MANAGING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SDGs

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MANAGING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SDGs

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUMMARY 5

1. CONTEXT 7
   - 1.1. A 'meta-policy' in need of effective public administration and governance 7
   - 1.2. SDG implementation requires tailored public administration and governance 10
   - 1.3. Sustainable development at the heart of EU and national policies 10
   - 1.4. Covid-19's lessons for public administration and governance 11

2. WHAT IS EFFECTIVE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE FOR THE 2030 AGENDA? 12
   - 2.1. Key concepts of PAG for sustainability 12
   - 2.2. From principles to practices 13

3. GOVERNANCE AND METAGOVERNANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 16
   - 3.1. Sustainability governance 16
   - 3.2. Metagovernance: governance of governance 16
   - 3.3. EU and Member States' examples of sustainability metagovernance 18
   - 3.4. Fifty 'shades of governance' – a toolbox 19

4. SDG IMPLEMENTATION IN EU MEMBER STATES AND EC: ACTIONS & GOOD PRACTICES 20
   - 4.1. Political leadership, commitment and strategies 21
   - 4.2. Horizontal coordination (multi-sector) and policy coherence 23
   - 4.3. Vertical coordination (multi-level) 26
   - 4.4. Stakeholder participation & partnerships (multi-actor) 28
   - 4.5. Partnerships beyond PPP? 29
   - 4.6. Monitoring and review 29
   - 4.7. Knowledge input and assessment tools 30
   - 4.8. Long-term thinking 35

5. LESSONS LEARNED 37
   - 5.1. Towards mission-oriented public-administration reform for the SDGs 37
   - 5.2. Boosting reform: How to set up peer-to-peer learning? 38
   - 5.3. Dynamising the multilevel governance for SDGs 39
   - 5.4. Making public institutions agile: dynamic adaption to different problem types 39
   - 5.5. Changing mindsets, engagement competence, negotiation competence 40
   - 5.6. Digital government for sustainability 43
   - 5.7. Boosting financial tools and SDG budgeting 44
   - 5.8. Teaching silos to dance 44

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND OTHER REFERENCES 46

ANNEX 1 - SDG 16 AND 17 TARGETS 52

ANNEX 2 - A METAGOVERNANCE TOOLBOX FOR SUSTAINABILITY: FIFTY DIMENSIONS 53

SUMMARY

This thematic study presents the state of play and challenges with regard to the management of implementing the UN Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), from a public administration and governance (PAG) perspective. It is written for policy makers on SDG objectives, as well as for those responsible for the quality of public administration and public governance. The focus is not in the first place on policies, but on the institutions, processes, tools, skills, etc., which should enable effective policy making and policy implementation.

The 17 SDGs are a comprehensive policy framework covering all great policy challenges for EU and Member States. Each SDG has enabling targets and SDGs 16 (institutions) and 17 (means of implementation) contain specific targets about how PAG should support reaching the Goals by 2030. SDGs 16 and 17 are therefore the enabling goals of the 2030 Agenda. This is even more important since the SDGs have become 'in the heart of EU policymaking' with the Von der Leyen Commission.

Section 1 argues that implementation of the SDGs requires readiness of public sector organisations and political leaders to design and manage effective governance. However, in practice, the universal and holistic, indivisible nature of the SDGs is hampered by silo-thinking. To implement the 2030 Agenda, we need to rethink institutions, instruments, skills, human resources development and governance processes, at all levels. Another part of the context described in section 1 is what we can learn from the Covid-19 crisis, namely a general 'rediscovery' of the public sector, a confirmation that effective public governance is contextualised, and an understanding that rapid systemic change might be more feasible than we thought.

Section 2 presents concepts and principles for SDG governance which are the starting point for a reflection on effective PAG for the SGDs. Part of this is classical PAG material, but it has a different twist, especially as regards the social dimension of PAG. Effectiveness, accountability and inclusiveness are presented as the three headline governance principles for implementation of the SDGs. They were elaborated into 11 more concrete principles of effective governance for sustainable development, of which five address the often-neglected social dimension of sustainability.

