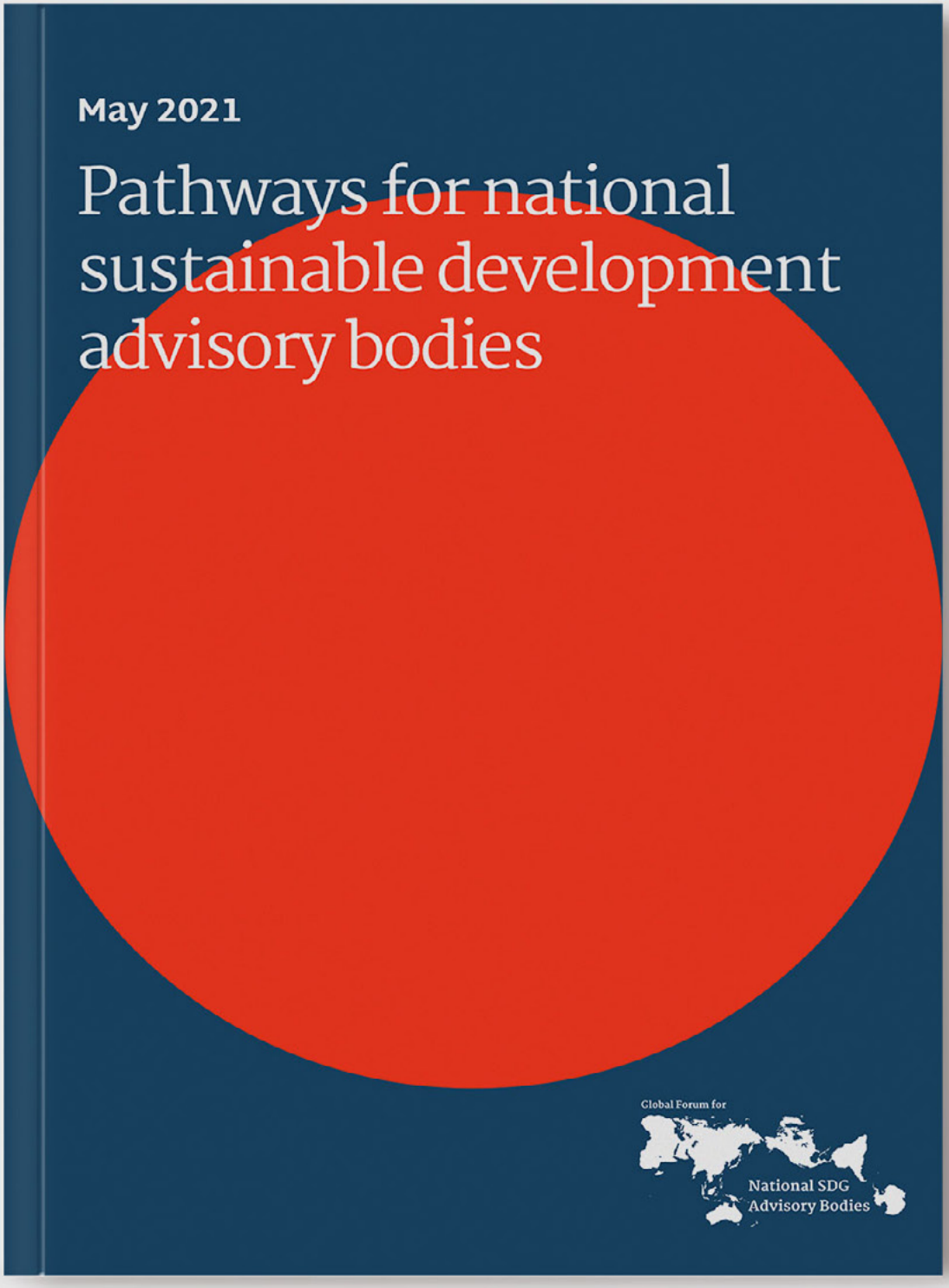

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the research participants from Belgium, Georgia, Kosovo, Mexico, Namibia, Portugal, Romania and Senegal, without whom this report would not have been possible. Moreover, the research has been conceptually developed and accompanied by a working group within the Global Forum for National SDG Advisory Bodies. The authors would like to thank the following individuals for their time contributed to this study:

- Gábor Bartus, Secretary General, Hungarian National Council for Sustainable Development (NFFT)
- Tamar Iakobidze, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, Caucasus Environmental NGO Network (CENN)
- Annika Lindblom, Senior Advisor, Ministry for Foreign Affairs & Prime Minister's Office (Finland)
- Michael Simpson, Executive Director, British Columbia Council for International Cooperation (BCCIC)
- Florence Syevuo, Country Coordinator, SDGs Kenya Forum
- Yared Tsegay, Head of Programmes, African Monitor South Africa
- Michiel de Vries, Network Coordinator, European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils Network (EEAC)
- Irena Zubcevic, Intergovernmental Policy and Review Branch, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)

The authors would also like to thank Hannah Janetschek (RNE), Felix Meyerhoff (RNE), Ursula Becker (GIZ) and Isabelle Krahe (GIZ) for their constructive support in writing this study.

The research was conducted by the British Columbia Council for International Cooperation (BCCIC) and submitted to the Global Forum for National SDG Advisory Bodies. The study was financially supported by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH on behalf of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of the Federal Republic of Germany.

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About the Global Forum for National SDG Advisory Bodies

The Global Forum is a network that connects the knowledge and experience of multi-stakeholder advisory commissions, councils and similar bodies for sustainable development. These bodies contribute to the national institutional architectures for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By bridging knowledge and interests of various stakeholder groups, multi-stakeholder advisory bodies foster social acceptance and cohesion within society in times of transformation. The demand for their work in facilitating negotiation outcomes cannot be underestimated.

This forum for and by national multi-stakeholder advisory bodies is as heterogeneous as the respective contexts its members are in, which vary accordingly in their institutional development, set-up, mandate and role. Constant exchange in and across working groups creates a rich marketplace of ideas, negotiation mechanisms and effective policy measures that can easily be transferred and tailored to local needs and demands elsewhere. As a demand-driven network, it constantly evolves its focus in collective processes. With its rich pool of collective knowledge, the forum effectively invites stakeholders and governments around the globe to adapt, implement and jointly accelerate the delivery of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

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Executive summary

This report presents pathways for the establishment and maintenance of national sustainable development councils, commissions or similar multi-stakeholder bodies (hereafter referred to as multi-stakeholder platform advisory councils, MSP-advisory bodies) with a formal and consultative status to national decision-makers for sustainable development. Formal arrangements for effective multi-stakeholder engagement are a key element to ensuring whole-of-society approaches to implementing the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and for accountability to remain within planetary boundaries in the coming decades.

Multi-stakeholder bodies played an important role in promoting sustainable development prior to the introduction of the 2030 Agenda; however, countries are increasingly establishing institutionalised MSP-advisory bodies specifically for long-term, inclusive engagement on 2030 Agenda implementation, to support consultation on the development of national priorities, drafting of national strategic plans and in reporting on progress to the United Nations and beyond.

MSP-advisory bodies and similar institutions constructively advise their governments on an integrated approach to sustainable development policymaking and create space for innovative dialogue. They encompass members from the private sector, academia and civil society in order to provide for whole-of-society dialogues on controversial issues that arise in the process of sustainable development transformation.

The governments examined in this report embrace inclusive and long-term, institutionalised multi-stakeholder engagement mechanisms and have set out provisions for periodic consultations and iterative engagement. Although the approaches to multi-stakeholder engagement vary, all the bodies investigated are informed to varying extents by the transformative elements of the 2030 Agenda, such as participation and leaving no one behind, as well as principles to ensure that engagement is timely, open and inclusive, transparent, informed and iterative. The eight countries considered in this study include MSP-advisory bodies that have been initiated and established far earlier than the 2030 Agenda (such as Belgium, Namibia and Portugal) and MSP-advisory bodies that have been established or are in the process of being established as a consequence of the 2030 Agenda and its international reporting and review mechanism (such as Georgia, Kosovo, Mexico, Romania and Senegal).

While the more established MSP-advisory bodies will provide pathways of how to maintain legitimacy and remain a credible advisor to the national government over time, the more recently established MSP-advisory bodies provide insight into success stories with respect to establishing effective processes and maintaining legitimacy over time. Together, the case studies provide a strong case for establishing multi-stakeholder mechanisms at the national level for countries lacking formal MSP institutionalisation.

For governments interested in an institutional, long-term architecture that incorporates multi-stakeholder negotiation results in their delivery, this report identifies the pathways for establishing and maintaining an advisory body to national governments.

Pathways for establishing MSP-advisory bodies:

- Harness existing inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms and processes or ad hoc MSP committees at national level.
- Collaborate with institutionalised stakeholder groups and build upon networks and a high degree of institutionalisation of the various stakeholder groups.
- Receive an official function to provide input and advice on national policy processes.
- Position the MSP-advisory body close to the centre of government and its administration to increase its engagement in national sustainable development strategies and ability to play

a leading role in holistic and policy-coherent advice to all ministries.
- Obtain recognition from the executive branch and/or parliament.
- Partner with international donors and organisations to establish a national MSP-advisory body (supporting the development of governance structures, financing a secretariat, as well as establishing working group modalities).

Pathways for maintaining long-term cooperation with governments and other stakeholders:

- Build consensus on controversial topics and incorporate academic, societal and private sector perspectives. This is the official mandate and a unique value added to maintaining relevance in the long run.
- Constructively engage with the various stakeholder representatives in controversial topics/transformation areas and deliver value added through Realpolitik policy advice that mediates the conflicting positions of civil society, the private sector and academia.
- Establish constructive and trustful partnership with the government to enhance legitimacy through living up to the principle of leaving no one behind, institutionally as well as in the work carried out by the MSP-advisory body.
- Subnational engagement of MSP-advisory bodies to foster societal dialogue and advocacy for sustainable development: promote engagement with the society, subnational engagement and piloting of initiatives to foster dialogue and implementation at the local level.

- Enhance state capacities through the promotion of local and regional networks that strengthen public engagement and thereby both accelerate implementation and promote vertical policy coherence for the implementation of sustainable development.
- Empower the (independent) secretariat with sufficient financial resources and capacities to operate the body/platform and strengthen governance elements, including limited member size, transparent and/or credible selection processes for membership, and modalities for exchange across working groups within the MSP-advisory body.
- Promote regional cooperation and networks to accelerate knowledge sharing and implementation, and to tackle cross-border challenges through context-aware learning, adaptation and reflexive governance.

Abbreviations

BCCIC	British Columbia Council for International Cooperation
BMU	Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz und nukleare Sicherheit
BMZ	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung
CASE	Harmonised Framework for Monitoring and Evaluation of Public Policies
CiDA	Civil Development Agency
CNADS	Conselho Nacional do Ambiente e do Desenvolvimento Sustentável
CONACYT	Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología
CONAGO	Conferencia Nacional de Gobernadores
CONCERE	Concertation État-Régions pour l´Énergie
CONGAD	Le Conseil des Organisations Non Gouvernementales d'Appui au Développement
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease of 2019
CSO	Civil society organisations
CTEODS	Comité Técnico Especializado de los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council (of the United Nations)
EEAC	European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils
ENOVER	Energieoverleg
ESDN	European Sustainable Development Network
EU	European Union
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH
GCNG	Global Compact Network Georgia
HLPF	High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (of the United Nations)
IDFI	Institute for Development of Freedom of Information
INEGI	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía
LNOB	Leave no one behind

Abbreviations

MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MP	Member of Parliament
MSP	Multi-stakeholder platform
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
NSDC	National Sustainable Development Council
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSIs	Implementation and follow-up mechanisms (for its acronym in Spanish)
RNE	Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDSN	Sustainable Development Solutions Network
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SRU	Sachverständigenrat für Umweltfragen
ToR	Terms of reference
UN	United Nations
UNAM	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNKT	United Nations Kosovo Team
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
VNR	Voluntary National Review

Introduction

In order to promote "accelerated action" to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)[1] in the final Decade of Action and Delivery,[2] this study identifies success factors and governance mechanisms on the pathway to establishing and maintaining MSP-advisory bodies. Success is defined in relation to the way that these bodies are established as official, functional and meaningful MSP-bodies, as well as maintain their relevance and legitimacy in the long run.

In "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", the General Assembly emphasised "global partnership" and "global solidarity",[3] bringing together governments, the private sector, civil society and other actors to transform our world. It further highlighted the essential role of national parliaments, governments and public institutions in working closely on implementation with regional and local authorities, subregional institutions, international institutions, academia, philanthropic organisations, volunteer groups and others to implement the goals.[4] A whole-of-society approach requires an enabling environment that promotes contributions by a wide range of stakeholders towards a collective impact. This requires effective and meaningful partnerships across scales, sectors and silos, and the coordination, mobilisation and sharing of "knowledge, expertise, technologies and financial resources", as outlined in SDG target 17.6.[5] This was reinforced by the UN resolution "Towards global partnerships: a principle-based approach to enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and all relevant partners" on 20 December 2018,[6] which highlighted consensual and voluntary relationships; participation of stakeholders from public and non-public sectors; an agreement to collaborate on a common purpose or specific task; and a mutually agreed sharing of risks, responsibilities, resources and benefits.

Transformation requires whole-of-society approaches

In September 2019, multi-stakeholder partnerships at global, national and local levels were highlighted by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in a call for "accelerated action" to achieve the SDGs.[7] Multi-stakeholder engagement was also the theme of the recent UNDESA SDG Partnership Guidebook, which stated that rather than starting from the assumption of "scarcity", it is important to recognise that "all of the ideas, people, technologies, institutions and resources that are required to achieve the SDGs are already available and the task is how do we engage them and combine them in new and transformational ways".[8]

Multi-stakeholder bodies played an important role in promoting sustainable development before the UN 2030 Agenda was introduced, and for this reason the study considers the establishment of national sustainable development councils prior to 2015 and their transformation for the 2030 Agenda, as well as MSP-advisory bodies established more recently with the explicit purpose of promoting the SDGs. Prior to 2015, emphasis was placed in the literature on the importance of results-oriented, non-partisan and context-specific mandates and functions; institutional recognition, positioning and pathways of influence; the political authority and public profile of leadership; and the promotion of dialogue, consultation and evidence-informed problem-solving.[9] In the context of the 2030 Agenda, more emphasis is placed by researchers on universality, interconnectedness and accountability when considering the effectiveness of

1 Jensen, Lois, ed. Report of the Secretary-General on SDG Progress 2019 Special Edition. United Nations, 2019. ↘ PDF

2 Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations). " Decade of Action". Accessed 1 May 2020. ↘ URL

3 United Nations. Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development A/RES/70/1. 'Means of Implementation': 39. ↘ PDF

4 Ibid, 'Means of Implementation': 45.

5 Ibid, 'Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development': 28.

6 United Nations General Assembly. "Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 20 December 2018: 73/254. Towards global partnerships: a principle-based approach to enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and all relevant partners". District General. 16 January 2019. ↘ PDF

7 Jensen, Lois, ed. Report of the Secretary-General on SDG Progress 2019 Special Edition. United Nations, 2019. ↘ PDF

8 Stibbe, Darian, Prescott, Dave. "The SDG Partnership Guidebook: a practical guide to building high-impact multi-stakeholder partnerships for the Sustainable Development Goals". The Partnering Initiative and UNDESA 2020, p. 9. ↘ PDF

9 See for example, ↘ Maurer, Crescencia. Rio 8: An Assessment of National Councils for Sustainable Development. Washington, D.C.: World Resources Institute, 1999: 10. ↘ Osborn, Derek, Cornforth Jack, Ullah, Farooq. "National Councils for Sustainable Development: Lessons from the Past and Present". Sharing Tools in Planning for Sustainable Development, April 2014, 1–11. ↘ De Vries, Michiel. The Role of National Sustainable Development Councils in Europe in Implementing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals Overview and Conclusions. Den Haag, Berlin, London: EEAC & RNE, 2015. ↘ Niestroy, Ingeborg. "Sustaining sustainability: a benchmark study on national strategies towards sustainable development and the impact of councils in nine EU member states." EEAC, January 2005.

MSP-advisory bodies, as well as on the incorporation of the transformative elements of the 2030 Agenda such as participation, inclusivity and leaving no one behind (LNOB).

Generally there is greater emphasis on whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches as a success factor for multi-stakeholder bodies, particularly in relation to policy coherence, horizontal and vertical coordination, and the "meaningful" participation (and "inter alia" empowerment) of diverse actors in MSP-advisory bodies.[10] However, what this literature does not tell us is how MSP-advisory bodies deliver value added through institutionalised consensus-building processes as well as formalised exchange and feedback loops that result in "Real-politik" policy advice that mediates the controversial positions of different stakeholders across scales, sectors and silos, and how this is fundamental to their success in maintaining relevance in the long run.

The importance of stakeholder inclusion, consensus-building & making sustainability a public issue

To understand how MSP-advisory bodies were established and what makes them successful over time, this report draws on a policy analysis, desk review and 29 semi-structured interviews with diverse stakeholders from eight case studies.[11] These case studies were purposefully selected based on expert opinion, regional variance and the presence of a democratic political system informed by the Polity IV Index. Apart from one emerging advisory body (Senegal), all of these MSP-advisory bodies have an official mandate[12] to advise on SDG implementation as well as a multi-stakeholder character.

