



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 3 January 2019
(OR. en)

15715/18

LIMITE

**JEUN 168
SPORT 97
SUSTDEV 29
ONU 111
RELEX 1117
DEVGEN 246
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EDUC 483**

NOTE

From:	Presidency
To:	Delegations
Subject:	The Youth dimension of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development - <i>Presidency note</i>

Delegations will find attached a Presidency background note on the above subject, which will be presented in the context of the mandate of the 2030 Agenda Working Party and the letter circulated by its chair during the Austrian Presidency.

Namely, the 2030 Agenda Working Party was set up by COREPER in November 2017 and it received a mandate to “ensure a systematic, effective, participatory, transparent and integrated follow-up and review of the implementation of the SDGs at EU level in order to track progress, assess achievements and ensure accountability.”

Additionally, the Working Party’s chair during the Austrian Presidency circulated a letter to all SDG-relevant Working Parties at the level of the Council, whereby they were invited to “establish regular and coordinated exchanges of information regarding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in [their] specific policy areas”.

Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

at EU level in field Youth

- Presidency note -

1. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the 70th session of the UN General Assembly on 25 September 2015, represents an ambitious new blueprint to respond to global trends and challenges in a universal and transformative manner.

The core of the 2030 Agenda are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their 169 associated targets, which should be achieved by 2030. The SDGs have replaced, as of the 1st of January 2016, the former Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The 2030 Agenda and its SDGs constitute a comprehensive plan of action for the international community to achieve a better world. It has 5 main building blocks, known as the "five Ps":

- People: end poverty and hunger and ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity, equality, non-discrimination and a human rights-based and healthy environment.
- Planet: protect the planet from degradation, promote sustainable consumption and production, manage our natural resources in a sustainable manner and take urgent action on climate change.
- Prosperity: ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature.
- Peace: foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.
- Partnership: mobilize the means required to implement this Agenda through a Global Partnership for Sustainable Development based on solidarity and leaving no one behind.

The 17 SDGs are the following:

1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
5. Achieve gender equality and empower women and girls
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

The interlinkages and integrated nature of the SDGs are of crucial importance in ensuring the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Along with the outcome of other key international summits and conferences that were held in 2015 (in particular Financing for Development in Addis Ababa, the Climate COP 21 in Paris and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction), the international community has an ambitious new frame for all countries to work together on shared challenges.

The SDGs are universally applicable to all countries, and the EU and its Member States are committed to be frontrunners in implementing them.

2. The Commission communication of November 2016 and the Council conclusions of June 2017

On 22 November 2016, the Commission adopted its Communication on "Next steps for a sustainable European future: European action for sustainability"¹ as a reaction to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in September 2015. While this communication explains how the Commission's 10 political priorities contribute to implement the 2030 Agenda and how the EU will meet the SDGs in the future, it does not provide a comprehensive gap analysis or an EU implementation strategy.

From the Commission's perspective, the process of implementation of the 2030 Agenda at EU level should include two work streams:

1. mainstreaming the SDGs in the European policy framework and current Commission priorities;
2. launching a reflection on further developing the EU's long-term vision and the focus of sectoral policies after 2020.

On 20 June 2017, the Council (GAC) adopted its Conclusions on "A sustainable European future: The EU response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"². In these Conclusions, the Council

- reiterated the strong commitment of the EU and its member states to fully implement the 2030 Agenda and achieve the 17 SDGs in a comprehensive and effective manner.
- set out the response of the EU to the 2030 Agenda and how its implementation is conceived at EU level.

¹ Doc. 14774/16 - COM(2016) 739 final + ADD 1

² Doc. 10370/17

- provided insights on the next steps to be taken for implementation, the means and resources in use, the involvement of multilateral stakeholders and other actions foreseen concerning future monitoring and review.
- underlined the importance to reach sustainable development in its three dimensions (economic, social and environmental), in a balanced and integrated way.
- Urged the Commission to elaborate by mid-2018 an implementation strategy outlining timelines, objectives and concrete measures to implement the 2030 Agenda in all EU policies, and to identify, also by mid-2018, existing gaps in order to assess what more needs to be done until 2030 in terms of EU policy, legislation, governance structure for horizontal coherence and means of implementation.
- called upon the Commission to carry out detailed regular monitoring of the SDGs at EU level.
- invited the Commission to prepare for the first EU report on the internal and external implementation of the 2030 Agenda by the EU at the High-Level Political Forum by 2019.

By December 2018, the Commission had not yet delivered on the requests made by the Council.

3. The 2030 Agenda Working Party

In November 2017, the Committee of Permanent Representatives (Coreper) set up a dedicated Council Working Party (the 2030 Agenda WP) to ensure proper follow-up, monitoring and review of the implementation at EU level, across internal and external policy sectors, of commitments under the 2030 Agenda, and approved the mandate proposed by the Presidency, in line with Article 19, paragraph 3, of the Council Rules of Procedure.

4. The 2030 Agenda implementation challenges

Following to a number of informal discussions at Working Party level³ and in light of the experiences shared by the 2030 Agenda coordinators from the Member States that have set up sustainable development coordination schemes, the following challenges as regards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda have been identified:

³ Involving the WPIEI Global, the Development Cooperation WP (CODEV) and the CONUN WP, jointly and in separate meetings.