Implementing the 2030 Agenda is a lot about effective public administration and governance. Section 3 explains why we need to broaden our definition of governance, in order to enable a pluriform approach that combines three typical governance styles in a contextualised way. It gives also insight in easy-to-prevent governance failures. This approach, 'metagovernance' is already common practice in the EU and its Member States and builds on the existing Open Method of Coordination. A comprehensive governance toolbox for sustainable development is presented, based on 50 features of governance. It is also suggested that establishing a PAG for SDGs peer-to-peer learning mechanism for EU countries would be useful.

Based on recent research on seven governance themes, section 4 shows how the challenges for PAG are being taken up by the Member States, and how the European Commission contributes. Political leadership, commitment and strategies are indispensable for effective horizontal coordination. A national strategy for sustainable development requires high-level leadership; developing in addition also participatory leadership could increase inclusiveness. Commitment can be strengthened by making basic training on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs mandatory for all public servants.

Dedicated mechanisms are needed to improve horizontal coordination and policy coherence, because the SDGs are highly interconnected and are designed to be treated as being indivisible. Good practice examples of horizontal coordination include mechanisms which are active, dynamic and driving engagement.

Vertical coordination across administrative levels requires 'dynamised' multi-level governance. The complexity of the 2030 Agenda necessitates seamless vertical coordination between levels of administration and other institutions. Real-time collaborative multilevel approach would be an important addition to the traditional top-down and bottom-up styles but it will not replace them.

Stakeholder participation mechanisms and bottom-up engagement are inherent to governance for sustainability, and the 2030 Agenda has boosted this in many countries. This also serves the Agenda 2030's principle of 'leaving no one behind'. The picture across EU Member States is, however, mixed. Stakeholder participation is engrained in many countries, but there is room for improvement in quite many others.

A robust monitoring and review framework is crucial for an effective and operational implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It is an area where further progress is needed, for example as regards indicators. Improving the mechanisms for using the best available knowledge for implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires effective science-policy-society relations, and better integration of the SDGs in impact assessments and budget checking tools. Sustainability budget checks are lagging behind; only a few countries are currently experimenting with this tool.

One of the fundamental problems in governance for sustainable development is how to overcome the typical political short-termism of democratic systems to be able to sufficiently adhere to the underlying principle of sustainable development: 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. Institutional mechanisms for long-term, future-oriented policymaking are necessary but so far rare. All-party arrangements in Parliaments for the 2030 Agenda should be further encouraged.

The challenges described in section 4 lead to several lessons learned and challenges ahead in section 5. First and foremost, it seems worthwhile to start mission-oriented public administration and governance reform to improve the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Part of this should be to investigate how peer learning for PAG and SDGs could be scaled up to achieve a critical mass for fundamental change, and to incorporate in training on public policy or governance that different system types may need different management responses.

It is clear that many governance failures can be directly linked to the mindset of one of the three governance styles: they are the result of, or part of the logic of each style. Training in mutual gains negotiation approach can be a catalyser towards a mindset fit for implementing the SDGs. In addition, in the new digital era it should be ensured that no one is left behind and that technological shifts are geared towards accelerating the achievement of the SDGs. The budget, the tax system and public procurement can be important accelerators for the implementation of the SDGs.

Finally, instead of 'breaking down' institutional silos, we should strive to make them more flexible, permeable, interactive and transparent: we need to 'teach silos to dance'.