At least two to three semi-structured interviews were conducted for each case study in order to enhance the depth of the findings. Respondents were purposefully sampled from MSP-advisory body members, chairpersons and secretariats, and the sample includes government officials, civil society actors, academics and private sector representatives. Interviews were conducted in English and French over Zoom or MS Teams (using a secure password) and lasted approximately 60–90 minutes. Informed consent was granted for all interviews, which included permission to be recorded.[13] The transcribed data set was analysed by the research team using a pre-agreed analytical framework. It was triangulated against other data sources (such as policy documents and secondary literature) and supplemented with written responses to queries by respondents. Accuracy and validity were further enhanced by means of a thorough review of the draft report by all respondents. In order to ensure confidentiality, findings and recommendations have been presented in a manner that cannot be traced back to individual participants. This report does not provide a detailed comparison of the sampled MSP-advisory bodies due to the qualitative nature of the research design, the geographical diversity of the

10 British Columbia Council for International Cooperation and Canadian Council for International Cooperation. "Effective multi-stakeholder engagement to realize the 2030 Agenda in Canada". ↘ URL
Niestroy, Ingeborg, Hege, Elisabeth, Dirth, Elizabeth, Zondervan Ruben. "Europe's Approach to Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals: Good Practices and the Way Forward". Policy Department for External Relations, 1 February 2019, 1–169.

11 For sample size, refer to ↘ Table 1, Appendix.

12 For official mandate, refer to ↘ Table 2, Appendix.

13 Research participants were provided with a letter of invitation, which explained the content and scope of the interview beforehand. Interviews did not proceed without their consent. Respondents were also given an opportunity to schedule the interviews at their convenience. They were also informed that they have a right to withdraw at any time without repercussion and that they may even decide to withdraw – and have their transcript destroyed – after the interview has been conducted. Instead of employing structured questionnaires, open-ended questions were used in a semi-structured questionnaire so that respondents could lead the direction of the interviews, thereby enhancing ownership.

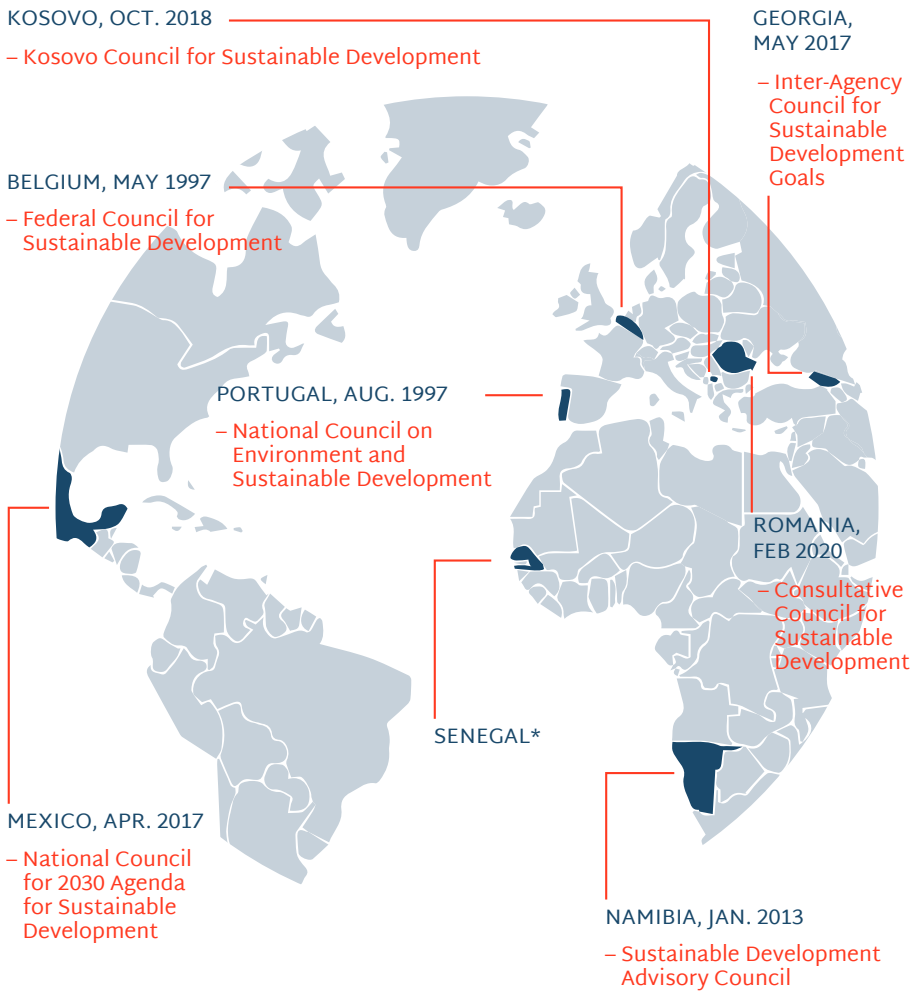
bodies and the relatively small sample size. Although the report will highlight commonalities and cross-cutting success factors, it will also showcase specific examples from the eight case studies to demonstrate the diverse pathways that can be taken to establish and maintain an MSP-advisory body in very different political and institutional contexts.

Considering that some of the MSP-advisory bodies were initiated and established far earlier than the 2030 Agenda (such as Belgium, Namibia and Portugal), while others were established recently or are in the process of being established (such as Georgia, Kosovo, Mexico, Romania and Senegal), the report will consider success factors in relation to the establishment of meaningful MSP-advisory bodies (↘Chapter 1), maintaining long-term partnership relationships between governments and MSP-advisory bodies (↘Chapter 2), and then favourable conditions that are relevant in installing and maintaining the legitimacy of MSP-advisory bodies in the long run (↘Chapter 3). Explanations for success varied from internal governance factors of the body such as inclusive and participatory governance modalities, effective consensus-building processes and a well-resourced secretariat, as well as external factors, such as the mandate of the government, inter-institutional coordination mechanisms, the institutionalisation of stakeholder groups, support from international partners and regional cooperation. Hence, the research tackled both dimensions – internal governance and operational dimensions – as well as external dimensions, meaning councils' relationships with the political environment of decision makers and other external factors at national, regional and international levels that may have impacted success over the years.

Consolidatd bodies:
- Belgium
- Namibia
- Portugal

Recently established or emerging:
- Georgia
- Kosovo
- Mexico
- Romania
- Senegal

Case studies: eight national MSP-advisory bodies



* SDG Council in Senegal is still emerging

Chapter 1: Establishing MSP-advisory bodies

This chapter will highlight the importance of building upon a high degree of institutionalisation of stakeholder groups and harnessing existing inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms and processes, or ad hoc MSP committees at national level, when designing the pathway for an MSP-advisory body. It will also reveal how political champions within these countries were able to design pathways towards institutional buy-in and ensure ownership from the highest executive level through consultation, awareness-raising, targeted advocacy campaigns and consensus-building on the value added, mandate and positioning of such a body. In terms of mandate, successful establishment requires giving MSP-advisory bodies an official mandate to provide input and advice on national policy processes, such as national sustainable development strategies, Voluntary National Reviews (VNR)[14] and the nationalisation of indicators. Positioning the MSP-advisory body close to the centre of government and its administration increases its ability to play a leading role in providing holistic advice in relation to these national policy processes and ensures policy coherence, while engaging with subnational authorities enables MSP-advisory bodies to contribute to vertical policy coherence. In terms of external success factors, learning from other MSP-advisory bodies with similar context conditions, and partnerships with international stakeholders and partners can support the development of governance, working groups and operations.

14 For Voluntary National Reviews, refer to ↘ Table 4, Appendix.

For a detailed overview of the recently established and emerging MSP-advisory bodies (Georgia, Kosovo, Mexico, Romania and Senegal) go to page ↘ 104

1.1. Building upon existing institutions

Existing multi-stakeholder collaboration mechanisms with a demonstrated history of success have served as useful examples and models when designing the working modalities for new MSP-advisory bodies.

MSP-advisory bodies have also been formed under existing mechanisms before being reconstituted as stand-alone SDG-focused bodies. Hence, ad hoc coordination committees for sustainable development or inter-institutional coordination mechanisms across ministries provide for favourable starting conditions.

Multi-stakeholder mechanisms that promote human rights and sustainable development have been used effectively for the establishment of SDG advisory bodies. For example, a multi-stakeholder National Council for Public Debate in Romania was established in November 2008 to revise the National Sustainable Development Strategy of 1999. Political champions were able to refer to this history of multi-stakeholder engagement to lobby for the creation of a new council.[15] In Kosovo, reference was also made to an "exemplary" multi-stakeholder Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, which "showed how you can make multi-stakeholder platforms doable, viable, applicable, and the work of the parliament".[16] In Mexico, the council has built on the multi-stakeholder character of the Open Government Partnership, which Mexico co-founded in 2011. It was described by non-state actors as "a space where civil society has been able to engage in dialogue and co-creation with the government".[17]

15 "Interview No. 28 – Romania". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 29 October 2020.

16 "Interview No. 6 – Kosovo". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 23 September 2020.

17 "Interview No. 10 – Mexico". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 29 September 2020.

Learn from good practices

18 "Interview No. 6 – Kosovo". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 23 September 2020.

19 Administration of the Government of Georgia. "On the Approval and Establishment of the Inter-Agency Council for Sustainable Development Goals, § Law of Georgia on the Structure, Authority and Rules of Procedure of the Government of Georgia, Article 8 (2) (i) and Article 29". 2020. Shared by personal correspondence.

20 During the period of May 2017 until January 2020, the mandate of supporting SDG implementation in Georgia was carried out by the Public Administration Reform Council.

21 Institute for Development of Freedom of Information. "Amendments to the Rules of Operation of the SDGs Council in Georgia". 21 February 2020.↘ URL

Some MSP-advisory bodies have been created under existing inter-ministerial or parliamentary bodies. To harness institutional memory and the experience of key individuals, the Council for Sustainable Development in Kosovo was specifically created as a parliamentary caucus under the Committee on Health, Labour and Social Welfare, which led MDG-related processes from a parliamentary lab: "The people who are currently engaged with the council are people who have either been working with MDGs before, or have an understanding of why is it important to work in this regard".[18]

The Inter-Agency Council for Sustainable Development Goals in Georgia was also reconstituted out of an interdepartmental council, namely the Council on Public Administration Reform and Sustainable Development Goals, which had an official mandate to support the process of SDG implementation.[19] For the sake of efficiency from a legal perspective it was created under this council and initially used its detailed rules of operation, although meetings were held independently.[20] In January 2020, the council was separated from the Public Administration Reform Council and was established as a stand-alone body, and relevant amendments were made to the Decree of the Prime Minister of Georgia on Establishing the Public Administration Reform Council (of 2 May 2017). As a result the title, the mandate of the council changed, enabling it to focus more holistically on all 17 SDGs in the 2030 Agenda.[21]

In order to transform these mechanisms so that they are fit for purpose in relation to the 2030 Agenda, time and resources were allocated to reorganising the operational aspects of the council and its membership. Based partly on the recommendations of the

State Audit Office on SDG preparedness in Georgia,[22] decisions were made to update the council's statute,[23] revise the terms of reference for the thematic working groups and improve the working process of the council so as to strengthen its multi-stakeholder character and integrated approach to sustainable development. Specific attention was given to the universal character of the 2030 Agenda, the interaction of the three dimensions of sustainability, and the requirements and standards for more inclusive, diverse and transparent multi-stakeholder partnerships.

22 State Audit Office of Georgia. "Performance Audit of Preparedness for Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals". 6 February 2019. ↘ PDF

23 Institute for Development of Freedom of Information. "Amendments to the Rules of Operation of the SDGs Council in Georgia". 21 February 2020. ↘ URL

1.2. Support by champions

Executive buy-in and ownership is crucial

Considering that the centre of government and parliaments have a role to play in arguing for a strong and meaningful council, obtaining the support of MPs in parliament and other key stakeholders in government at an early stage in the drafting and adoption of laws and policies is very important when establishing MSP-advisory bodies and maintaining them over time. This requires specific activities related to multi-stakeholder consultation, advocacy and awareness-raising at national and subnational levels. For initiation and enhanced ownership and continuity, institutional buy-in from the highest executive level to the MSP-body as well as consultative and/or caucus processes established with parliament are contributing factors to the successful establishment of an MSP-advisory body.

In order to successfully ensure national ownership of the council, political champions consulted with a wide range of stakeholders at different levels of government. In Kosovo, "The first, and the most successful, step, which has taken the processes this far, was the process of consultation with all key players and MPs of the Parliament. When they started to feel a part of the processes themselves, it was easier for us to ensure that they are also engaged with the new processes related to the establishment of the council".[24] It is also necessary to consult with subnational authorities when establishing national MSP-advisory bodies in order to ensure vertical policy coherence and to support the creation or strengthening of similar structures at subnational levels, as was undertaken in Mexico.[25]

24 "Interview No. 11 – Kosovo". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 29 September 2020.

25 "Interview No. 26 – Mexico". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 27 October 2020.

26 "Interview No. 25 – Georgia". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 27 October 2020.

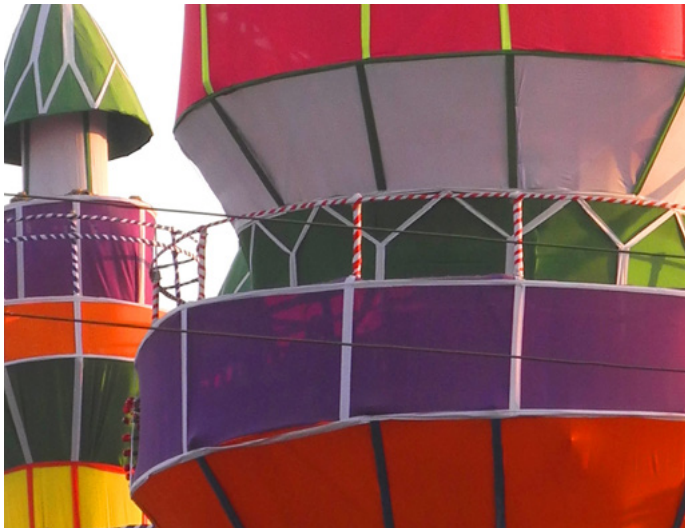
27 "Interview No. 21 – Mexico". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 20 October 2020.

28 "Interview No. 21 – Mexico". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 20 October 2020.

Raise SDG awareness in government & parliament

Furthermore, exposing members of parliament and government officials to the SDGs through awareness-raising is key to ensuring whole-of-government engagement with the SDGs and in turn the official legitimisation of MSP-advisory bodies. In Georgia, parliamentarians and government officials were initially tentative and regarded the SDGs as "coming from a foreign perspective";[26] however, a participant noted a rapid change in awareness and mindset among members of parliament, suggesting that awareness-raising was effective in helping stakeholders connect their work to the 2030 Agenda. In Mexico, raising the awareness of government officials was critical for the establishment of the council, in campaigns that emphasise the indivisibility of the 2030 Agenda as a means of supporting integrated planning and policy coherence.[27] As a result of these efforts, 90% of the cabinet of 19 ministries now recognise the existence of the 2030 Agenda through explicit mentions of it; and slightly less than 70% have ensured that the projects and public programmes within their ministries are directly aligned with the 2030 Agenda or have a specific programme to achieve specific goals of the 2030 Agenda.[28]

In addition to general awareness-raising activities, political champions engaged in very targeted advocacy campaigns. From 2015 to 2017, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) worked closely with the cabinet of the speakers of the parliament in Kosovo to raise awareness on the SDGs and lobby for the approval of the resolution in parliament, which was adopted in January 2018. Stakeholders argued that legislators and government officials were more receptive to the idea of a council when it was framed as a part of a universal undertaking that was being adopted by governments from both developing and developed countries, rather than as a sign of 'under-development' or failure.[29] Efforts were made to align the 2030 Agenda to the interests of specific members of parliament, focusing on the fact that the SDGs are "not an additional burden" and that it is possible to "find your niche and pursue your passion" within the framework of the 2030 Agenda. In this way, they were able to "find champions to work with and select



29 "Interview No. 2 – Kosovo". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 17 September 2020.

30 "Interview No. 5 – Kosovo". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 22 September 2020.

31 For SDG National Strategy, refer to ↘ Table 3, Appendix.

topics that they're passionate about, and they have the authority and knowledge to work on those areas and mobilise others around those topics".[30] Hence, it is important to invest time and resources in raising awareness on the value added of an MSP-advisory body in order to create a conducive ecosystem that will support the legislative and institutional changes (and resources) that will be required to ensure its success and maintenance in the long term.

1.3. Official mandate tied to national sustainable development policies

Form follows function: the importance of a concrete mandate

MSP-advisory bodies have a general mandate to provide advice to the government based on negotiation and consensus-building processes that allow the diverse interests of different stakeholders to be balanced in favour of a common goal. However, it was found that advisory bodies are more successful if their official mandate to provide advice to the government on general issues related to sustainable development is expanded to provide concrete advice on a specific policy process or document, as this gives the advisory bodies a more active role in established processes and enhances their legitimacy at a national level. The MSP-advisory bodies have an official mandate to contribute to the following policy processes or documents: national Sustainable Development Goal strategies[31] (Georgia, Kosovo, Mexico, Romania), VNRs (Georgia, Mexico, Romania) and the development of national indicators (Georgia, Kosovo, Mexico, and Romania).

