary work.

However, as is often the case in Europe, there is not much cooperation by national parliaments in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda or the SDGs. At the European and EU level there is a genuine desire to see a more harmonious approach to integrating and implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs by creating an EU-wide sustainable development strategy that relies heavily on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, but the European Commission has not of yet proceeded with drafting one. Instead, the European Commission has taken the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs and looked at its 10 current focal areas and have assessed how they are already meeting the SDGs. This is an important step, but the European Commission cannot stop at that point, as some EU Member States and the European Parliament have hinted at. A common strategy that Member States could align their own strategies with, would be helpful in assuring vertical policy coherence and providing guidance to Member States in their implementation measures.

The European Parliament, on the other hand, has been attempting to bring the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs more to the forefront at the European level, but because they do not have legislative initiative, they cannot formulate their own EU-wide sustainable development strategy. The other suggestions made by the European Parliament to the European Commission regarding forming committees to enhance the cooperation and coordination between the two, as well as between the European National Council, will hopefully be seen by the European Commission as a way to discuss more about the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in a constructive and progressive way.

The Multi-Stakeholder Platform that is being developed by the European Commission is a step in the right direction, as it is one more communication avenue that will be opened, with which to further discuss the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs with not only the European Parliament, but with a host of different stakeholders. Although not as inclusive as the European Parliament has suggested, the Platform has the potential to change and adapt if it proves itself to be successful.

At the national level, there are a few countries in which their national parliaments are more actively involved than in other countries with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Some countries, such as Finland, Germany, Greece, and Italy have introduced national sustainable development councils, or other parliamentary committees that deal directly with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, and bring SDG issues before their parliaments, ensuring that the 2030 Agenda is being discussed and concrete actions are being taken by all levels. The involvement of the national parliaments in these countries helps tremendously in policy coherence and generating political will for, and visibility of, the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

Other countries, however, have parliaments that are scarcely involved in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. However, many of those NFPs who filled out the survey indicated they believed their national parliaments would become more active in the 2030 Agenda's and the SDGs' implementation. It must also be said that many countries in Europe are still in the process of figuring out how they will implement the 2030 Agenda and are still developing their national sustainable development strategies to reflect the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