MS coverage	All, with case studies from Denmark, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Slovakia, Finland.
Key words	UN Agenda 2030, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), sustainability, metagovernance, silo thinking, multi-stakeholder process, civil society engagement, open method of coordination (OMC), mutual gains approach (MGA), multilevel governance (MLG), sustainability impact assessments (SIAs), peer-to-peer, SDG budgeting, mission-oriented, skills, capacity building, public sector reform

I. CONTEXT

1.1. A 'meta-policy' in need of effective public administration and governance

In September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the successor of the Millennium Development Goals: the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development which includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2015). The SDGs address all big societal challenges and they require effective public administration and governance for their implementation. The SDGs – also called the Global Goals – and their 167 targets connect the big problems of our times and offer a framework for sustainable development worldwide. They therefore constitute a policy of policies or 'meta-policy' (Meadowcroft, 2011). The Goals address, among other issues, poverty, inequality, economic development, infrastructure, climate action, and biodiversity (Figure 1). They are intended to be universal, while at the same time allowing each country to develop its own approach to implementation. In addition, they require a 'whole of government and whole of society approach' to achieve the Goals by 2030.

Figure 1 | The UN Sustainable Development Goals

Source: United Nations

The enabling SDGs 16 (institutions, rule of law, peace) and 17 (partnerships, means of implementation) aim to improve the quality of public administration and governance to deliver all the SDGs. Effective, 'sound' public administration and governance is the topic of these two Goals, and it is also an essential enabler. This is reflected in the fact that each Goal has besides numerical targets a few alphabetically characterised targets (a, b, c, …) that refer to means of implementation. Governance is also recognised as one of the levers for sustainability identified in the UN Global Sustainable Development Report 2019 (UN, 2019).

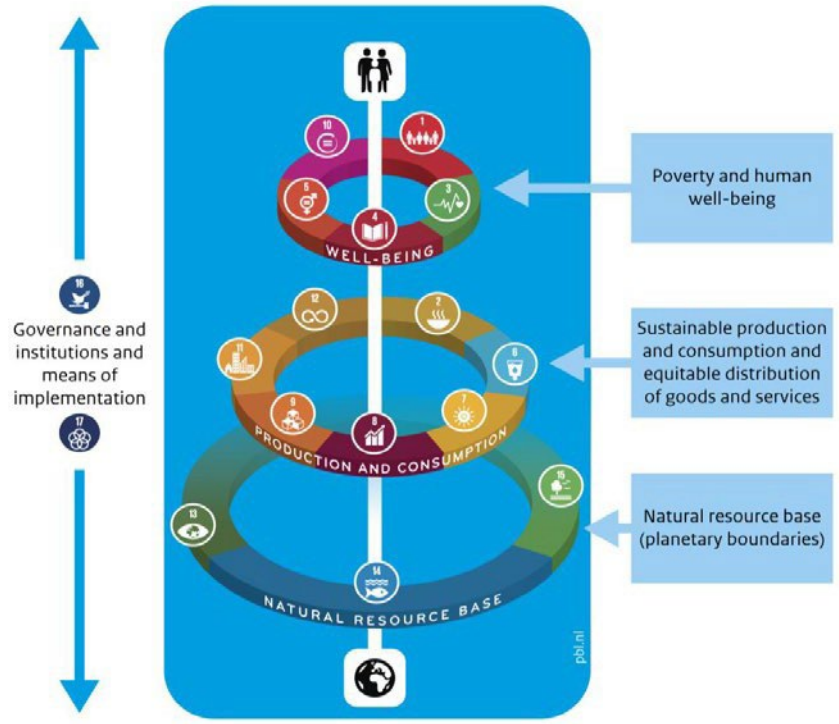
The 2030 Agenda and PAG are therefore closely connected. Table 1 shows some of the targets of SDGs 16 and 17 that are crucial for PAG quality in Europe, and a few examples of governance targets in other Goals. For all targets per Goals, as well as the official indicators per targets, see the Global SDG Indicators Database.