Table 6 in the Appendix highlights the achievements of these MSP-advisory bodies in fulfilling their official mandates.[32]

1.4. Central positioning

Central institutional positioning to foster coherence is key for pathways of influence and reliable feedback processes. Positioning close to the centre of government and its administration increases engagement in national sustainable development strategies and enhances its ability to play a leading role in providing holistic and coherent advice to all ministries. There are various ways in which MSP-advisory bodies can be positioned close to the centre of government; however, the advantages and disadvantages of this positioning will depend on a context-specific assessment of the national institutional and political landscape. Generally, it is important to position the MSP-advisory body close to the national institution responsible for overall SDG planning and implementation, so that it is closely aligned with the institution that has a coordination mandate, while also considering the effect of its positioning on its ability to provide independent advice on critical issues in different political systems.

The fine balance of closeness to centre of government & independent advice

In some countries, MSP-advisory bodies are positioned close to or housed within the Office of the President or Prime Minister, which has an important role in ensuring the implementation and enforcement of laws and policies, promoting the integration of the SDGs in national laws and policies and thereby encouraging policy coherence. For example, the National Council for 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Mexico was initially established within the Office of the Presidency in order to ensure a whole-of-government commitment to the 2030 Agenda. Positioned in the Presidency, the council had the power of 'convocation' and was able to ask ministries to provide information about their activities and progress and thereby monitor the commitments of the different ministries to the implementation of the national development plan.[33] This positioning also helped the government move away from a siloed approach to planning within separate ministries to focus more on integrated planning.[34] This is also one of the reasons why since December 2020, the Executive Secretariat will become a part of the Ministry of Economy to support integrated planning and budgeting.

Government administrative bodies play a leading role in the development of national development plans. For example, in Georgia, positioning the secretariat of the Inter-Agency Council for Sustainable Development Goals within the administration gives it a clear pathway of influence over the content of national development plans. The secretariat of the council is housed within the Department of Policy Planning and Coordination, within the Prime Minister's Office. As an overarching planning entity, its membership includes deputy ministers from different departments. In council meetings they are able to discuss interlinkages across and between the goals and therebyensure horizontal policy coherence. Positioned in theadministration, the council's secretariat can also coordinate the SDG focal points housed in each ministry.[35]

MSP-advisory bodies positioned in parliament can focus on ensuring that government policies and budgets related to the SDGs are authorised, monitor the use of public funds and improve transparency.

32 For recently established MSP-advisory councils, refer to ↘ Table 6, Appendix.

33 "Interview No. 21 – Mexico". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 20 October 2020.

34 "Interview No. 8 – Mexico". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 28 September 2020.

35 "Interview No. 9 – Georgia". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 29 September 2020.

For example, the Kosovo Council for Sustainable Development was created as a parliamentary caucus within the Assembly because it was seen as the "highest institutional body" in the country and has the power to monitor government's implementation of SDG resolutions, recommend legislative changes and ensure alignment with the national budget.[36]

Hence, when considering the institutional positioning of an MSP-advisory body it is important to map out the institutional context in relation to the specific mandate of the platform, and identify where it will have access to resources and have the most influence over national strategies and policies, while promoting interlinkages, and the indivisible and universal sustainable development goals.

1.5. Harnessing from networks

The core mandate of MSP-advisory bodies is to unite representatives from different stakeholder groups and provide advice on controversial issues for sustainable development. This is the unique value added for governments in the long run as it links together civil society representatives, the private sector and academiainto one institutionalised body. MSP-bodies are crucial for dealing with these competing interests and in identifying areas where synergies can be promoted and trade-offs mitigated. Thus, building upon a high degree of institutionalisation of various stakeholder groups and drawing upon their networks can be considered as a favourable condition for establishing an MSP-advisory body.

Important precondition: umbrella associations

Countries that engage with institutionalised stakeholder groups and networks, such as CSO umbrella organisations, trade union confederations, private sector networks and academic networks are more successful in establishing MSP-advisory bodies because they have a history of finding a common ground out of competing interests. The council and the Interdepartmental Committee in Romania are illustrative examples of this. Employer's associations were legalised in 1991 with the express purpose of representing state companies in social dialogue with several nationally representative trade union confederations. From 1997, a number of tripartite institutions or bodies were set up allowing for dialogue between representatives of government, employers and workers, such as the Economic and Social Council of Romania.[37] The newly formed council will build upon this history by including representatives of the social partners as well as of the scientific, academic, and research community, civil society and the business community, insofar as they demonstrate specialised expertise in relation to the SDGs. It will also draw upon the history of successful negotiation and consensus-building practices associated with social dialogue on controversial topics.[38] This includes asking council members to consult with the institutions or networks that they represent, thereby ensuring that they are able to put forward a strong position backed by their institutions (and shared by others in their sector) in difficult negotiations on sensitive topics.

Furthermore, the institutionalisation of stakeholder groups has facilitated the selection of members for MSP-advisory bodies. In Mexico, the technical secretariat of the National Council collaborated with academia, CSOs, business associations, the employer's representative council, the worker's representative council as well as mining and agricultural associations

36 "Interview No. 11 – Kosovo". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 29 September 2020.

37 International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions (AICESIS). "Social Dialogue in Romania". January 2013. ↘ PDF

38 "Interview No. 24 – Romania". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 26 October 2020.

39 "Interview No. 8 – Mexico". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 28 September 2020.

to identify who should sit on the National Council and working groups.[39] These institutionalised stakeholder groups are specified in policies that describe the membership of the council and committees, and through these institutions and associations, members are nominated to sit on the council. Through the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), the National University of Mexico (UNAM) and Tecnológico de Monterrey have consulted with universities and presented their joint inputs to the Office for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (CONACYT) and SDSN also represent the scientific and academic community on the National Council.[40]

A positive relationship is furthermore fostered with private sector networks in Mexico and Georgia. In Mexico, the private sector maintains its representativeness through its participation in the Working Committees of the National Council, in line with the principles of shared responsibility and universality of the 2030 Agenda. In particular, there is a direct link with Mexico's UN Global Compact (Pacto MundialMexico) and its ten principles.[41] As an example of this, collaboration for the Global Compact at the subnational level has been implemented, strengthening the alliance between the private sector and the implementation and follow-up mechanisms (OSIs; acronym from the Spanish) of the 32 states. In another example, the Inter-Agency Council for Sustainable Development Goals in Georgia works closely with private sector networks through the Global Compact Network Georgia (CiDA/GCNG) in order to collaborate with diverse companies and small and medium-sized enterprises (SME).[42]

40 "Interview No. 26 – Mexico". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 27 October 2020.

41 "Interview No. 26 – Mexico". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 27 October 2020.

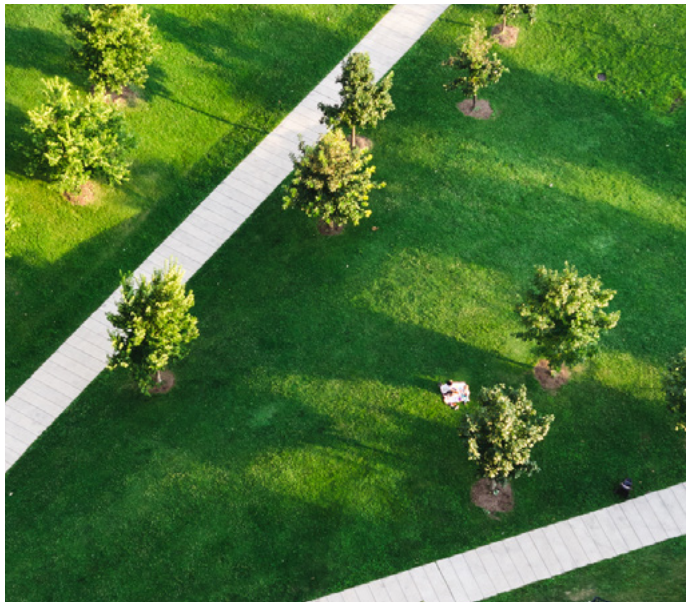
42 Global Compact Network Georgia. "Private Sector Contribution to Georgia's 2020 Voluntary National Review on Sustainable Development Goals". United Nations High-Level Political Forum. July 2020. ↘ PDF

Hence, the institutionalisation of stakeholder groups provides a useful foundation when establishing MSP-advisory bodies, deciding upon their membership or grounding debates in practical considerations and the special interests of different sectors.

1.6. Stakeholder dialogues

Kick-start with frontrunners!

The 2030 Agenda requires a whole-of-society approach to ensure that no one is left behind. Utilising input from academia for policymaking and the knowledge and support of civil society to enhance capacities, as well as utilising the contribution of frontrunners for sustainable development in the private sector, is a requirement for a successful MSP-advisory body. According to research participants, these stakeholders provide valuable technical and research expertise;



monitor SDG progress in local communities; facilitate access to subnational authorities due to established relationships on the ground; design and implement relevant and targeted public engagement campaigns; and make a myriad of contributions to the capacity and effectiveness of MSP-advisory bodies. Moreover, the presence of diverse stakeholders on MSP-advisory bodies promotes temporal continuity when there are changes in political leadership and a turnover of government officials and MPs within councils and similar bodies.

It is therefore important to adopt an appreciative approach towards the contribution that different stakeholders can make to MSP-advisory bodies. Civil society, academia and the private sector can meaningfully complement government mandates and actions in different ways. For example, in some cases councils and similar bodies have harnessed the research and policy expertise of non-state actors. In Mexico, Tecnológico de Monterrey conducted a study on the alignment of 126 national federal laws with the SDGs[43] and is working with a Special Commission of the Senate to map activities related to the SDGs undertaken by its 46 commissions.[44] In Georgia, the council secretariat collaborated with the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI), which in addition to providing logistical and technical support to the secretariat, supported policy development and the training of civil servants.[45]

Some councils have harnessed the expertise of the academic sector in relation to information technology, and the nationalisation and localisation of indicators. In Senegal, SDSN Sahel, hosted by Universite Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar, has supported the government by strengthening territorial

43 Gobierno De Mexico. "Estrategia Legislativa Para La Agenda 2030". 24 August 2020. ↘ PDF

44 "Interview No. 26 – Mexico". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 27 October 2020.

45 Kldiashvili, Giorgi. "Role of CSOs in Improving SDG Monitoring & Data Analysis: Case of Georgia". Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI). September 2018. ↘ PDF

46 Heidbrink, Kathrin, Fenster, Eva, Oepen, Manfred. Tracking Progress Together: Emerging Practices in National SDG Review. Bonn: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, 2018. Accessed October 2020. ↘ PDF

The importance of evidence-informed stakeholder advice

47 Government of Romania. "National Reform Programme 2020". April 2020. ↘ PDF

48 "Interview No. 25 – Georgia". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 27 October 2020.

49 Government of Georgia. "Statistical Annex Voluntary National Review 2020 Georgia". United Nations High-Level Political Forum. July 2020. ↘ PDF

50 Global Compact Network Georgia. "Private Sector Contribution to Georgia's 2020 Voluntary National Review on Sustainable Development Goals". United Nations High-Level Political Forum. July 2020. ↘ PDF

51 "Interview No. 25 – Georgia". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 27 October 2020.

information systems based on the SDGs and has involved both local and regional authorities to improve data coverage and ensure consistency between local and national planning.[46] MSP-advisory bodies have also collaborated with the academic sector for the purposes of learning and capacity development. In Romania, the Department of Sustainable Development will collaborate with local universities to train 150 SDG experts for the SDG hubs in each ministry – a role which was recently formalised as a profession in the Classification of Occupations Code in Romania (September 2018).[47] In Georgia, the Corporate Sustainability Academy under CiDA/GCNG will provide courses to council staff members and partners from different line ministries.[48]

Moreover, in order to successfully utilise input from different sectors, it is important to provide very concrete opportunities for non-state actors to contribute to specific policy processes or documents such as national development strategies and VNRs. For instance, the Inter-Agency Council in Georgia included an annex compiled by CiDA/GCNG[49] in the VNR report that focused specifically on the contribution of the private sector (large companies and SMEs) to the 2030 Agenda.[50] This inclusion was a clear signal that the SDG secretariat and council are strengthening their relationship with the private sector, and this has "made the private sector more motivated to link their business activities to concrete SDGs".[51]

Similarly, in Mexico it was found that giving non-state actors specific roles in the production of tangible outputs, such as the council's work plan, the nationalisation of indicators and the post-COVID recovery plan, has made their participation more meaningful: "Sometimes we have had substantive

co-creation, so for example, right now, we're creating a national platform for the tracking of resources for the public health emergency and recovery phase. And it's been done in co-creation between the government, the National Institute of Transparency, and civil society organisations."[52] Hence, successful multi-stakeholder partnerships should be results-driven and action-oriented in the context of MSP-advisory bodies.

This is not without challenges, and the newly established councils are still learning how to promote meaningful participation and effective partnerships with diverse stakeholders. From a governance perspective, concerns were raised about the way that council and working group meetings are run in some of these MSP-advisory bodies. When agendas are too strict or are set in a top-down matter, there is no opportunity for dialogue, leaving members feeling as though they are one-way receivers of information imparted by government. When meetings are too technical or procedural, CSOs and private sector members do not have the space to contribute, or an opportunity to raise concerns.[53] When meetings are not held regularly, stakeholders lose motivation and interest. Several challenges were raised regarding lack of communication between MSP-advisory body secretariats and non-state members, ambiguity on roles and unclear expectations.[54] The same applies to VNR processes, where concerns were expressed about the dearth of guidance on compilation and review processes, and insufficient time for review, consultation and debate.[55]

Lack of ownership, sense of shared responsibility and risk were also highlighted among diverse respondents. Georgia has tried to grapple with this by giving non-state actors an opportunity to assume leadership and decision-making roles within the Inter-Agency Council for Sustainable Development Goals. Working groups now have a chairperson from governmental agencies as well as two co-chairs, which are elected by civil society and the UN respectively.[56] Co-chairs can submit agenda items, draft motions and participate in the Inter-Agency Council. This has given non-state actors a greater sense of ownership and shared responsibility, and working groups are more active as a result.[57]

In general, in the newly established councils, effective and inclusive multi-stakeholder engagement may require capacity development, peer learning and guidance, as argued by an official in Romania: "Well, I think that a recommendation which may have some value, not only for my own country, but also for our colleagues in other countries, even beyond Europe, is that we should develop better ways of working with the civil society. I think we need a better blueprint or guidelines for governments on how to deal with organised civil society and not see them as political rivals or enemies of the system."[58]

Hence, the findings reveal that governments can only ensure sustainable development in cooperation with all stakeholders and that the contributions of diverse stakeholders should be coordinated with inclusion and collective impact in mind. Meaningful multi-stakeholder collaboration is fruitful and results in enhanced capacities at all ends to serve the common purpose of sustainable development; however, this will require ongoing review of progress, careful consideration of the transformative principles of the 2030 Agenda as well as capacity development and peer learning.

Stakeholder inclusion to enhance social acceptance of change

52 "Interview No. 10 – Mexico". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 29 September 2020.

53 "Interview No. 15 – Georgia". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 9 October 2020; "Interview No. 25 – Georgia". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 27 October 2020; "Interview No. 29 – Georgia". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 30 October 2020.

54 "Interview No. 15 – Georgia". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 9 October 2020.

55 "Interview No. 15 – Georgia". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 9 October 2020; "Interview No. 25 – Georgia". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 27 October 2020.

56 State Audit Office of Georgia. "Performance Audit of Preparedness for Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals". 6 February 2019. ↘ PDF

57 "Interview No. 9 – Georgia". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 29 September 2020.

58 "Interview No. 24 – Romania". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 26 October 2020.

1.7. Subnational engagement

Successful national MSP-advisory bodies have institutionalised mechanisms for the meaningful engagement of subnational governments. They have created inclusive spaces for stakeholder dialogue across scales, bearing in mind that the diverse actors operate in multiple sectors and jurisdictions with divergent and conflicting interests. Including subnational authorities in these councils provides the government with a clearer sense of these conflicting interests at the local level, areas where common ground can be reached and coordinated action proposed, as well as a sense of possible spillover effects and trade-offs. It also ensures that subnational governments can play a role in holding national governments to account, and that UN follow-up and review processes capture progress at all levels.

In Mexico, the secretariat is in the process of strengthening formal communication mechanisms between the council and the states. In November 2020, the council created a specific working committee on subnational engagement. Representatives of the states who have championed the 2030 Agenda implementation are given an opportunity to participate in this working committee, thereby facilitating direct communication with the national council.[59] For example, Oaxaca is a forerunner, as it has a state-level council (Council for the Fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the State of Oaxaca), which was established by official decree on 9 February 2018, and it has produced a subnational voluntary local review.[60]

In Georgia, the Office of the Auditor has recommended that more representatives from the municipalities be included in the working groups and council,[61] and for this reason the council and its secretariat have recently developed a new strategy on how to involve municipalities. This will include the selection of three pilot regions as targets for awareness-raising, capacity development and the provision of technical support.[62] It is hoped that in the future, the new Kosovo Council for Sustainable Development will be able to facilitate peer-learning exchanges for local authorities. For the time being, the Head of the Association of Municipalities will sit on the council and represent the interests of all mayors across Kosovo.[63] These subnational representatives will be empowered to speak on behalf of other subnational authorities, thereby allowing for the coordination and collation of input gathered from different local regions.

Push driver's seats for local champions

59 "Interview No. 8 – Mexico". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 28 September 2020.

60 Government of Oaxaca. Voluntary Subnational Review. 2020. ↘ URL

61 State Audit Office of Georgia. "Performance Audit of Preparedness for Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals". 6 February 2019. ↘ PDF

62 "Interview No. 9 – Georgia". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 29 September 2020.

63 "Interview No. 5 – Kosovo". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 22 September 2020.