Global implementation challenges

- Mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs into all relevant policy areas and not only on those who were involved in the preparatory process, namely Development cooperation and Environment
- Keeping the balance among the 3 dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) during the implementation period up to 2030
- Means of implementation, in particular international public financing, as well as the current lack of synergies between the finance for development and the finance for sustainable development processes
- Effective monitoring and accountability, since many data and indicators related to a number of SDGs are not available or not comparable, and many of them will not be available on time
- Policy coherence for sustainable development, which requires keeping a comprehensive approach while at the same time implementing the 2030 Agenda in all relevant policy sectors, both at internal and external levels
- Achieving ownership of the 2030 Agenda by all relevant actors and effective involvement of all relevant stakeholders, in particular civil society and the private sector, in the implementation and monitoring process

Implementation challenges for the EU

- Making the implementation of the 2030 Agenda a priority for the EU and its Member States, including at Commission and European Council levels
- Mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda into all policy areas and promoting ownership of the 2030 Agenda by all policy sectors
- Assessing and identifying possible gaps in all policy areas in order to assess what needs to be done in terms of EU policy, legislation and means of implementation from now to 2030. This includes the possible review of existing EU strategies, policies and instruments that have a shorter implementation period, such as the Europe 2020 Strategy

In this context, the Presidency has preliminarily identified a number of additional implementation challenges, which are specific to the Youth policy area:

- EU's limited competence with regard to the youth policy area, as provided by the TFEU
- There is a need to increase awareness at political level and in national, regional and local administrations with regard to the Youth dimension of the 2030 Agenda

5. The 2019 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)

The High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF) was set up by the 2030 Agenda⁴ as a forum with a central role in overseeing a network of follow-up and review processes at the global level.

Meeting under the auspices of the UN ECOSOC, the HLPF carries out annual reviews of selected SDGs in July. At those meetings, UN Members present their voluntary national reviews (VNRs) on the state of play of their national implementation processes.

Every 4 years, the HLPF meets under the auspices of the UN General Assembly in order to review implementation, provide guidance, identify challenges and mobilize further actions.

The seventh meeting of the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF 2019) will take place in two sessions at the UN Headquarters in New York, namely

- under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on 9-18 July, including a three-day ministerial meeting on 16-18 July, held jointly with ECOSOC's annual high-level segment.
- under the auspices of the UN General Assembly on two days in September 2019.

⁴ See paragraphs 82-90 of the 2030 Agenda (Follow-up and review/Global level)

Only one outcome document will result from the two sessions.

The HLPF 2019 will address the theme 'Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality', which the Presidency considers to be particularly relevant to Youth. It will conduct an in-depth review of SDG 4 (education and learning), SDG 8 (sustainable growth, employment and decent work), SDG 10 (reducing countries' inequalities), SDG 13 (combating climate change) and SDG 16 (peace, justice and good governance), in addition to SDG 17 (Global Partnership for Sustainable Development) which is reviewed each year.

Fifty-one countries will conduct Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) for HLPF 2019, among which 2 EU countries (Croatia and the UK⁵). In addition, 10 countries will conduct VNRs for the second time, including 1 EU country (France). The Commission is expected to report on the state of play of implementation at EU level.

6. Implementing the 2030 Agenda in the Youth field

World population data projections show that while the world youth population (ages 15 to 24) is projected to rise to 1.4 billion in 2050 from 1.2 billion now, the youth share of world population will fall to 14 percent from 16 percent. In particular, Africa's youth population will rise to 35 percent of the world youth total in 2050, from 20 percent today.

This means that by 2030, Youth is likely to remain a significant factor in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda as a whole. Youth is part and parcel of 2 "Ps" (People and Partnership) and is also very relevant to the other 3 "Ps" (Planet, Prosperity and Peace). There can be no sustainable development without young people being part of it: "leaving no one behind" also means including young people.

Youth, boys, girls and children are widely mentioned in the Preamble of the 2030 Agenda, in particular in paragraphs 20 (gender equality), 23 (vulnerable groups), 25 (quality education) and 27 (youth employment).

⁵ Whether the UK will still be a member of the EU or not by July 2019 is an issue that remains subject to ongoing Brexit developments and the political situation in the UK

As regards the SDGs, and while the Youth component is part of most of them, the following SDGs and targets are particularly relevant from a Youth perspective:

- Goal 1, in particular target 1.2
- Goal 2, in particular target 2.2
- Goal 3, targets 3.1 to 3.9
- Goal 4, all targets
- Goal 5, all targets
- Goal 6, in particular targets 6.1, 6.2 and 6.b
- Goal 8, in particular targets 8.3, 8.5, 8.6, 8.7, 8.8 and 8.9
- Goal 9, in particular targets 9.1, 9.5 and 9.c
- Goal 10, in particular targets 10.1, 10.2, 10.3, 10.4 and 10.7
- Goal 11, in particular targets 11.1, 11.2, 11.5 and 11.7
- Goal 12, in particular targets 12.3, 12.5, 12.8 and 12.b
- Goal 13, in particular targets 13.3 and 13.b
- Goal 15, in particular target 15.c
- Goal 16, in particular targets 16.1, 16.2, 16.3, 16.7 and 16.9

Like gender equality, the Youth dimension can be considered a cross-cutting issue that should be mainstreamed throughout the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs.

7. Presidency objectives

In the context of the invitation launched by the 2030 Agenda Working Party during the Austrian Presidency in December 2018, the Romanian Presidency wishes to facilitate the exchange of information between the two Working Parties on the 2030 Agenda topic. This should lead to a better information flow between the Council and the European Commission, with regard to the latter's reporting tasks on the implementation of youth-related SDG's by the EU.

Similarly, this initiative could equally help make the work of the Council in the youth field and inherently that of the EU Youth sector more visible.

Consequently, the Presidency invites the delegations to an exchange based on the questions below:

- How do you believe it would be best to mainstream the 2030 Agenda topic in the activities of the Youth Working Party?
 - What would be the most appropriate input of the Youth Working Party to the EU's internal and external implementation of the 2030 Agenda and on its reporting at the seventh UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in 2019 and beyond?
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