Table 1 | Examples of SDG 16 and 17 targets essential for PAG quality

SDG 16: Institutions, rule of law, peace
16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.
16.5 Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms.
16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.
16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision making at all levels.
16.10 Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.
16.b Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.
SDG 17: Partnerships, means of implementation
17.1 Strengthen domestic resource mobilization. . . to improve domestic capacity for tax and other revenue collection.
17.13 Enhance global macroeconomic stability, including through policy coordination and policy coherence.
17.14 Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development.
17.15 Respect each country's policy space and leadership to establish and implement policies for poverty eradication and sustainable development.
17.16 Enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, complemented by multi-stake-holder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources.
17.17 Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.
Governance targets in other Goals (examples):
SDG 2 (Zero hunger), 2.c: Adopt measures to ensure the proper functioning of food commodity markets and their derivatives and facilitate timely access to market information, including on food reserves, in order to help limit extreme food price volatility.
SDG 5 (Gender equality), 5.c: Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.
SDG 6 (Clean water & sanitation), 6.b: Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management.
SDG 11 (Sustainable cities & communities), 11.a: Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning.

The three dimensions of sustainable development (environmental, social and economic; see blue boxes in Figure 2) are equally important and communicating vessels: taking them apart implies risking policy and governance failure. Several models have been developed to illustrate how the SDGs are connected and may be clustered in a system (Niestroy, 2016 and PBL, 2018, based on Waage et al., 2015; Folke et al., 2016). Figure 2 shows an adaptation of the 'SDG wedding cake' model where the three dimensions are interwoven in a system with a means-ends logic: the natural resource base as the foundation and ultimate means, i.e. what the environment can handle (also framed as planetary boundaries)(bottom tier), human well-being as ultimate end, i.e. the social dimension (top tier), and in between the various production and consumption cycles, i.e. the economic dimension in a wider sense, as means as well (middle tier).

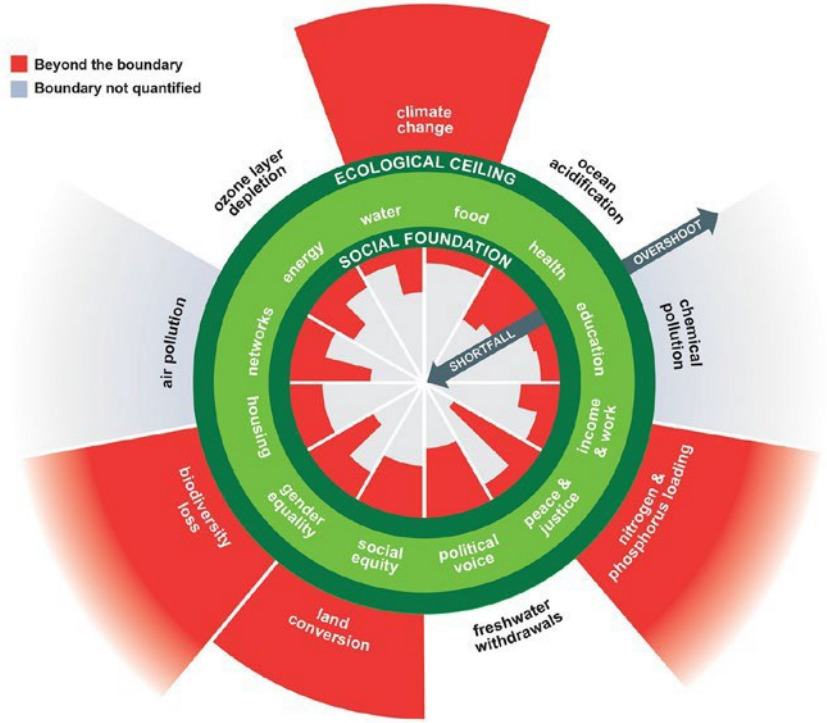
Figure 2 | Adaptation of the 'wedding cake' model of the SDGs



Source: PBL, 2018

A related well-known visual representation of the dynamic relations between environmental, social and economic issues is the 'doughnut' developed by the economist Kate Raworth (2012) (figure 3).

Figure 3 | The 'doughnut' of social and planetary boundaries



Source: Raworth, 2012

As Raworth explains on her website: 'The environmental ceiling consists of nine planetary boundaries, as set out by Rockström et al. (2009) beyond which lie unacceptable environmental degradation and potential tipping points in Earth systems. The 12 dimensions of the social foundation are derived from internationally agreed minimum social standards, as identified in the SDGs. Between social and planetary boundaries lies an environmentally safe and socially just space in which humanity can thrive'.