1.8. International partners

Countries that have well-established MSP-advisory bodies have supported the development of burgeoning councils, particularly in relation to the development of governance structures and establishing working group modalities. In some cases, international development cooperation (including from Germany) stimulated governance change, such as in Mexico (funded by the German 2030 Implementation Initiative [BMZ]) and Kosovo, but in other cases, peer learning and twinning between bodies supported the development of modalities (e.g. Romania) and examples from international partners stimulated discussions on the value added of establishing an MSP-advisory council. This was undertaken through study visits with several ministries and bodies of the government, and

exchanges with coordination entities of the Deutscher Bundestag and the German Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development. Although stakeholders were inspired by the German model, numerous adaptations were made to suit the unique political systems and contextual realities in each country.

International organisations have provided invaluable technical support to governments when establishing SDG advisory bodies. At the specific request of high-level authorities (e.g. the President's or the Prime Minister's Office), governments have worked closely with international actors (e.g. GIZ and UNDP in Mexico; UNDP, CiDA/GCNG and IDFI in Georgia; United Nations Kosovo Team (UNKT) in Kosovo) to strengthen coordination strategies, set up institutional frameworks and draft methodologies for the creation of national strategies and the establishment of advisory bodies. For instance, the Department of Sustainable Development in Romania studied examples of good practice from the European Union regarding the establishment of the Interdepartmental Committee and the Consultative Council. Later, when they were in place or in the process of being set up, OECD support was elicited for an evaluation of the SDG budget in order to link policy planning and budgeting.[64]

Team up with your international peers

International stakeholders and donors have also provided financial support to cover the operational costs of the secretariats through partnerships, pooling of resources and sharing of risks. These external sources of funding also enhance the temporal continuity of bodies as governments face political changes and fiscal challenges. It was argued by a stakeholder in Mexico that external funding contributes to sustainability because "government budgets change year by year and may even disappear due to shifting political priorities".[65] Hence, international support by partners is important for the establishment of councils and their maintenance over time, however, this should be undertaken in the spirit of development cooperation and partnership, while promoting national ownership.

64 European Economic and Social Committee. "Portugal". Accessed 20 September 2020. ↘ URL

65 "Interview No. 21 – Mexico". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 20 October 2020.

Chapter 2: Maintaining long-term cooperation with governments

In this chapter, the internal and external success factors for multi-stakeholder mechanisms at a national level will be discussed, with specific reference to pathways from established MSP-advisory bodies that have succeeded in maintaining their advisory mandates over time in Belgium, Portugal and Namibia. In particular, this chapter will highlight the success factors required to promote consensus-building on controversial topics and develop recommendations based on the perspectives of stakeholders across sectors. It will also describe the importance of working routines and governance modalities that promote equal participation of stakeholders towards a common mandate, institutionalised feedback mechanisms enacted by law, as well as the promotion of vertical integration through subnational engagement and piloting of initiatives.

2.1. Consensus-building

At its core, multi-stakeholder collaboration requires relationship building. UNDESA states that partnership relationships should be built on trust and transparency, equity, mutual benefit, accountability and commitment.[66] It also includes bringing together existing competencies and resources, creating collective legitimacy, sharing or reduction of risk, synergy in aligning programmes, enhancing delivery across scale, and connection in the form of networking. None of this can happen without some form of agreement on the value added of coming together to solve 'wicked problems'[67] to reach the ambitious, indivisible and universal 2030 Agenda.

66 Stibbe, Darian, Prescott, Dave. "The SDG Partnership Guidebook: a practical guide to building high-impact multi-stakeholder partnerships for the Sustainable Development Goals". The Partnering Initiative and UNDESA. 2020. ↘ PDF

67 Camillus, John C. "Strategy as a Wicked Problem." Strategic Planning, Harvard Business Review (2014), available from ↘ URL For a discussion of wicked problems in the context of multi-stakeholder engagement, see Simpson, Michael. "Multi-stakeholder Approaches in a Canadian Context". In BCCIC, Reading Between the Lines: Accelerated Implementation of Agenda 2030". June 2020. Vancouver, B.C. ↘ URL

For a detailed overview of the established MSP-advisory bodies with a long-term advisory mandate (Belgium, Portugal and Namibia) go to page ↘ 106

What makes these three MSP-advisory bodies effective is that they have incorporated consensus-building into their mandates, governance procedures and approach to collaboration. Despite the fact that council members represent very different interests and sectors, they have to make compromises and reach agreements in order to fulfil their mandates. Failure to reach consensus would undermine the legitimacy and effectiveness of MSP-advisory bodies, as argued by respondents.

In Belgium and Portugal, consensus-building is facilitated by institutionalised mechanisms for promoting dialogue, participatory problem-solving and consensus-building, and it is supported by formal and informal feedback loops within the advisory council (between working groups and decision-making bodies) to promote transparency and accountability. Leadership and facilitation skills were described as key success factors, as well as a commitment to fact-finding and evidence-supported arguments.[68] The process in these countries is as follows: the council identifies three or four issues where it thinks it can reach a strong agreement and where it thinks the council will contribute value added and bring something new to the debate, and this is included in an action programme, which incorporates priority opinions, seminars and publications to be prepared each year. The MSP-advisory council then schedules a number of discussions on that specific topic each year. The number of opinions it issues each year depends mainly on the number of requests received from the government. In addition to these requests, the council can decide to prepare an own-initiative opinion. Members invest time in research and identifying allies within the council and working

68 "Interview No. 19 – Portugal". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 15 October 2020.

groups. Together, they develop a negotiation strategy and then discuss the issue until consensus is reached. External experts may be invited to present on the topic in order to facilitate constructive dialogue.

Working groups are an institutionalised mechanism for promoting consensus-building, particularly since they are smaller in size, allow for greater interaction and dialogue, and arguably give marginalised groups an opportunity to express their voices. In addition to having structured working groups,[69] ad hoc working groups are created to address new policy issues or to address topics that are deemed important by the chairperson of the council and its members. This gives members an opportunity to initiate new working groups on matters that are relevant to them. The detailed work of each working group is managed by its members under the leadership of a chairperson. One staff member from the secretariat is present to provide administrative and technical support. Tasks are distributed among members within the working group and meetings are held when requested by the working groups. These working groups undertake research and preliminary work on the preparation of advice. Members of the working groups, specifically those from academia, often assume responsibility for undertaking this research but working groups can request the attendance of experts to incorporate expert knowledge into decision-making, and can request hearings with officials from other ministries. After conducting research and consulting with relevant stakeholders, members put forward their perspectives in a written format. The secretariat or chairperson of the working group compiles all the text received into one document, which is then circulated to the members of the group.

69 In Belgium, these working groups include: Strategies for Sustainable Development, Energy and Climate; International Relations; Product Standards; Biodiversity and Forests. In Portugal, they are: National Strategy for Portugal 2030; Oceans and Coastal Zones; Soil, Spatial Planning and Urban Planning; Energy and Climate Change.

Dialogue & consensus-building – the essence of advice

Members discuss the draft in a general discussion or by using a more formal method with amendments, particularly when there is a strict deadline for the process.

When there is full agreement on the draft, it is sent to the plenary council (Portugal) or the general assembly (Belgium). Dialogue in the larger plenary council provides opportunities for an exchange of information and dialogue between working groups/committees. This ensures that discussions and consensus-building processes will include perspectives from different stakeholders working on the different pillars of development, thereby allowing for more balanced advice as well as a stronger consideration of interlinkages. In Portugal, all members of the working groups are members of the plenary. In the plenary council, some members may propose amendments to the text, but it is not common. In contrast, not all working group members can participate in the general assembly in Belgium; each sector is allocated a specific number of votes (e.g. the environmentalists have three votes) in the general assembly.
Formal and informal feedback loops within the councils have also ensured that there is buy-in for the recommendations of the working groups, and that if working group contributions are not taken into account by the plenary or decision-making committee, there are opportunities for discussion, questions and feedback, thereby promoting transparency and accountability of decision-making, both of which are cross-cutting principles in the 2030 Agenda.

There have been numerous challenges when reaching a consensus on controversial topics in Belgium (e.g. the post-recovery plan; international trade and the production of nuclear energy) and

70 "Interview No. 16 – Belgium". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 14 October 2020.

71 Federale Raad Voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling (FRDO-CFDD). "Koninklijk besluit tot goedkeuring van het huishoudelijk reglement van de Federale Raad voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling". 12 July 2016. ↘ PDF

Focus on pathways forward for controversial issues

Portugal (e.g. extraction of mineral resources from the seabed, mining of lithium reserves, and green hydrogen as an alternative to fossil fuels). It was argued that power dynamics within the councils and the relationship between specific sectors (e.g. industry) and the government affects their willingness to compromise on certain issues.[70] In both countries, tensions were also highlighted between the private sector and environmentalists on the council, and this has hindered consensus-building processes on specific issues. As a result, stakeholders have had to make certain compromises in order to move forward, and these compromises are often reflected in the quality of the opinion submitted. As was found in several case studies in this research, this may have an effect on the legitimacy of the councils and can have an effect on their ability to promote progressive sustainable development policy guidance, but it is often the only way that the councils can fulfil their legal mandate.

In order to avoid a stalemate or the risk of submitting weak advice, some councils have formalised options for moving forward without consensus. For example, in Belgium the aim is to produce text that is consensual, but when a consensus is not possible, the text will clearly differentiate how many members voted for different positions. This is clearly outlined in the internal regulations of the council, which states: "Art. 14, Section 3 'The Council will strive for consensus in its advices. If consensus is not possible, all positions of the members with voting rights shall be included in the advice.'"[71] This is usually the exception, and is not the preferred option; instead, the route taken is usually the drafting of a mutually agreed upon text with several compromises.
In Portugal, although all of the Conselho Nacional

do Ambiente e do Desenvolvimento Sustentável (CNADS) position papers have been approved unanimously up to now, the law does allow for deliberations to be approved by a majority.

Despite these challenges, there are numerous examples of success where consensus-building processes have led to advice or recommendations that were taken into account by policymakers. For example, the advice of the MSP-advisory council in Portugal on carbon taxes has been included in the final draft of the official plan, and the strong position taken by the council on biofuels was reflected at a policy level. The fact that the council was able to reach consensus "gives pause to any decision maker. So they say, okay, if the environmental NGOs and the industry could agree on this, it might actually be a good idea".[72] The MSP-advisory council adds value by identifying the different interests and power dynamics at stake and where a common ground can be reached: "In my opinion, the added value of the council in Belgium is to give the temperature of what is living within society within the interest groups, which are organised around sustainable development policy. And so it's important for politicians and public servants to gain knowledge about what is the common ground with civil society, and where we can go further or not in function of political priorities."[73] This is critical information for policymakers when deciding on priorities and contributes to "Realpolitik" in that it grounds the political process in very practical considerations.[74]

72 "Interview No. 19 – Portugal". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 15 October 2020.

73 "Interview No. 17 – Belgium". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 15 October 2020.

74 "Interview No. 20 – Portugal". Interview by Bashar Alsaeedi & Zosa Gruber. 16 October 2020.

75 Moniteur Belge. "Lois, Decrets, Ordonnances Et Reglements". 11 February 1999. ↘ PDF

76 Federale Raad Voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling (FRDO-CFDD). "Koninklijk besluit tot goedkeuring van het huishoudelijk reglement van de Federale Raad voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling". 12 July 2016. ↘ PDF

2.2. Feedback mechanisms

The importance of trust & constructive advice

In order to ensure long-term effectiveness, it is important to enact through law institutionalised feedback mechanisms to ensure that governments meaningfully engage with the advice provided by MSP-advisory bodies. This includes the establishment of exchange and feedback-loops with inter-ministerial mechanisms, and the establishment of a constructive and trustful partnership with the government.

In Belgium, the government (or the parliament or another body) requests advice from the MSP-advisory council or the council can prepare advice on its own initiative. The government is not legally obliged to request advice on all subjects, with the exception of subjects related to regulation in the Product Standards Act (Art. 19, Sect. 1)[75], and the preliminary draft Federal Sustainable Development Plan, as outlined in the Sustainable Development Act (Art. 4, Sect. 1).[76] The Sustainable Development Act contains a provision on how the government must or can respond to an opinion: "Art. 11, Section 6 The Minister shall indicate

the action taken by the Government on the opinion of the Council and, where appropriate, the reasons why it deviates from the opinion of the Council."[77] There is no instrument to effectively oblige a minister to reply, but the MSP-advisory council invites all ministers to the first general meeting of the year to explain what they have done with the advice. Written explanations are also requested by the council, which are published on the website. Hence, ministers are not obliged to explain what they have done with the text, but there is a moral obligation, strengthened by the fact that their answer (or non-answer) will be published on the website. The request for advice, as well as the response, is posted on the council's website to ensure adequate follow up, accountability and transparency.[78] There is one exception related to the Federal Sustainable Development Plan. Feedback is required when the advice provided by the MSP-advisory council is unanimous: "Art. 5 The King adopts the plan by a decree issued after consultation in the Council of Ministers. He shall give reasons for departing from the unanimous advice of the Council. The plan is published in the Belgian Official Gazette."[79] So for this particular case there is a reference to a "unanimous" opinion as a condition for feedback, but that is not the general rule for all opinions.[80]

In Portugal, there is the option of inviting ministers, secretaries of state and other public officials to attend special meetings of the plenary session of the council to discuss the advice submitted, and to hear and debate their current agenda and future plans for the environment and sustainable development policies. All statements and opinions are published on its website,[81] and regularly through a compendium of statements.[82]

77 Moniteur Belge. "Lois, Decrets, Ordonnances Et Reglements". 18 June 1997. ↘ PDF

78 "Interview No. 4 – Belgium". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 22 September 2020.

79 Ibid.

80 The General Sustainable Development Act (↘ PDF) regulates the operation of the Federal Council on Sustainable Development (art. 10-15) and there are also provisions on the Federal Plan for Sustainable Development (art. 3-6).

81 National Council of the Environment and Sustainable Development. Accessed 15 September 2020. ↘ URL

82 "Interview No. 13 – Portugal". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 1 October 2020.

2.3. Inclusive governance

In order to promote the equal participation of all stakeholders, MSP-advisory bodies have identified a number of success factors. It is important to ensure that decision-making bodies, such as the General Assembly in Belgium, the Bureau in Namibia and the plenary council in Portugal, are not confined exclusively to government members but are inclusive of a wide range of stakeholders. In Belgium, full membership is available largely to non-state actors, although members of the administration and other state actors may sit in as observing members without a right to vote.[83]

In many of these councils, governance structures are informed by inclusivity, such that a wide range of stakeholders are involved in decision-making and problem-solving. Enabling non-state actors to assume leadership and decision-making roles within working groups and decision-making bodies has encouraged a sense of ownership among its members, which according to several authors,[84] is fundamental to consensus-building within these platforms and is necessary for multi-stakeholder problem-solving and innovative thinking.[85] For example, in Portugal the MSP-advisory council is governed by a chairperson (an expert in sustainable development) who is designated by the Council of Ministers.[86] In Belgium, there are three vice presidents of the council, including a representative from the private sector, a representative from the confederation of trade unions, as well as a representative from an environmental CSO platform. Hence, the leadership roles assumed by non-state actors encourage the participation of all stakeholders.

83 For example, in Belgium observers/non-voting members include a representative of each federal ministry or secretary of state, one representative for each region/community and other observers, including representatives from federal institutes, planning bureau and regional councils.

84 See for example Cornforth, Jack, Becuwe, Juliette. "What Role Can National Sustainable Development Councils and Similar Bodies Play in the Design and Delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals?" Sharing Tools in Planning for Sustainable Development, April 2014: 8. ↘ URL

85 Cashore, Benjamin, Bernstein, Steven, Humphreys, David, Visseren-Hamakers, Ingrid, Rietig, Katharine. "Designing Stakeholder Learning Dialogues for Effective Global Governance". Policy and Society 38, No. 1 (1 April 2019): 118-47. ↘ URL

86 "Interview No. 13 – Portugal". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 1 October 2020; "Interview No. 18 – Portugal". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 15 October 2020. Since its inception, the chairperson has been MSP-advisory council in Portugal have been governed by non-state actors. In Portugal, many respondents highlighted the important role played by the previous President, Professor Mário Ruivo, an oceanographer who was a respected political figure with an established international and national reputation. He played a role in establishingthe council, raising its profile and maintaining it over time (until his death in 2016).

To promote inclusion and accessibility, there are offline and online methods of engagement with members in the council. The secretariat shares background documents, the schedule and engagement plans with members in advance. There is a continuous process with multiple opportunities for ongoing engagement and dialogue; the only disruptions to this iterative process have been related to electoral politics, political transitions and shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Council members are also informed about the purpose of engagement, how their inputs will be used and overall expected outcomes with clear deadlines.

Active participation of diverse stakeholders is also influenced by more intangible success factors such as a sense of collective pride in the structure and its mandate, an appreciative and inclusive approach to inputs from diverse members (and in turn the perception of being valued and included), mutual respect established between members over time and a shared belief in the importance of collaboration to support transformational change. In Belgium, the Federal Council was one of the first places where NGOs were admitted as official stakeholders in the discussion, and therefore participation in this platform is greatly valued. MSP-advisory bodies therefore serve the function of elevating the position of diverse stakeholders to be taken seriously as players, and giving them an opportunity to constructively engage and contribute, instead of always watching from the outside.

Furthermore, another intangible success factor identified by members is a high level of respect for the structure itself and a fundamental belief that through "true discussion with the stakeholders

87 "Interview No. 16 – Belgium". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 14 October 2020.