1.2. SDG implementation requires tailored public administration and governance

Implementation of the SDGs requires readiness of public sector organisations and political leaders to design and manage effective governance. This requires rethinking of institutions, instruments, skills, human resources development and governance processes on at least the same scale as the rethinking of energy, economy, food and other systems that are essential for living well within the limits of the planet.

The wedding cake and the doughnut are creative tools to communicate the cross-cutting meaning of the SDGs. It is not exaggerated to say that the adoption of the SDGs represents a paradigm shift on how development is considered in every aspect of society. It represents a change in thinking about domestic and international development, about economics, environment, and society, and a transformation of those towards sustainability. This shift in thinking needs to be followed by a shift in how we govern societies and implement solutions to these global challenges.

In 2020, five years after the adoption of the SDGs, the progress on implementation is mixed in Europe and elsewhere, as the annual SDG Monitoring Reports by Eurostat, as well as progress reports from the UN (UN, 2020), and monitoring reports from science networks (SDSN, 2020; SDSN and IEEP, 2019) clearly show. The UN has called for acceleration of the implementation to achieve the Goals by 2030.

In the EU as much as elsewhere, insufficient effectiveness and efficiency of public administration and public governance are root causes of weak implementation of government policies. One of these is that the universal and holistic, indivisible nature of the SDGs is still hampered by silo-thinking.

1.3. Sustainable development at the heart of EU and national policies

At the EU level, sustainable development is back on the political agenda. While the European Commission last updated its Sustainable Development Strategy in 2006 and the adoption of the SDGs in 2015 did not trigger new political priorities, the European Commission finally decided to 'put the SDGs at the heart of its policies' in December 2019. The European Green Deal (EC, 2019a) is the overarching policy framework and the Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2020 (EC, 2019b) is a new European growth strategy which is about 'creating an economy that works for people and the planet'. As from 2020, the implementation of the SDGs is monitored by the European Commission in the context of the European Semester, and EU Member States are expected to report annually on their progress in the National Reform Programmes.

The new impetus at EU level and in many of the Member States (although some of them were already frontrunners on the SDGs) can be illustrated with important developments in all three dimensions of sustainable development:

- Redefining the economy (e.g. more use of fiscal instruments to guide transitions, an EU taxonomy on sustainable finance defining the key concepts, and the twin 'green and digital' focus of the post-Covid EU Recovery and Resilience Facility).
- Integration of social aspects (e.g. the EU Just Transition Mechanism).

- Ambitious environmental policies (e.g. a new Circular Economy Action Plan, the Farm to Fork Strategy, the Biodiversity Strategy to 2050).

The new focus on sustainability transitions requires new policies, as well as a new focus on PAG. Many of the topics discussed in this paper are not new – but they will need to be reviewed, reassessed and where appropriate, reformed to deliver the SDGs. For some challenges, such as policy coherence across administrative 'silos', the new political mainstream creates an increased urgency. For other PAG-related topics such as sustainable public procurement, sustainable finance and budgeting, sustainability impact assessment, SDG indicators, and new skills and mind-sets for the public administration workforce of the future, there are clear challenges ahead to mainstream the SDGs.

To conclude, the challenge of sustainability opens many possibilities for targeted, mission-oriented modernisation of PAG at the level of the EU institutions as well as in the Member States, at all levels.

1.4. Covid-19's lessons for public administration and governance

The Covid-19 pandemic that started in spring 2020 should not be seen as distraction of the 2030 Agenda, but could be used to even further focusing on sustainability as the mission of public institutions and governance. This is the general view of leaders at the levels of UN, EU and most Member States. Many of the 47 countries who presented their Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs at the UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2020 have already shown lessons learned from the Covid crisis, for public administration and governance. Three pertinent lessons are set out below (Meuleman, 2020a):

1.4.1 The crucial role of the public sector is rediscovered

The first lesson is that countries with a functioning public sector that caters for essential health services for all, are better equipped to deal with the pandemic than those with privatised health care. Market-based health care uses the same strategy as retail companies, namely just-in-time delivery, limited stock and high reliance on logistics. This explains why many hospitals in otherwise well-resourced health systems had no emergency stock of protective clothing and facial masks when the pandemic struck. Furthermore, long-term thinking is typically lacking in privatised versions of what used to be public tasks. Financial austerity since the global financial crisis of 2008 has aggravated the situation. The conclusion is be that we need to reassert the central role of an effective, responsive and capable public sector in responding to society's needs, building resilience and dealing with crises when they arise. A hands-on instead of hands-off government is what the SDGs need, to maintain traction and course.

This will not be easy because, according to the economist Mariana Mazzucato (2018), for decades we have generally undervalued the role of the public sector. This has resulted in less effective public administration and service, and a disregard of the public value that it may create. Mazzucato calls for rethinking the role of public policy and the public sector, and for a redefinition how we measure value in our societies.

1.4.2 Effective governance is contextualised

The second early lesson from the Covid-19 pandemic is that effective public governance has to be contextualised. This is not a big surprise. Markets are also context sensitive, but for a different purpose (e.g. specific revenue streams and market segments). Governments need to be sensitive to national values and traditions. People in China accept strict rules more easily than in countries such as the Netherlands where the governance tradition is less hierarchical. Governments are making use of this cultural dimension, extensively researched decades ago already (Hofstede, 1984), by focusing, respectively, on collective responsibility in Asian countries and on individual responsibility

in the Netherlands. The Dutch Prime Minister called his limited corona-lockdown 'intelligent social distancing', which is logical because in his national culture it is considered smart to be individualist.

While universal values continue to be a foundation for humanity, differentiation will remain key in the new normal. There are almost no 'best practices' that can be applied everywhere. Some exceptions have merged, such as leadership at the top (see section 4.1) and the need to take care of horizontal coordination (4.2).

1.4.3 Rapid systemic transformation is possible

The third lesson is that rapid and systemic transformation is possible in each country. A disaster requires the acceptance of a command and control style of leadership (in individualist countries with soft gloves to 'pamper the pain'). This style of leadership is making a comeback in responses to Covid-19, although it is not replacing collaborative or empowered approaches. But Covid-19 has become an equaliser: all governments have switched to a central command and control style of governance. For some that was a big change, for others not. The surprise, and that is an important lesson learned, is that such a sudden switch was possible. In other words: big transformations are possible. That is good to know. We might need to rely on disaster management more often in the future than we would like to think.

Beyond disaster management, can we also accelerate SDG and climate action through fast-track policy and institutional innovations - without replacing existing incremental innovation? This depends among other things on whether public institutions are willing to become a little more risk-taking than they are used to being. Fast-track SDG implementation cannot be organised without taking risks. It is impossible without trial and error, and without failure. This we need to accept. But risk-taking is not exactly a popular issue in public sector organisations. Public institutions' first reaction to external shocks is normally the 'turtle'. Close the windows and doors, then your eyes, and hide. That is logical because such institutions were not invented to be flexible, innovative and agile. They are there to keep things reliable, predictable and stable. But to be prepared better for dealing with crises we need to be able to combine stability with flexibility. So, we need institutional innovation that rewards some level of failure instead of punishing it.

Good overviews of the systemic challenges and pathways to address the sustainability transitions are publications by the group of independent experts who compiled the Global Sustainable Development Report 2019 (UN, 2019), the and the former think tank of the European Commission EPSC (EC, 2019c), and the European Environment Agency (EEA, 2019a, 2019b).

2. WHAT IS EFFECTIVE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE FOR THE 2030 AGENDA?

This section introduces key concepts and principles of sustainable development and the SDGs.

2.1. Key concepts of PAG for sustainability

Agenda 2030 and its SDGs are both conceptual and pragmatic. The following key concepts are guiding its implementation.