88 "Interview No. 20 – Portugal". Interview by Bashar Alsaeedi & Zosa Gruber. 16 October 2020.

that are sitting in the council, we can improve the situation".[87] This sense of pride and belonging was also highlighted by diverse MSP-advisory council members in Portugal. This has served to maintain the long-term participation (in some cases up to 20 years) of many of its CSO and private sector members. As noted, "I belong to the council. I'm convinced of the importance of the council. I work for the council in order to preserve the prestige of the council".[88] This sense of belonging and commitment to the mandate of the council may not only lead to active participation, but may enhance the likelihood of compromise in difficult negotiations in order to achieve a shared goal of sustainable development.

Ownership, pride & belonging of members is Key for commitment

2.4. Create space for action

By collaborating with diverse stakeholders, federal/national MSP-advisory bodies can promote vertical coherence to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at subnational levels. As was discussed in Section 1.7, collaboration with subnational authorities encourages a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Some councils specifically collect and collate the diverse inputs of different subnational authorities and consider them in negotiations. This gives the council a better understanding of diverse local needs and interests in different geographical locations within the country. Other councils pilot initiatives to foster dialogue and enhance implementation at the local level, or coordinate subnational authorities' contributions.

In Belgium, some regions have their own sustainable development strategies with their own multi-stakeholder bodies (either environmental or socio-economic councils) and administration.[89] The council responds primarily to requests for advice from federal ministers on specific federal competencies; however, the federal council also informally coordinates advice with the regional councils for inter-federal institutions such as the National Commission for Climate or CONCERE/ENOVER (Concertation État-Régions pour l´Énergie/Energieoverleg).[90] Representatives from the regional councils are also observing non-voting members of the federal council to ensure effective coordination of policy recommendations on different issues.[91]

Furthermore, MSP-advisory bodies can work collaboratively with local authorities to solve local problems (depending on the sovereignty of subnational levels), promote innovative SDG implementation, follow up and review. In Portugal, two mayors are present in the National Council on Environment and Sustainable Development. In addition, the autonomous governments of Madeira and Azores have the right to nominate one person to the council. The National Council on Environment and Sustainable Development has received funding to develop an electronic platform for the municipalities, to allow for the uploading of content related to the localisation of indicators and local progress in relation to SDG targets. Following the success of the pilot project in eight municipalities, the project was officially launched in November 2020 with plans to extend it to 370 municipalities. The council has also worked on an innovative climate change adaptation project with municipalities in partnership with a consortium of universities.[92]

However, some MSP-advisory bodies have the capacity and standing to take on additional tasks, such as promoting civil society cooperation, partnerships and networks. For example, there are plans to promote an SDG coalition among civil society in Romania, whose members, depending on expertise and availability, may acquire a seat in the council and become important partners in the acceleration of the 2030 Agenda.[93] The Department of Sustainable Development cannot play a role in formalising this coalition, but can provide contacts to like-minded organisations that share a common interest in the Sustainable Development Goals and can provide venues, guidance and other forms of informal support to the coalition.[94] In Senegal, the state works closely with the Conseil des Organisations Non Gouvernementales d'Appui au Développement

Create space for action & make sustainability a public issue of vital importance

89 Not all regions have formal Sustainable Development Goal strategies. Flanders region, for example, only has an implementation strategy for the SDGs. The Inter-Ministerial Conference for Sustainable Development was a national mechanism for coordinating action between different levels of governance and all the ministers in charge of sustainable development, but it is no longer active.

90 In English: consultation between the federal state and the regions on energy matters.

91 "Interview No. 4 – Belgium". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 22 September 2020; "Interview No. 17 – Belgium". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 15 October 2020.

92 "Interview No. 18 – Portugal". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 15 October 2020.

93 "Interview No. 3 – Romania". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 21 September 2020.

94 "Interview No. 28 – Romania". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 29 October 2020.

(CONGAD), a consortium of NGOs in support of sustainable development, including a wide range of international, national and community-based organisations. Although it is not an official MSP-advisory body, the government sees CONGAD as an important intermediary with civil society and has consulted with them on the localisation of indicators, and in annual and sector-based reviews. Stakeholders in Kosovo also identified the importance of encouraging the development of CSO networks as partners to the MSP-advisory council.[95]

To accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, many of the MSP-advisory bodies have a specific mandate to strengthen public engagement with the 2030 Agenda. In Namibia, the Sustainable Development Advisory Council has a website that has an interface where public viewers can raise concerns, ask questions or contribute content. When the annual report is tabled for cabinet in parliament, it receives extensive media attention.[96] Furthermore, over the last two years, the council has run an annual competition in which it celebrates individuals and community-level organisations that promote sustainable development.[97] In Georgia, in collaboration with IDFI, public engagement activities were undertaken at national and subnational levels, including community consultations, an innovative street art project and an annual festival.[98] Sustainable Development Week in Kosovo has been implemented for the third successive year in collaboration with the council secretariat, GIZ, the EU and the national Ministry of Economy and Environment.[99] The newly formed council will continue to work closely with UNKT in promoting public engagement and civic education to accelerate the 2030 Agenda. Increasingly, public engagement is being promoted in Belgium, where the council aims to "enlarge the societal basis for sustainable development"[100] by encouraging dialogue between different stakeholders. Since the Federal Council for Sustainable Development is not well known among the public or media, the council organises high-profile seminars and conferences, has started to use press releases and is developing a more effective communication campaign.[101]

95 "Interview No. 11 – Kosovo". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 29 September 2020.

96 "Interview No. 12 – Namibia". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 30 September 2020.

97 Sustainable Development Advisory Council. "Sustainable Development Awards Programme". Accessed 10 October 2020. ↘ URL

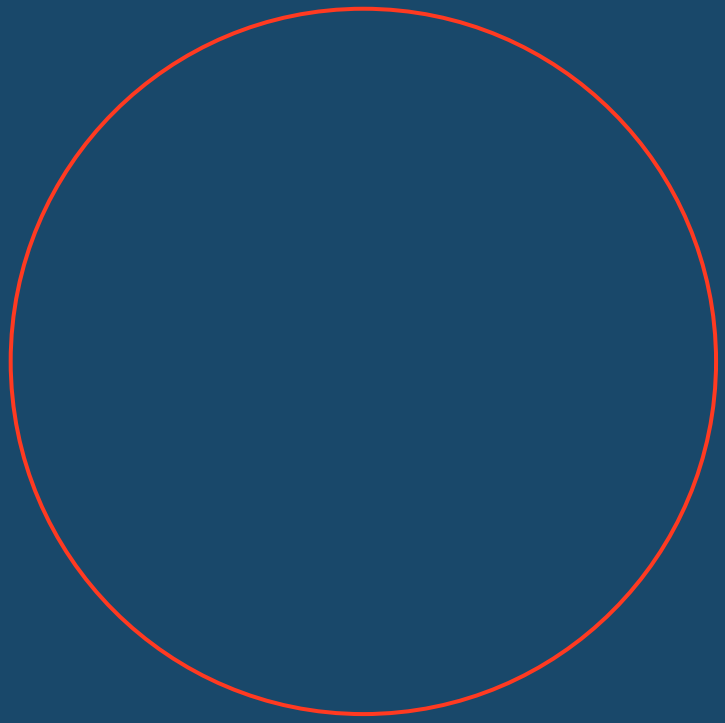
98 Institute for Development of Freedom of Information. "Future = You – Georgia Unites Around Global Goals". 24 October 2017. ↘ URL
Institute for Development of Freedom of Information. "Facilitate the Landing of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the National Level". December 25, 2017. ↘ URL

99 KSDW. "The Recovery Is Green". 2020. ↘ URL

100 "Interview No. 4 – Belgium". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 22 September 2020.

101 "Interview No. 17 – Belgium". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 15 October 2020.

Chapter 3: Favourable conditions for MSP-advisory bodies



In this chapter, the favouring conditions for MSP-advisory bodies will be highlighted. At an MSP-internal level, this chapter will highlight the importance of governance modalities that support the effective functioning of MSP-advisory bodies, as well as secretariats with sufficient funding and capacity to operate the body. Furthermore, it will discuss some of the lessons learnt on the path to constructively engaging with diverse stakeholders to mediate controversial positions and add value through "Realpolitik" advice, as well as how to enhance legitimacy through engaging with the "Leave No One Behind" pledge.[102] At an external level, this chapter will discuss the enabling ecosystem that includes not only official recognition but also inter-institutional mechanisms to promote whole-of-government approaches, and review of the contribution made by MSP-advisory bodies within the broader architecture of government. It will also consider the role that MSP-advisory bodies play in enhancing state capacities through the promotion of local and regional networks and public administration. And lastly, it will conclude with a discussion on regional cooperation and networks to tackle cross-border challenges and accelerate 2030 Agenda knowledge building and implementation.

102 United Nations Sustainable Development Group. "Leave No One Behind". Accessed 12 October 2020. ↘ URL

3.1. Independent, capacitated and resourced secretariat

MSP-advisory bodies require an institutionalised, mandated and resourced secretariat for operations. All of the councils have a secretariat that fulfils the following functions: prepares proposals that

the councils should consider; develops strategic plans for the council in liaison with other institutions; liaises with regional-level counterparts; promotes consensus building; encourages cooperation with other subnational councils; provides technical and analytical support; develops background documents for consideration in collaboration with independent thematic experts; provides administrative support in convening meetings; and attends council meetings, sets agendas and takes minutes. An independent secretariat also plays an important role in ensuring continuity over time when there is a change in the political landscape.

Resourcing these councils is fundamental to their success in the long term. The administrative costs of the councils are usually covered by the departments or institutions in which they are positioned, often in partnership with international actors. Despite changes in political leadership, in Belgium and Kosovo the secretariats were able to continue to function because they are relatively independent, have access to financial resources and have the capacity (often with support from international partners) to continue providing support to councils or supporting new MPs and government officials to move forward. In many countries, the lack of funding may hinder the effectiveness of the councils in fulfilling their mandates. This suggests that mandate and substantial funding should be coherent in order to make the MSP-advisory body effective. If there is a lack of funding, the mandate should be reduced and vice versa. For this reason, some secretariats have started to develop resource mobilisation strategies (e.g. Namibia and Portugal) to ensure their sustainability.

Institutionalisation & resources need to be coherent with the mandate

103 For SDG advisory council structures, refer to ↘ Table 5, Appendix.

104 "Interview No. 1 – Kosovo". Interview by Bashar Alsaeedi. 16 September 2020.

105 "Interview No. 15 – Georgia". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 9 October 2020; "Interview No. 29 – Georgia". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 30 October 2020.

3.2. Transparent membership

All of the case studies point to the need to have very well-defined governance modalities, membership and selection processes.[103] In order to enhance the functionality of MSP-advisory bodies, lessons from several case studies in this research suggest that membership size should be limited.

When the council in Kosovo was first established, it was open to all members of parliament who showed an interest in the 2030 Agenda. This resulted in the presence of 39 interested MPs on the council. It was found that such a large council does not work very well and that expertise should be a criterion for membership, with clear terms of reference and a specific mandate.[104] In Georgia, an open call was put out for members to join the working groups. There was an overwhelming response, resulting in 80–100 working group members.[105] As a result, there is a need for guidance on how to strengthen these bodies and create smaller subgroups to enhance operations.

Typically there are two ways in which members are selected. First, a high-level decision maker appoints the members as persons with a long history of expertise, an established reputation and acknowledged merits in some field of sustainability, based on an open application process (e.g. Romania, Namibia), or directly without an application process (e.g. the Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung (RNE) or the Sachverständigenrat für Umweltfragen (SRU)). The second way in which members are selected is through very specific rules and mechanisms that are created for chosen stakeholder institutions to nominate representatives (e.g. Kosovo, Belgium and Portugal). Regardless of the preferred selection method,

membership principles and requirements should be clearly and transparently outlined, based on clear requirements as well as specific terms of appointment, as recommended by the State Audit Office in Georgia.[106] In Romania, the operational selection procedure is outlined in law, which states that the selection of the 34 specialists (to cover all the 17 SDGs) will be made on the basis of file analysis, letter of intent, and interview.[107] There is no blueprint for selecting members, but MSP-advisory bodies should carefully consider the time and resources as well as consultation that is required when defining selection processes and what this will mean for the council's legitimacy, inclusivity, diversity and autonomy.

Moreover, there should be a specific tenure for members, and the extent to which members are autonomous or represent their institutions should be clearly spelled out. For instance, to highlight the independent character of Portugal's National Council on Environment and Sustainable Development, the law states that once appointed to a three-year term

Inclusivity + diversity + participation

106 State Audit Office of Georgia. "Performance Audit of Preparedness for Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals". 6 February 2019. ↘ PDF

107 Government of Romania. "Operational selection procedure for the establishment of the team of specialists from the Advisory Board for Sustainable Development, within the SIPOCA 613 project". 26 August 2020. Shared by personal correspondence.

108 National Council on Environment and Sustainable Development. "CNADS Brief Presentation". May 2019. Shared by personal correspondence.

109 National Council of the Environment and Sustainable Development. 15 September 2020. Accessed 10 September 2020. ↘ URL

mandate, the President or the members of CNADS are irremovable and independent; if they offer advice that is contrary to dominant political opinion, members of this council cannot be removed.[108] Furthermore, the law states that even when designated by the central government, or other regional or local authorities, designated persons are not acting as representatives but on their personal capacity and profiles.[109] Although political independence cannot be guaranteed when engaging with multiple stakeholders in such a political sphere, these legally grounded principles ensure that the council is able to provide balanced advice that reflects the competing interests of different stakeholders in society and government. It is also important to note that there is a concerted effort to ensure an overlap of old and new members in CNADS, and this ensures the retention of tacit knowledge and the strength of networks, thereby contributing to the continuity of work.

3.3. Legitimacy through leaving no one behind

MSP-advisory bodies are an institutionalised mechanism for taking the views of diverse stakeholders into account, but more should be done to open these spaces to encourage inclusion and diversity. Some bodies have ensured gender parity (e.g. Namibia), linguistic diversity (e.g. Belgium) and created spaces for youth voices (e.g. Belgium and Namibia), while others have earmarked spaces for representatives of agencies and organisations responsible for carrying out policies related to marginalised communities

(e.g. Mexico). Civil society actors in Mexico highlighted the value of the council's working committees in promoting a "space for substantive co-creation" but noted that they "have to push for broader participation and use their voice" to ask for meaningful participation and greater consideration of diversity, equity and inclusion. Specific reference was made to the need to include indigenous communities and people with disabilities as members in MSP-advisory bodies.[110]

3.4. Enabling environments

The UN Partnership Guidebook argues that it is important to identify and strengthen the "enabling ecosystem" including policies, platforms and mechanisms that promote partnerships built to good-practice standards. As was discussed in Chapter 1, in Georgia, Kosovo and Mexico, obtaining institutional buy-in from officials, ministers and parliamentarians at an early stage in the drafting and adoption of laws and policies through awareness-raising and capacity development was very important in establishing the MSP-advisory bodies and developing partnerships within government. In Romania, Portugal and Mexico, political champions who had extensive experience in promoting multi-stakeholder engagement and participating in international MDG and SDG negotiations advocated for change and raised awareness from within government.

In all the case studies, parliaments played a critical role in embedding the SDGs in national legislative frameworks and strategies; however, there were very context-specific pathways for establishing the MSP-advisory bodies in different political systems. Institutional changes were made in parliaments (e.g. Kosovo), senior executive offices (e.g. formerly in the case of Mexico), in government administrative bodies (e.g. Georgia), or in specific government ministries and departments (e.g. Namibia, Portugal and Romania) in order to create a resourced space for the bodies and their secretariats to function with clear pathways of influence and varying levels of independence.

Institutional change also required the creation of inter-institutional mechanisms allowing for communication and collaboration with other arms and levels of government. This is not the responsibility of MSP-advisory bodies; it is the responsibility of governments to create coherent and efficient inter-institutional mechanisms that support the work of multi-stakeholder platforms, as well as a nationally coordinated and, ideally, coherent policy. However, MSP-advisory bodies do have an important role to play in following institutional processes that allow for inter-institutional coordination, and it is therefore important to create links between the different layers of engagement and coordination. In some cases, this involves the participation of government officials from different sectors in MSP-advisory bodies as non-voting members to promote communication, coordination and transparency. In Belgium, a representative from the Federal Institute for Sustainable Development participates in the general assembly for the MSP-advisory council and working group meetings as an observer.[111] In Namibia, a member of the National Planning Commission sits on the council and brings issues related to the National Development Plan, SDG domestication and VNR processes to the attention of the council.

MSP-advisory bodies are in top form when combined with whole-of-government mechanisms

110 "Interview No. 10 – Mexico". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 29 September 2020.

111 "Interview No. 17 – Belgium". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 15 October 2020.

In other contexts, focal points for implementation and monitoring at the department level are an important resource and communication mechanism for MSP-advisory bodies. For example, in Romania, SDG hubs have been established in each ministry, which will liaise with the MSP-advisory council through the secretariat and keep the officials in their respective ministries informed of developments and decisions made by the council.[112] Similarly, in Georgia, there is an SDG focal point in each ministry, which liaises with the secretariat of the MSP-advisory council by sharing information about the progress of indicators.[113]

In addition, having a relationship with national statistics institutions is useful for MSP-advisory bodies in fulfilling their mandate, particularly if they have a responsibility for compiling or contributing to voluntary national review reports and the nationalisation of indicators. For example, in Mexico, the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee of the MSP-advisory council works with INEGI, an autonomous national statistical agency on data generation and the development of a national indicator framework for the SDGs.[114] In Romania, the MSP-advisory council will collaborate with the National Institute of Statistics to fulfil its mandate to nationalise the 2030 Agenda indicators.[115]

In order to strengthen the relationship between the council and different arms of government, clear procedures and mechanisms for inter-institutional engagement should be created. Although the MSP-advisory council in Portugal has regular hearings with parliamentary committees, the parliament should also play a role in partnering with government to accelerate the 2030 Agenda.[116] The MSP-advisory council in Kosovo, positioned in the parliament, needs stronger formalised links with the executive branch in order to ensure that recommendations from the assembly are implemented.[117] It is recommended that MSP-advisory bodies map out the different role players in their SDG ecosystems and review the experiences of other countries in order to clearly define roles and empower both the legislative and executive to work as partners in the acceleration of the 2030 Agenda.

112 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. "SDG Budgeting in Romania Linking Policy Planning and Budgeting to Support the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)". Accessed 15 October 2020.↘ PDF

113 "Interview No. 28 – Romania". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 29 October 2020.

114 "Interview No. 21 – Mexico". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 20 October 2020.

115 "Interview No. 28 – Romania". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 29 October 2020; "Interview No. 3 – Romania". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 21 September 2020.

116 "Interview No. 19 – Portugal". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 15 October 2020.

117 "Interview No. 2 – Kosovo". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 17 September 2020.

118 State Audit Office of Georgia. "Performance Audit of Preparedness for Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals". 6 February 2019. ↘ PDF

3.5. Review progress

All of the MSP-advisory bodies in this study have extensive work to do in developing an appropriate monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework to check their work and progress against their mandate. To some degree they are held accountable when reporting to the Prime Minister or President's Office, or to parliament; however, monitoring and evaluation require more systematic approaches that will allow for a review of councils' progress against stated goals and objectives, as well as a consideration of impact in relation to the contribution that MSP-advisory bodies make to sustainable development.

The importance of learning & reflection

Within the full architecture of government, supreme audit institutions, ombudsmen, and other external stakeholders (e.g. international organisations) can also provide information about the contribution that MSP-advisory bodies are making to the 2030 Agenda. In Georgia, the State Audit Office assessed national preparedness for the implementation of the SDGs and issued recommendations based on their results; this included a review of the actions undertaken by the Inter-Agency Council.[118]

Based on these recommendations, the government developed an action plan that outlined various amendments to the structure of the council, including the participation of representatives from municipalities as voting members, representatives from the legislative branch, and participation of a representative from the ombudsman's office. The participation of the ombudsman's office is significant in that this office is seen as a strong independent institution that monitors the government's protection of human rights and will serve this function in relation to the council.[119] Federal audit offices also played a role in assessing preparedness in Belgium and considering the impact of the MSP-advisory council on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.[120]

However, it is important to note that MSP-advisory bodies are only one piece of the puzzle – they are one platform within the broader architecture of government. Acceleration of 2030 Agenda implementation requires contributions from different stakeholders across sectors, silos and scales, and a common understanding that MSP-advisory bodies are not the silver bullet for all development challenges. Therefore, instead of trying to attribute impact directly to these platforms, evaluators should consider the contribution that MSP-advisory bodies make to development progress within a broader government and social system.

It is also important to note that traditional M&E frameworks may not be able to capture the more intangible impact that MSP-advisory bodies have on members and the organisations, associations and institutions that they represent. Respondents have highlighted the transformative impact of these consensus-building processes at multiple levels. In Belgium, the process of building consensus within the MSP-advisory council is seen as a learning opportunity that will have an impact on all participants: "People are learning by participating in our activities; they are learning to consider other points of view, and the possibility of building a dialogue between the different perspectives of the world – that is a value added of our council. People are richer when they leave the council than when they arrive."[121] This individual transformation has a ripple effect which extends from individuals to their organisations, and then into the wider society, and in so doing promotes social cohesion more generally by "building bridges between the different points of view and the different priorities".[122] According to MSP-advisory council members in Belgium, these intangible impacts are rarely considered when their contribution is reviewed, as they are difficult to measure and report on but they should not be downplayed.

119 "Interview No. 29 – Georgia". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 30 October 2020.

120 "Interview No. 17 – Belgium". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 15 October 2020; Belgian Court of Audit. "Sustainable Development Goals 2030 UN Agenda: Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting by the Belgian Authorities (Preparedness Review)". 24 June 2020. ↘ PDF

121 "Interview No. 4 – Belgium". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 22 September 2020.

122 "Interview No. 4 – Belgium". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 22 September 2020.

3.6. Reflexive governance

Context-aware learning and adaptation requires critical self-awareness or what the United Nations SDG Partnership Guidebook describes as "reflective practice".[123] At an institutional level this amounts to "reflexive governance" in which governments and institutions must monitor performance and institutionalise reflexive mechanisms to modify development trajectories.

The first step requires moving beyond traditional decision-making processes to understand how decision making itself is influenced by the context, and to assess what works and does not work in a particular context. Good practice suggests that is important to consider knowledge generated from different actors and diverse processes (e.g. institutional mapping, evaluations, audits and VNR reporting) when going through these reflexive exercises. The way that MSP-advisory bodies were governed or operated was strengthened as a result of knowledge generated from supreme audit institutions (e.g. Georgia), international organisations (e.g. Romania) and SDG experts (e.g. Kosovo and Georgia), and from inputs from civil society organisations, academia (e.g. Mexico) and the private sector (e.g. Georgia).

The next step is examining the relevance of other models for the current context and its system of rules, values and knowledge, and then considering how to learn from it and adapt it to the context.[124] It is also important to consider the lessons learnt from countries that are most in alignment with the legal framework and institutional architecture of one's country. The Kosovo MSP-advisory council collaborated with Albania, Montenegro and Macedonia in the early stages of setting up the council through comparative desk reviews[125] and in-person exchanges of members. The draft action plan also refers to ongoing collaboration with SDG experts in these countries going forward.[126] The Office for the Implementation of the SDGs in Georgia has exchanged information and shared experiences with counterparts in Uzbekistan through the UNESCAP twinning programme. The council also exchanged draft versions of the VNR document with the council in Uzbekistan. Peer-learning activities were conducted with Armenia and Azerbaijan in the past. The Department of Sustainable Development in Romania collaborated with other countries in the Black Sea Region and Western Balkans when establishing the advisory council.

Reflexive governance is iterative. It is a long-term process that may require numerous adaptations to the governance structures and approach taken by MSP-advisory bodies. New structures may become more independent, inclusive or transparent over time, and may benefit from the peer learning described above. Evidence suggests that belonging to regional and global platforms will help reflexive governance, support the identification of good practices and encourage learning and context-aware adaptation.

123 Stibbe, Darian, Prescott, Dave. "The SDG Partnership Guidebook: a practical guide to building high-impact multi-stakeholder partnerships for the Sustainable Development Goals". The Partnering Initiative and UNDESA 2020, p. 9. ↘ PDF

124 Gorddard, Russell, Colloff, Matthew et al. "Values, rules and knowledge: adaptation as change in the decision context". Environmental Science & Policy (57) 2016, pp. 60–69. ↘ URL

125 Ibrahimi, Ervin. "SDGs in National Development Strategies of Albania and Montenegro – Working Paper". 2019. Shared by personal correspondence.

126 Ibrahimi, Ervin. "Council for Sustainable Development of the Assembly of Kosovo Draft Action Plan 2020". 22 November 2019. Shared by personal correspondence.

3.7. Regional cooperation

Many MSP-advisory bodies are actively collaborating with multi-stakeholder structures and networks at a regional level, and this has been described as an important pathway for all case studies. The added value includes information-sharing, capacity development, peer learning and creative problem solving, particularly

when tackling cross-border challenges such as public infrastructure and water resource management.

	REGIONAL COOPERATION
GEORGIA	The Office for the Implementation of the SDGs in Georgia has exchanged information and shared experiences with counterparts in Uzbekistan through the UNESCAP twinning programme. The council also exchanged draft versions of the VNR document with the council in Uzbekistan. Peer-learning activities have been conducted with Armenia and Azerbaijan in the past.[127]
KOSOVO	The Kosovo Council for Sustainable Development collaborated with Albania, Montenegro[128] and Macedonia in the early stages of setting up the council desk reviews through in-person exchanges of members.[129] The draft action plan also refers to ongoing collaboration with SDG experts in these countries going forward.[130] A comparative desk review was undertaken on the effectiveness of MSP-advisory bodies in different political contexts, specifically Albania and Montenegro.[131]
ROMANIA	The Department of Sustainable Development in Romania collaborates with other coordinators in the Black Sea Region and liaises with countries in the Western Balkans and other parts of the Caucuses.[132]
SENEGAL	At the level of the African Economic Commission, a tentative harmonisation process has been developed between other African countries who have completed their VNR reports and are involved in ongoing discussions around the establishment of institutionalised mechanisms for multi-stakeholder engagement on the 2030 Agenda.[133]

127 "Interview No. 9 – Georgia". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 29 September 2020.

128 Ibrahimi, Ervin. "SDGs in National Development Strategies of Albania and Montenegro – Working Paper". 2019. Shared by personal correspondence.

129 "Interview No. 11 – Kosovo". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 29 September 2020; "Interview No. 5 – Kosovo". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 22 September 2020.

130 Ibrahimi, Ervin. "Council for Sustainable Development of the Assembly of Kosovo Draft Action Plan 2020". 22 November 2019. Shared by personal correspondence.

131 "Interview No. 11 – Kosovo". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 29 September 2020; Ibrahimi, Ervin. "SDGs in National Development Strategies of Albania and Montenegro – Working Paper". 2019. Shared by personal correspondence.

132 "Interview No. 13 – Portugal". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 1 October 2020.

133 "Interview No. 22 - Senegal". Interview by Nicolas Gaulin. 21 October 2020.

134 European Sustainable Development Network. "Single Country Profile – Belgium". 7 May 2020. ↘ URL

Belgium is a member of the steering group of the Committee of the European Sustainability Development Network (ESDN),[134] which is working on various peer-learning platforms, peer-learning visits, conferences, exchanges etc. The Federal Council for Sustainable Development in Belgium is working with the European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils Network (EEAC Network) as well as with the German Parliamentary Advisory Council for Sustainable Development.

Different conferences have been jointly organised, and joint advice has been prepared with the councils in Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands to address cross-border challenges (e.g. joint advice about international rail transport as a more sustainable alternative to air travel).[135]

The Department of Sustainable Development in Romania collaborates with other coordinators in the Black Sea Region and liaises with countries in the Western Balkans and other parts of the Caucuses.[136] There is a law that will soon be approved which will permit Romania to join the EEAC, and it is currently on the board of the ESDN. The department has worked with the EU and OECD on reports related to inter-institutional frameworks for the implementation of the SDGs and budgeting for the SDGs.[137] A previous deputy chair of the MSP-advisory council in Namibia was involved in the Global Forum for National SDG Advisory Bodies and participated in the Open SDG Club,[138] started by the German Council for Sustainable Development as a transnational peer-learning platform.[139]

The National Council on Environment and Sustainable Development in Portugal is a member of the EEAC Network. One of the council members is the vice-chair for this network and represents the council within that network. It is useful to note that a permanent working group was created in the MSP-advisory council specifically for the Sustainable Development Goals. This was designed to mirror the creation of a similar group within the EEAC. This working group responded to requests from the EEAC, communicates externally, hosts thematic workshops related to the 2030 Agenda, and informs the rest of the council about developments related to the

135 "Interview No. 4 – Belgium". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 22 September 2020.

136 "Interview No. 13 – Portugal". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 1 October 2020.

137 European Economic and Social Committee. "Portugal". Accessed 20 September 2020. ↘ URL

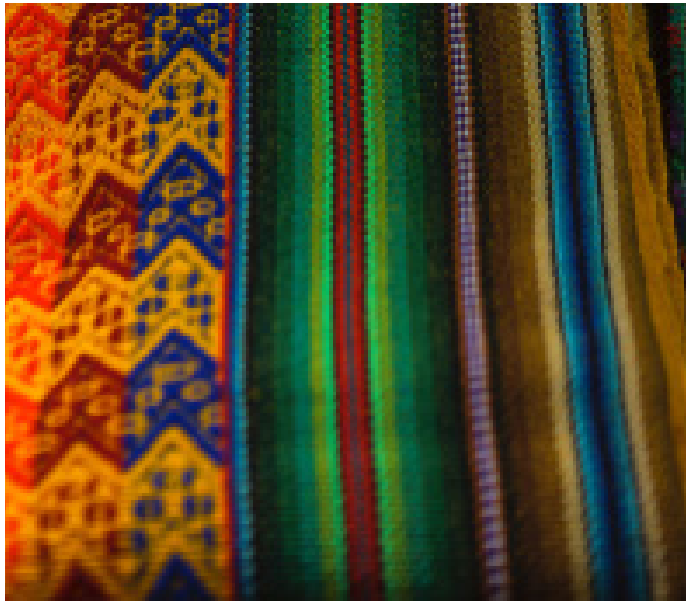
138 German Council for Sustainable Development. "Open SDGclub.Berlin". Accessed 10 October 2020. ↘ URL

139 "Interview No. 12 – Namibia". Interview by Zosa Gruber. 30 September 2020.

140 Currently there are three very active working groups that focus on: preparing a statement on recent changes in legislation related to management models for protective areas; working group on marine issues to respond to the government's recently launched public consultation for the new ocean strategy; working group that worked for three weeks on the urgent matter of producing a statement about a post-COVID recovery plan, which was prepared by a consultant for government. (13)

Accelerated SDG delivery: regional exchange, adaptation & learning

2030 Agenda.[140] The MSP-advisory council is also participating in a project on the SDGs involving seven Portuguese-speaking countries around the world, including Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Timor-Leste. The council shares experience and knowledge with these Portuguese-speaking governments, although many do not have counterpart councils.



Conclusion

This report reveals that acceleration of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires instituting formal arrangements for multi-stakeholder engagement to ensure whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches. Good practices emerging from eight case studies of national sustainable development advisory councils around the world highlight pathways for the establishment and maintenance of MSP-advisory bodies for the 2030 Agenda.

Multi-stakeholder bodies played an important role in advancing the sustainable development agenda before the UN 2030 Agenda was adopted. They will continue to fulfil an equally important role beyond the time horizon of the Agenda. It is evident that countries are increasingly establishing institutionalised mechanisms specifically for long-term, inclusive multi-stakeholder engagement on 2030 Agenda implementation, to support consultation on the development of national priorities, drafting of nationalstrategic plans and in reporting on progress to the United Nations. Furthermore, the governments in this report planned for inclusive and long-term, institutionalised multi-stakeholder engagement and set out provisions for periodic consultations and iterative engagement through the mechanism of MSP-advisory bodies.

The core mandate of MSP-advisory bodies is to convene representatives from different stakeholder groups and provide advice on controversial issues for sustainable development that transcend but include these multiple views. This is the unique value added for governments in the long run as it links together private sector interests and public demands in one institutionalised body with a common view that is wider and more embracing than any single angle or

perspective. These bodies are crucial for dealing with competing interests and in identifying areas where synergies can be promoted and trade-offs mitigated. Beyond this core mandate, some MSP-advisory bodies play an active role in specific policy processes, such as the development of national sustainable development strategies, compilation of VNRs or the nationalisation of indicators. These roles add credibility to the Agenda and often make implementation more efficient.

Other councils and similar bodies which have the standing and resources to do so have expanded this mandate even further by promoting civil society networks or embarking on public engagement. However, their overarching goals are to find common ground and make a collective impact on sustainable development by means of elevating the contributions of diverse stakeholders and managing difficult negotiation and consensus-building processes on controversial subjects, thereby promoting a whole-of-society approach to the 2030 Agenda.

There are diverse pathways for establishing MSP-advisory bodies, and there is no specific recipe or blueprint for how they should be established, where they should be positioned or how they should be composed. Success is context-dependent and should be based on a thorough assessment of the institutional and political landscape. The experiences, successes and challenges of MSP-advisory bodies that were established prior to the 2030 Agenda (such as Belgium, Namibia and Portugal) differ from those that are newly established or are in the process of being established (such as Georgia, Kosovo, Mexico, Romania and Senegal) given the institutional, legal and political contexts in which they were initiated and seek to maintain their legitimacy. The latter are currently defining their modus operandi, governance mechanisms and selection procedures, while the former are seeking to strengthen long-term partnership relationships. For this reason, the report has highlighted favourable conditions that have contributed to success for the different types of councils and similar bodies, while also identifying cross-cutting success factors that are relevant in installing and maintaining legitimacy with an eye to learning from and adapting these success factors.

How to establish MSP-advisory bodies?

Harness existing institutions, processes and stakeholder structures. Given that time is of the essence in terms of "acceleration", utilising existing entities and building on existing stakeholder structures is

the most efficient route. If possible, build upon a history and culture of negotiation and consensus-building practices associated with dialogue on controversial subjects, and create opportunities for institutional linking of various stakeholders. Task execution should aim to moderate competing interests and identify areas where synergies can be promoted and trade-offs needed to be mitigated, without losing sight of demands from society and the private sector and based on academic findings. Governments should aim to connect such an MSP-advisory body with existing coordination mechanisms within government that include different members and levels of government. Draw upon existing coordination institutions and committees, which serve as useful examples and models when designing new MSP-advisory bodies. Use their demonstrable successes to advocate for the appropriateness and importance of creating a new multi-stakeholder body and harness the institutional memory and experience of key individuals in these committees. In short, whenever possible build upon the shoulders of the existing national "giants" instead of starting afresh. Use existing resources, legal mandates and rules of operation before branching out as stand-alone councils and similar bodies and transform them to suit the 2030 Agenda. Due to the urgency of the situation with regard to "acceleration", transforming existing entities is the most efficient route.