Interconnectedness and indivisibility – The 17 SDGs need to be considered in their entirety, and require a strong level of policy integration, coherence, and coordination. Sustainable development challenges are closely interlinked and require integrated solutions, including the social, economic and environmental dimensions as mutually dependent factors.

This principle has strong connections to the aim of policy coherence, as indivisibility should be addressed with an integrated approach and result in policy coherence. Improving policy coherence for sustainable development ('PCSD', SDG target 17.14) across policy sectors, between internal (domestic) and external/international policies and law, as well as between levels of administration is essential to achieve the SDGs. One part of this aim is already enshrined as 'PCD' (policy coherence for development) in Art. 208 TFEU (Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union).

Universality – The SDGs are historically unique through their universality; unlike the Millennium Development Goals (UN, 2000), they are applicable to all countries. The Agenda and its SDGs need to be translated in the national context, and the principle of universality also means that each country needs to consider its own actions in relation to others. Universality hence reinvigorates the need to pursue policies and policy coherence in the domestic and external dimensions, and to address the links between the two (e.g. spill over effects).

Inclusiveness and "leave no one behind" – The SDGs require the participation of all segments of society and ensuring that no segment of society, or even an individual, is left behind in the process, taking care of the most vulnerable in particular. The EU's Just Transition Mechanism (EC, 2020) is an example of an instrument designed for that purpose. Inclusion is a core principle, not only in how the SDGs are implemented but also in how this is governed. Without involvement of all societal groups, targeted and effective implementation is very difficult.

Partnerships – This is a key concept of Agenda 2030, which calls for multi-stakeholder partnerships to be established, for mobilising and sharing knowledge, technology and other resources to support the achievement of the SDGs in all countries. Without partnerships between sectors, and across borders, interconnectedness, universality and participation cannot be achieved.

2.2. From principles to practices

Three headline principles define the implementation of the 2030 Agenda: effectiveness, accountability and inclusiveness. They were elaborated into set of 11 principles of effective governance of sustainable development by the UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA), in collaboration with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-CEPA, 2019a, 2019b, 2018) (Box 1). The principles are accompanied by 62 examples of commonly used implementation strategies and were endorsed by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 2018.

Box 1 | Principles of effective governance for sustainable development

The first three principles focus on **effectiveness**:

1. Competence: To perform their functions effectively, institutions are to have sufficient expertise, resources and tools to deal adequately with the mandates under their authority.

2. Sound policymaking: To achieve their intended results, public policies are to be coherent with one another and founded on true or well-established grounds, in full accordance with fact, reason and good sense.

3. Collaboration: To address problems of common interest, institutions at all levels of government and in all sectors should work together and jointly with non-State actors towards the same end, purpose and effect.

Three more principles address **accountability**:

4. Integrity: To serve in the public interest, civil servants are to discharge their official duties honestly, fairly and in a manner consistent with soundness of moral principle.

5. Transparency: To ensure accountability and enable public scrutiny, institutions are to be open and candid in the execution of their functions and promote access to information, subject only to the specific and limited exceptions as are provided by law.

6. Independent oversight: To retain trust in government, oversight agencies are to act according to strictly professional considerations and apart from and unaffected by others.

Five principles focus on **inclusiveness**:

7. Leaving no one behind: To ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality, public policies are to take into account the needs and aspirations of all segments of society, including the poorest and most vulnerable and those subject to discrimination.

8. Non-discrimination: To respect, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, access to public service is to be provided on general terms of equality, without distinction of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability or other status.

9. Participation: To have an effective State, all significant political groups should be actively involved in matters that directly affect them and have a chance to influence policy.

10. Subsidiarity: To promote government that is responsive to the needs and aspirations of all people, central authorities should perform only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more intermediate or local level.

11. Intergenerational equity: To promote prosperity and quality of life for all, institutions should construct administrative acts that balance the short-term needs of today's generation with the longer-term needs of future generations.

Work is ongoing to link the principles to indicators. Several countries and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) of the African Union have started using the principles to evaluate and develop SDG implementation.