Meaningfully complement government mandates & action with a whole-of-society approach

Collaborate with institutionalised stakeholder groups in order to identify MSP-advisory council members who are able to put forward strong positions backed by their institutions, thereby ensuring that debates are grounded in practical considerations and the

special interests of different sectors. Build upon a history and culture of negotiation and consensus-building practices associated with social dialogue on controversial subjects, and create opportunities to link together different representatives and sectors into one institutionalised body that can moderate competing interests and identify areas where synergies can be promoted and trade-offs mitigated. Embrace a whole-of-society approach by collaborating with academia, civil society and forerunners for sustainable development in the private sector, encouraging knowledge exchange, shared responsibility and a common sense of purpose. It is important to appreciatively recognise the ways in which different sectors can meaningfully complement government mandates and actions, and it is necessary to provide non-state actors with opportunities to contribute to tangible outputs and assume leadership roles within the council and its working groups. Acknowledging barriers to participation is central to this whole-of-society approach, particularly when considered in relation to LNOB. Not everyone is in a position to be able to afford to participate, and mechanisms to work around this are key.

Allocate the MSP-advisory council an official function tied to specific policy processes or documents in order to give it a more active role in established processes, while creating clear pathways of engagement, impact and enhancing its legitimacy. Connect it to national sustainable development strategies, opinions on the process and content of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) or nationalisation processes of SDG indicators. Aim for reciprocal exchange and feedback loops about recommendations, advice and adaptation

of policy processes towards accelerated delivery of SDGs. Position the MSP-advisory council close to or within national institutions responsible for overseeing sustainable development policymaking. This will ensure that it is aligned with the institution that has a coordination mandate. It will increase the MSP-advisory council's engagement in national sustainable development strategies and will enhance its ability to provide coherent and integrated policy advice to all ministries. However, this positioning (and its implications for the independence of advice formulated) must be carefully considered in different national institutional and political contexts. Ideally, position the MSP-advisory council close to the centre of the government and its administration. Positioning it close to or within national institutions responsible for overall SDG planning and implementation will ensure that it is aligned with the institution that has a coordination mandate, and it will increase the MSP-council's engagement in national sustainable development strategies and enhance its ability to provide coherent policy advice to all ministries. However, this positioning (and its implications for the independence of any advice formulated) must be carefully considered within the different national institutional and political landscapes.

Obtain recognition from the executive branch and/or parliament, promote ownership and shared responsibility with a whole-of-government approach in mind. Not only will this ensure policy coherence but it will also create a conducive ecosystem that will support the legislative, institutional and budgetary changes that are required to establish the council and maintain it in the long run.

Join forces with international partners and harness the financial, technical and capacity support of international partners for the establishment of MSP-advisory bodies, particularly in relation to developing governance modalities and financing the secretariat.

How to maintain legitimacy and long-term constructive relationships?

Build consensus on controversial topics and incorporate academic, societal and private sector perspectives to constructively engage with the various stakeholder representatives on controversial topics and transformation areas. Requirements for unanimity of advice provided by the MSP-advisory council must be outlined in law, and the need (and processes) for consensus-building should be described in internal regulations. This also requires the creation of formal and informal feedback mechanisms within

MSP-advisory bodies to promote transparency and accountability, and an investment in leadership and facilitation skills to ensure effective mediation of diverse interests. Among members, there should be a shared commitment to fact-finding and evidence-supported arguments, and a willingness to compromise in order to reach consensus on opinions.Together these should form the common guiding ethic of the body's processes. Internal processes and working approaches should include specification of the mandate and various routes and methodologies for consensus-building, e.g. through strengthening the functioning and mechanisms for dialogue and consensus-building within working groups. When it is not possible to achieve consensus, there should be options to include text that contains differing positions rather than weakening or simplifying the advice provided. This is important information for policymakers when deciding upon priorities and grounding political processes in very practical considerations, and it speaks to the value added of MSP-advisory bodies in providing "Realpolitik" policy advice that mediates the controversial positions of civil society, the private sector and academia.

Constructive, formal and trustful relationships between MSP-advisory council and government. Enacting institutionalised exchange and feedback mechanisms between both entities is needed to guarantee policy relevance of recommendations and to also maintain motivation for honorary engagement on the part of MSP-advisory bodies. This goes along with creating a conducive ecosystem for MSP-advisory bodies, developing structural solutions and processes with an institutionalised mandate,

and financial resourcing. The MSP-advisory bodies should be embedded in a robust legal framework with clear inter-institutional mechanisms that bridge different arms and levels of government. This will ensure horizontal and vertical policy coherence as well as adequate follow-up.

Enhance social acceptance of transformation and social change by promoting inclusivity, diversity and participation in the MSP-advisory council. This requires clear and transparent selection or appointment procedures grounded in law or internal regulations; providing non-state actors with opportunities to assume leadership and decision-making roles within the council itself or in working groups; strengthening the functioning and mechanisms for dialogue and consensus-building within working groups; promoting inclusion and accessibility through online and offline methods of engagement; providing for multiple and iterative engagement over time; and keeping members informed of the purpose of their inputs. It is also important to promote collective pride, belonging and commitment to the MSP-advisory council, grounded in a common belief in the mandate, role and value added of the council. In short, the intentional culture of inclusivity must go beyond just the stated formalities. Put measures in place to ensureup-to-date representation in membership and promote temporal coherence in the face of shocks such as political transitions, economic crisis or health pandemics. This requires reviewing the composition of MSP-advisory bodies to ensure that in ever-shifting political and socio-economic contexts, all the relevant stakeholders are included. It also requires planning for ongoing advocacy, awareness-raising and

Anchor the 2030 vision within society

capacity development for new officials, creating a robust legal and institutional framework, ensuring the continuity of the secretariat and presence of diverse non-politically appointed members. Resource-mobilisation strategies and measures to ensure the independence of the council, such as the buy-in of parliament are key. Grounding the central purpose of national advisory bodies in the underlying principles and ambitious vision of the 2030 Agenda, as well as in state commitments to regional and multilateral agreements, can serve to reinforce the legitimacy of MSP-advisory bodies. Even in polarised contexts they can continue to play a role in the acceleration of 2030 Agenda implementation.

Subnational engagement of MSP-advisory bodies to foster societal dialogue and advocacy for sustainable development. MSP-advisory bodies play a role in collating the diverse inputs of subnational entities; providing opportunities for subnational authorities to participate in council or working group meetings as observers or voting members; and collaborating with local authorities to develop innovative solutions to local problems. They also play a role in enhancing state capacities through the promotion of local and regional networks to strengthen public engagement and thereby accelerate implementation of sustainable development.

Budget for the operational and administrative aspects of the MSP-advisory council and provision of capacity development to the secretariat and leadership.
A well-resourced and relatively independent secretariat is necessary in order to enhance operations and ensure effectiveness in the long run. Allocate

141 Stibbe, Darian, Prescott, Dave. "The SDG Partnership Guidebook: a practical guide to building high-impact multi-stakeholder partnerships for the Sustainable Development Goals". The Partnering Initiative and UNDESA 2020, p. 9. ↘ PDF

resources for capacity development for MSP-advisory council secretariats and chairpersons, specifically in relation to convening and facilitation skills, so that they are better equipped to promote consensus-building. The mandate needs to be backed with a budget in order to be able to fulfil the mandate.

Strengthen operational and governance elements for the smooth delivery and fulfilment of mandate and services. Document internal governance and operational principles and procedures, ensure that all members understand them, and create room to strengthen them over time, when needed. Careful consideration should be given to leadership roles, membership size, as well as credible selection processes (appointment vs. nomination vs. application). There should be very clear membership principles and requirements as well as formalisation of the tenure and independence of members. There should also be modalities for exchange across working groups within the MSP-advisory council and a well-resourced secretariat to operate the body.

'Challenge assumptions of scarcity',[141] as argued by UNDESA, by making use of existing multi-stakeholder engagement opportunities, such as consultation on sustainable development strategies and coordination mechanisms that include different levels of government, and ad hoc or periodic engagement opportunities, such as reporting on progress to the United Nations, when identifying champions and setting out provisions for long-term institutionalised multi-stakeholder engagement. It is also important to factor in trans-formation of existing MSP-mechanisms and working modalities to make them "fit for purpose"

in the 2030 Agenda context, including consideration of interlinkages, policy coherence, inclusivity, diversity, and the "leave no one behind" principle.

Review the contribution made by MSP-advisory bodies. Acceleration of 2030 Agenda implementation requires complementary contributions of different stakeholders across sectors, silos and scales. It should be recognised and emphasised that MSP-advisory bodies are not the silver bullet for all development challenges. Instead of trying to attribute impact directly to these platforms, evaluators should consider the contribution that MSP-advisory bodies make to development progress within a broader institutional and political system.

Invest in institutional learning across like-minded MSP-advisory bodies at the regional and global level by learning in regional networks or twinning whenever possible cooperation processes for the purposes of information sharing, capacity development, and innovative problem-solving on cross-border issues.

Strike a balance between dealing with timely and societally relevant issues, while safeguarding the long-term vision in order to maintain the value added of an MSP-advisory council. This requires flexibility and adaptation to immediate demands (such as COVID-19, 'build back better' and concepts such as a 'just transition'), while also ensuring some degree of continuity. This requires careful consideration of the composition of the secretariat and MSP-advisory council, and the need to maintain institutional memory over time. This includes institutionalisation of operational principles, membership selection criteria and governance mechanisms grounded in law as well as the allocation of resources and creation of opportunities for collective long-term planning to ensure that the work of MSP-advisory bodies fits in with the strategic goals of the country, region and globally, both within the context of the 2030 Agenda and beyond.

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↘ Gouvernement du Sénégal. “Objectifs De Developpement Durable – ODD – Revue Nationale Volontaire”. United Nations High-Level Political Forum. June 2018

↘ Ministère De L’économie, Des Finances Et Du Plan. “Plan Sénégal Émergent Plan D’actions Prioritaires 2019–2023”. Décembre 2018

↘ Ministère De L’environnement Et Du Developpement Durable. “Strategie Nationale De Developpement Durable”. 2016

↘ Plateforme Des Organisations De La Societe Civile Pour Le Suivi Des Objectifs De Developpement Durable. “Contribution De La Société Civile Au Rapport National De Suivi De La Mise En œuvre Des ODD”. May 2018

↘ Sustainable Development Solutions Network. “Regional Network Sahel”. Accessed 1 November 2020

↘ United Nations PAGE. “Senegal”. Accessed 2 November 2020


Global Forum for
National SDG
Advisory Bodies

Annex

GEORGIA

The Inter-Agency Council for Sustainable Development Goals has existed in Georgia since 2017 as the Council on Public Administration Reform and Sustainable Development Goals[142] and was reconstituted on January 23, 2020.

The Council is directly accountable to the Prime Minister of Georgia,[143] and it is composed of deputy ministers and other senior government officials, but participants from all sectors of society, including civil society, academic, private sector, and international non-governmental organisations can participate in working groups. Members of the Council also include co-chairs of the thematic working groups from local NGOs.

There are four working groups that report to the Inter-Agency Council:

- Social Inclusion,
- Economic Development,
- Sustainable Energy and Environmental Protection
- Democratic Governance.

The secretariat of the council is positioned in the Prime Minister's Office in the Department of Policy Planning and Coordination responsible for the coordination of SDG implementation in Georgia.

The Council in Georgia provides strategic guidance on inter-agency issues in relation to SDG implementation and is responsible for developing the national development strategy and integrating the SDGs into national policies. Furthermore, the Council reviews the VNR[144] and annual monitoring reports, provides guidance on statistical data collection for SDG monitoring, advises on the nationalisationof the SDGs,[145] and helps with other functions through existing legislation.[146]

KOSOVO

Since its establishment in October 2018, the Kosovo Council for Sustainable Development has existed as a parliamentary caucus led by the Committee on Health, Labour and Social Welfare under the leadership of the president of this Committee.[147]

The Council is positioned within parliament as the highest institutional body that can monitor the implementation of the SDG resolution.[148] The membership of the Council is inter-institutional, in that it includes a chairperson, 13 members of the Parliamentary Committee on Health, Labour and Social Welfare, and then on a voluntary basis 14 chairpersons of other parliamentary committees, representatives from the secretary-general, and external representatives from UNKT, government and CSOs.

The Council brings together parliamentarians and other institutional representatives, international organisations and CSO think tanks to coordinate joint action in implementing the 2030 Agenda in Kosovo. The participation of government representatives and the Association of Kosovo Municipalities in the Council contributes to streamlined actions on the SDGs across all layers of the society. It also enables easier localisation and vertical coordination.[149]

142 Administration of the Government of Georgia. "On the Approval and Establishment of the Inter-Agency Council for Sustainable Development Goals, § Law of Georgia on the Structure, Authority and Rules of Procedure of the Government of Georgia, Article 8 (2) (i) and Article 29". 2020. Shared by personal correspondence.
143 Ibid.
144 Government of Georgia. "First Voluntary National Review on Implementation of The Sustainable Development Goals – Georgia". United Nations High-Level Political Forum. 2016. ↘ PDF ; Government of Georgia. "Voluntary National Review – Georgia VNR 2020". United Nations High-Level Political Forum. July 2020. ↘ PDF
145 Administration of the Government of Georgia. "The National Document for the Nationalization of UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)". Accessed 14 September 2020. ↘ PDF
146 Administration of the Government of Georgia. Council. Accessed 10 September 2020. ↘ URL
147 Assembly of Kosovo. "Constitutive Act of the Council for Sustainable Development". Pristina, 2018. Shared by personal correspondence.
148 Ibrahimi, Ervin. "Council for Sustainable Development of the Assembly of Kosovo Draft Action Plan 2020". 22 November 2019. Shared by personal correspondence.
149 Ibid.

MEXICO

In Mexico, the National Council for 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was initially established by Presidential decree in 2017.[150] The National Development Planning Law (2018)[151] was also reformed, ensuring a whole-of-government commitment to the 2030 Agenda. On 31 May 2018, the Operational Guidelines of the National Council of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as the Multisector Participation Mechanisms were established.[152]

The highest decision-making body in the MSP-advisory council is the National Council of the 2030 Agenda led by the President or one of his/her representatives.

Under the National Council, there are two committees, namely the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee and the National Strategy Committee, composed of 30 members, including 19 federal agencies and a mixture of non-government or subnational representatives from CSOs, private sector, academia, the scientific community, subnational governments, municipalities, legislative branch and a statistics institution.

There are four thematic working groups (social development, economic development, environmental development, and equality and inclusion),[153] and two additional ones have been proposed on subnational engagement and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) respectively.

The Council has a mandate to develop a national strategy for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and plays a leading role in compiling VNRs,[154] based on a broad consultation process involving stakeholders at the federal, state, and local levels.[155]

In December 2020, significant restructuring took place within the government. The Executive Secretariat will become a part of the Ministry of Economy.

ROMANIA

The Consultative Council for Sustainable Development in Romania has existed since February 2020 and is positioned within the Department of Sustainable Development.[156]

The Department of Sustainable Development is currently finalising the structure and formal process to recruit 34 representatives (two per SDG) to sit on the council. Members will be appointed based on an open call, application process and interviews. The membership of the Council will be approved at the level of the Prime Minister, following proposals by the State Councillor, who is the Head of the Department of Sustainable Development, subordinate to the Prime Minister himself. Proposals are to be made following a transparent selection procedure.

The Council develops proposals for national strategy implementation, conducts studies and analysis regarding the implementation of the strategy, drafts proposals for legislative initiatives deemed as a priority for the implementation of the strategy, ensures an organised framework for consultations with various stakeholders, promotes innovative approaches, advises the Department for Sustainable Development (including on the VNR),[157] offers advice to the Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development, and provides support to the National Institute of Statistics in selecting relevant SDG indicators.[158]

150 Government of Mexico. "Decree by which the National Council of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is created." Official Gazette of the Federation. 26 April 2017. ↘ URL
151 In 2018, the National Council presented a proposal to reform the ↘ Planning Law to the Congress. This law resulted in aligning the National Development Plan with the 2030 Agenda. 2018. ↘ URL
152 Gobierno de Mexico. "Lineamientos De Los Comités De Trabajo Del Consejo Nacional De La Agenda 2030". Lineamientos De Funcionamiento, October 2019. Shared by personal correspondence.
153 Ibid.
154 Government of Mexico. "Voluntary National Review for the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2018. ↘ PDF
155 Gobierno De Mexico. "Estrategia Nacional Para La Implementación De La Agenda 2030 En México". 2 December 2019. ↘ URL
156 Department for Sustainable Development. Accessed 15 September 2020. ↘ URL
157 Government of Romania. "Romania's Voluntary National Review 2018". United Nations High-Level Political Forum. July 2018. ↘ PDF
158 Department for Sustainable Development. Accessed 15 September 2020. ↘ URL

SENEGAL

Senegal does not have an official advisory council for sustainable development; however, Senegal's political commitment to the implementation of the SDGs was manifested through inclusive and participatory mechanisms. This includes the Harmonised Framework for Monitoring and Evaluation of Public Policies (CASE); the creation of the ad hoc technical committee for the VNR (2018) established under the Ministry of Economy, Finance and Planning; engagement with the Platform of Civil Society Organisations for Monitoring of the SDGs (POSCO Agenda 2030),[159] as well as the civil society working group under the Council of Non-Governmental Development Support Organisations (CONGAD),[160] and partnership with academia through SDSN Sahel.[161]

BELGIUM

In Belgium, the Federal Council for Sustainable Development is relatively autonomous and independent.

The Council is composed entirely of representatives from organised civil society, academia, trade unions and industry representatives. It was formed under the law of 5 May 1997[162] and amended in 2010.[163]

The general assembly meets on average three times a year, but in between meetings the general assembly formally votes on all draft opinions by means of a written procedure.

Decisions related to the functioning of the council are made by the bureau, which includes an honorary chair and three vice chairs, as well as members with a voting capacity.

The Council has five active working groups, namely:

- Strategies for Sustainable Development
- Energy and Climate
- International Relations
- Product Standards
- Biodiversity and Forests

The Council advises the government on all measures concerning federal policy on sustainable development. It contributes to policy dialogue, serves as a forum for exchanging ideas on sustainable development, and drafts opinions within the statutory bodies, working groups and forums.[164]

159 Plateforme Des Organisations De La Societe Civile Pour Le Suivi Des Objectifs De Developpement Durable. "Contribution De La Société Civile Au Rapport National De Suivi De La Mise En œuvre Des ODD". May 2018. ↘ PDF
160 Conseil des Organisations Non-Governmentales d'Appui au Développement. Accessed 2 November 2020. ↘ URL
161 Sustainable Development Solutions Network. "Regional Network Sahel". Accessed 1 November 2020. ↘ URL
162 Moniteur Belge. "Lois, Decrets, Ordonnances Et Reglements". 18 June 1997. ↘ PDF
163 Federal Council for Sustainable Development (FRDO-CFDD). Accessed 8 September 2020. ↘ PDF
164 Ibid. See also, Federal Council for Sustainable Development (FRDO-CFDD). "Update 2030 Agenda". 17 July 2020. ↘ PDF

PORTUGAL

The National Council of the Environment and Sustainable Development (CNADS) in Portugal has existed since 1997[165] (and was reformed by decree in 2004).[166]

The President of CNADS is appointed by the Council of Ministers and empowered by the Prime Minister, for a three-year term. There are eight members designated in their personal capacity by the central government. CNADS is composed of 36 members appointed by the following entities: Council of Ministers, Autonomous Regions of the Azores and Madeira, the National Association of Portuguese Municipalities, and associations of different sectors of civil society. Members attend plenary meetings but also work in specific working groups.

Working groups are created for the purpose of council deliberations, taking into account the national and international agenda, and requests for the council's advice. At present, the working groups in the Council are as follows:

- 2030 Agenda and SDGs
- National Strategy for the Portugal 2030
- Oceans and Coastal Zones
- Soils, Spatial Planning and Urban Planning
- Energy and Climate Change[167]

The Council is housed within the Ministry of Environment and Climate Action, and is seen as an advisor to the parliament and the government. The Council, by its own initiative or by request of the members of the government, consults with diverse stakeholders, develops sustained analysis and recommendations on issues related to the environment and sustainable development policies and laws.[168] It also provides input into the VNRs prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[169]

NAMIBIA

In Namibia, the Sustainable Development Advisory Council was established by the terms of the Environmental Management Act[170] within the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism in 2013.

The Sustainable Development Advisory Council is governed by a board. The board consists of nine members, including four state representatives and four non-state representatives, selected based on their expertise and the extent to which they represent associations, organisations or institutions with expertise on environmental issues.[171] The Minister of the Environment is the appointing authority and requests nominations from different line ministries, including the National Planning Commission, the Ministry of Mines and Energy, the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform, and the Director of Forestry. There is also one permanent member on the council, namely the Environmental Commissioner, who is an "ex officio" member that participates in meetings but has no say. The four non-state representatives are selected through an open call for applications, and include representatives from the Chamber of Environment, an umbrella organisation for NGOs, the Environmental Investment Forum, the Environmental Economics Association, and a Young Women's Association.

The council was established to advise the Minister of Environment. The Sustainable Development Advisory Council is responsible for giving inputs into the formulation of the national development plan[172] and the VNR report,[173] both of which are coordinated by the National Planning Commission, based on research the Council coordinates related to the state of the evironment.[174]

165 Portugal's Ministry of Environment. Decreto-Lei n.o 220/97. Diário Da República. 20 August 1997. ↘ PDF
166 Portugal's Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning. Decreto-Lei n.o 136/2004. Diário Da República. 3 June 2004. ↘ PDF
167 National Council on Environment and Sustainable Development. "CNADS Annual Activity Report". March 2019.
168 National Council on Environment and Sustainable Development. "CNADS Brief Presentation". May 2019.
169 Government of Portugal. "National Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – Portugal". United Nations High-Level Political Forum. July 2017. ↘ PDF
170 Parliament of the Republic of Namibia. " Environmental Management Act 7 of 2007". 31 December 2007. ↘ PDF
171 Sustainable Development Advisory Council. Accessed 15 September 2020. ↘ URL
172 Government of the Republic of Namibia. "Namibia Vision 2030: Policy Framework for Long-Term National Development". 2004. ↘ PDF; National Planning Commission. "Namibia's 5th National Development Plan (NDP5)". Accessed 30 September 2017. ↘ PDF
173 Government of Namibia. "Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals – Voluntary National Review 2018". United Nations High-Level Political Forum. 2018. ↘ PDF
174 Edwards, Jessica, Kilian, Darryll. "Second National Integrated State of the Environment Report for Namibia Final Inception Report". SRK Consulting. September 2020. Shared by personal correspondence

COUNTRY	NO. OF INTERVIEWS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS
BELGIUM	3	3
GEORGIA	4	5
KOSOVO	5	6
MEXICO	4	5
NAMIBIA	2	2
PORTUGAL	4	4
ROMANIA	3	3
SENEGAL	4	4
TOTAL	29	32

	PROVIDING EXPERT ADVICE	VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW (VNR)	NATIONAL SDG STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION	LOCALIZATION OF INDICATORS	FACILITATING MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE	SUB-NATIONAL ENGAGEMENT	RESEARCH	PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
BELGIUM	✓				✓		✓	✓
GEORGIA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
KOSOVO	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MEXICO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
NAMIBIA	✓				✓			✓
PORTUGAL	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
ROMANIA	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	
SENEGAL	✓	✓	SDG Council in Senegal is still emerging					

	DATE	STRATEGY'S TITLE	LEADING AGENCY	OTHER AGENCIES	COUNCIL'S INVOLVEMENT	LINK
BELGIUM	2017	National Sustainable Development Strategy	Inter-Ministerial Conference for Sustainable Development	Interdepartmental Commission for Sustainable Development, Inter-Federal Statistical Institute, Federal Planning Bureau	To advice and give an opinion.	↘
GEORGIA	2015	The National Document for the Nationalization of UN Sustainable Development Goals	Government of Georgia	Inter-Agency Council for Sustainable Development Goals	Highly engaged in developing and updating the national document and submitting it to Government for approval.	↘
KOSOVO	Jan 2016	National Development Strategy 2016 – 2021	Office of the Prime Minister	Inter-Agency Council for Sustainable Development Goals	Council helped with releasing the Strategy.	↘
MEXICO	Nov 2019	Estrategia Nacional para la Implementación de la Agenda 2030 en México (National Strategy for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Mexico)	Head of the Office of the Presidency of México[175]	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and UNDP	Provides input.	↘
NAMIBIA	May 2017	Namibia's 5th National Development Plan	National Planning Commission		Provides input.	↘
PORTUGAL	Feb 2016	Programa Nacional de Reformas (National Reform Programme)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Ministry of Planning and Infrastructures	Provides input.	↘
ROMANIA	Nov 2018	Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy 2030	Department of Sustainable Development	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Inter ministerial Committee	High level of participation.	↘
SENEGAL	2016	Strategie Nationale De Developpement Durable (National Strategy for Sustainable Development)	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development		Sustainable Development, Inter-Fed	↘

175 Note: On December 2020, the department responsible for coordinating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Mexico (i.e. the Head of the President's Office) was dissolved. The relevant department was re-sectorized to the Ministry of Economy, emphasizing the relevance of the financing and economic dimension. GIZ and UNDP contributed to the elaboration of the VNR.

	YEARS VNR SUBMITTED	AGENCY RESPONSIBLE	OTHER AGENCIES	SDG COUNCIL'S LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT	VNR DOCUMENT
BELGIUM	2017	Inter-Ministerial Conference for Sustainable Development	Inter-Federal Statistical Institution	Produced an advice on the VNR Report	To advice and give an opinion.
GEORGIA	2016, 2020	SDG Secretariat, Department of Policy Planning and Coordination	Georgian Statistic Office	High level participation and compilation, revision and provided feedback on draft prepared by Secretariat.	Highly engaged in developing and updating the national document and submitting it to Government for approval.
KOSOVO*					
MEXICO	2016, 2018	Office of the President of Mexico	National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI)[176]	High level participation and compilation and validated the VNR draft before submission.	Provides input.
NAMIBIA	2018	National Planning Commission	Namibia Statistics Agency	Participated in consultation.	Provides input.
PORTUGAL	2017	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	National Statistical Institute	Participated in meetings and current sustainable development situation. However, does not play a role in VNR process.	Provides input.
ROMANIA	2018	Department of Sustainable Development	National Institute of Statistics	Pending engagement	High level of participation.
SENEGAL	2018	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development	National Agency of Statistics and Demography	POSCO Agenda 2030 made a contribution to the VNR on monitoring the implementation of SDGs.	Sustainable Development, Inter-Fed

* Since Kosovo is not a UN Member State, it does not submit VNR Reports.

176 GIZ and UNDP contributed to the elaboration of the VNR.

	NAME OF GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE(S)	WORKING GROUP(S)	SECRETARIAT	OTHER BODIES
BELGIUM	The Bureau	Strategies for Sustainable Development, Energy and Climate, International Relations, Product Standards, Biodiversity and Forests	Secretariat	SDG Cells, Federal Institute for Sustainable Development housed in Federal Administration for SD, Federal Planning Bureau, Inter-Departmental Commission, Inter-Ministerial Conference (no longer active)
GEORGIA	Inter-Agency Council	Social Inclusion, Economic Development, Environmental Protection, Democratic Governance	Policy Planning Unit of the Policy Planning and Coordination Department of the Administration of the Government of Georgia	SDG focal points in each ministry
KOSOVO	Steering Committee in Parliamentary Caucus	Technical Group will have the working group	Secretariat and UNKT	Parliamentary Caucus is led by Health, Labour, and Social Welfare Committee
MEXICO	National Council for the 2030 Agenda	National Strategy Committee, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, and 4 thematic committees: social development, economic development, environmental development, and equality and inclusion. Two new committees recently created (Nov 2020): subnational engagement and SDG 16	Office of the President	Two new committees based on SDG 16 and for states/municipalities (sub-national level)
NAMIBIA	Board	Ad-hoc committees	Secretariat in the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism	National Planning Commission
PORTUGAL	Plenary Council	Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, National Strategy for Portugal 2030, Oceans and Coastal Zones, Soil, Spatial Planning and Urban Planning, Energy and Climate Changes	Secretariat	
ROMANIA	Interdepartmental Committee	Proposing 17 working committees for each SDG	Secretariat, Department of Sustainable Development	Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development, SDG Hubs

Annex – Recently established MSP-advisory bodies (overview)

	OFFICIAL MANDATE	ACHIEVEMENTS
GEORGIA: INTER-AGENCY COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS	– Providing expert advice – Leading Voluntary National Review – National SDG Strategy Development – Nationalisation of indicators – Coordinating and providing strategic guidance on inter-agency issues in relation to SDG implementation – Developing recommendations to integrate SDGs into national policy – Reviewing projects by the Secretariat as well as thematic working groups and other actors during the SDG implementation process and recommendations that are submitted to the Government.[177]	– This council played an important role in drafting and updating the national strategy in Georgia, and in coordinating the nationalisation of all 17 SDGs and selected targets.[178] – It has also promoted the integration of the SDGs in the policy cycle by publishing a Handbook for Policy Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation to promote policy-making reform in line with the 2030 Agenda, in partnership with the EU and OECD.[179] – The most recent VNR[180] process was coordinated by the Council Secretariat, and the final draft report was approved by the Council.[181] – With the support of an expert contracted by a local CSO, it has also undertaken eco-system mapping and developed a matrix in order to support implementation, monitoring and reporting.[182]
KOSOVO: COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	– Bringing together parliamentarians and other institutional representatives, international organisations and CSO think-tanks to coordinate joint action in implementing Agenda 2030 in Kosovo[183] – Providing expert advice – Contribution to the national development strategy and budgets – Working with the government to help support the mainstreaming of the SDGs with the aim of achieving inter-institutional unity – Establishing partnerships with local, regional, and global entities to mobilize resources for SDG programs.[184]	– The Government has adopted a resolution which committed Kosovo to the 2030 Agenda, and laid the foundations for the establishment of the SDG Council in Kosovo.[185] – As a result of awareness-raising, capacity development and advocacy, there is institutional buy in and recognition of the important role that will be played by the Council[186] in integrating the SDGs in the upcoming national development strategy.[187] – The Council developed a draft action plan, which will be revised when the Council is reconstituted in November 2020, based on research on MSP-advisory bodies in different countries and consultation with various regional and global entities.

177 Administration of the Government of Georgia. Council. Accessed September 10, 2020. ↘ PDF **178** Administration of the Government of Georgia. "The National Document for the Nationalization of UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)." Accessed September 14, 2020. ↘ PDF **179** "Interview No. 9 – Georgia." Interview by Zosa Gruber. September 29, 2020. Administration of the Government of Georgia. "Policy Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Handbook." Mar 4, 2020. ↘ URL **180** Government of Georgia. "Voluntary National Review - Georgia VNR 2020." United Nations High Level Political Forum. July 2020 **181** "Interview No. 9 – Georgia." Interview by Zosa Gruber. September 29, 2020. **182** Administration of the Government of Georgia. "The National Document for the Nationalization of UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)." Accessed September 14, 2020. ↘ PDF **183** Assembly of Kosovo. "Constitutive Act of The Council for Sustainable Development." Pristina, 2018. Shared by personal correspondence. **184** Ibid **185** "Interview No. 11 – Kosovo." Interview by Zosa Gruber. September 29, 2020. **186** "Interview No. 11 – Kosovo." Interview by Zosa Gruber. September 29, 2020. **187** Ibrahimi, Ervin. "Council for Sustainable Development of the Assembly of Kosovo Draft-action Plan 2020." November 22, 2019. Shared by personal correspondence.

	OFFICIAL MANDATE	ACHIEVEMENTS
MEXICO: NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	– Coordinating the design, execution, follow-up and evaluation of actions to implement the SDGs – Providing expert advice – Facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue and public engagement – Analysing current policies in relation to the 2030 Agenda – High level of participation in the compilation and validation of the VNR draft – High level of contribution to the national strategy under the coordination of the President's Office.[188] Note: On December 2020, the department responsible for coordinating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Mexico (i.e. the Head of the President's Office) was dissolved. The relevant department was re-sectorized to the Ministry of Economy, emphasizing the relevance of the financing and economic dimension.	– The structure of the councils and its working modalities have been fully established in consultation with diverse stakeholders. – In 2018, the National Council successfully presented the proposal of reforming the Planning Law to the Mexican Congress in order to align it with the 2030 Agenda.[189] – The Council created a specific National Strategy Committee for the task of developing a national development strategic plan in November 2019.[190] – The council worked closely with the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) in compiling and validating the 2018 VNR report.[191]
ROMANIA: CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	– Providing expert advice – Conducting studies and analysis regarding the implementation of the Strategy – Developing proposals on the national plan of action for implementing National Strategy – Ensuring the organized framework for consultations and exchange of information between various stakeholders – Conducting studies, research and debates in order to elaborate and implement a sustainability code; – Providing support for the efficiency of the National Statistical System.[192]	– The Council obtained an institutional mandate and received governmental approval to operate in February 2020. The regulatory framework of the Council has been approved by the Government. – SDG Hubs (or dedicated specialist units) have been created in each line ministry and other governmental agencies to deal with sustainable development issues in terms of implementation, monitoring, and reporting.[193] – The profession of SDG experts has been approved by the new Romanian Occupational Code, and partnerships have been established with academic institutions to provide training to these SDG experts to work in the SDG Hubs. – The Council has received funding from the European Fund Program to help Romania implement the Sustainable Development Strategy and nationalise indicators.[194] – It is expected that the Council will commence its formal duties in December 2020.

188 Government of Mexico. "Agenda 2030." Accessed September 15, 2020. ↘ URL **189** "Interview No. 8 – Mexico." Interview by Zosa Gruber. September 28, 2020 **190** "Interview No. 21 – Mexico." Interview by Zosa Gruber. October 20, 2020 **191** Government of Mexico. "Voluntary National Review for The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development Basis for A Long-Term Sustainable Development Vision in Mexico: Progress on The Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and The Sustainable Development Goals." United Nations High Level Political Forum. 2018. ↘ PDF **192** Department for Sustainable Development. Accessed September 15, 2020. ↘ URL **193** "Interview No. 24 – Romania." Interview by Zosa Gruber. October 26, 2020 **194** "Interview No. 28 – Romania." Interview by Zosa Gruber. October 29, 2020.