Application of the 11 principles has shown that government guidance or policies often lack attention to the social dimension (principle 7-11). This is evident for example when we compare the 11 CEPA principles with the OECD 'Principles of Public Administration' (OECD, 2019a, p. 6). The OECD principles concentrate on the 'internal business' of public administration organisations, namely on 'the preconditions for a good public administration (good laws, policies, structures and procedures) and how the administration performs in practice, including the implementation of reforms and subsequent outcomes'. There is nothing on collaboration or inclusiveness as relevant features. Neither the 2030 Agenda as guiding challenge for PAG, nor the SDGs, is mentioned on any of the 263 pages of the OECD's methodological framework report on its principles.

This means that a country's administration could fully implement the OECD's recommendations for a modern PAG without becoming sufficiently equipped for implementing the SDGs. It does not mean that the OECD principles are not useful and cannot be combined with more SDG-relevant principles. But it points at a mindset in which public administration reform should be guided by promoting 'inherent' and 'independent' qualities of public administration, rather than by policy relevance. This will be addressed a little more in section 5. The lack of attention for sustainable development, although we have the SDGs since 2015 with their PAG-focused Goals 16 and 17, may be related to the long preparation time of the OECD work.

By contrast, another and more recent OECD report, the Draft Policy Framework on Sound Public Governance (OECD, 2019b) fully recognises the importance of the SDGs for PAG:

> *The environmental, social, and economic challenges of our times call for a multidimensional and integrated approach to public policy and service delivery. It is clear that traditional analytical tools and problem-solving methods are no longer enabling the achievement of better results and outcomes that are demanded by and expected from citizens. (…) The shared goal of sustainable development, expressed in the UN Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), defines a clear set of commitments within goal 16 to achieve peace, justice and strong institutions.*

3. GOVERNANCE AND METAGOVERNANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

3.1. Sustainability governance

When the First Vice-President of the European Commission spoke at the United Nations General Assembly on 27 September 2015, he emphasised the governance dimension of sustainable development, and particularly the SDGs:

> *Ultimately, it's all about governance. About inclusiveness: societies will only accept transformation if people feel their voices have been heard. And it's about breaking out of silos. Sustainable development is not just an economic or social challenge, or an environmental problem: it's all three – and our efforts on each need to reinforce rather than undermine one another" (EC, 2015a).*

This is mirrored from an academic perspective: "Sustainable development is really all about governance" (Meadowcroft, 2011). Governance can be defined in many different ways; this is why we are using here a very broad definition in which governance is about the question of 'how to get things done', not on 'what should be done'. This goes back to the classical distinction in political science between polity, politics and policy. Governance is about polity (institutions) and politics (processes), and not about policy (the substance). Governance is not an end, but a means to an end. A definition expressing this, also utilised by the European Environment Agency (EEA, 2019) is: 'Governance is the totality of interactions in which government, other public bodies, private sector and civil society participate (in one way or another), aimed at solving public challenges or creating public opportunities' (Meuleman, 2008).

Governance for sustainability is special because it is – to a substantial extent – about complex problems, which take place in a context with a multi-sector, multi-level and multi-actor character. In addition, different governance styles are important for SDG implementation in different contexts.

3.2. Metagovernance: governance of governance

Governance failure can delay the achievement of the SDGs substantially. Where such failure can be linked to insufficient public administration quality or governance frameworks which are not optimised for the context and the problem types, this can in principle be prevented. Successful governance requires leaders to have an open mind for emerging windows of opportunity, and a sense for using those opportunities successfully. An open mind for using opportunities is a prerequisite of effective governance for sustainable development. For example, the political attention a few years ago to plastics presented a window of opportunity to address this important environmental problem. It arose due to a rare combination of factors. NGO pressure and public awareness played a role, but also the fact that China closed its borders to the EU's plastic waste, while the European Commission at the same time was looking for new revenue options to fill the budget gap caused by UK's decision to leave the Union. A plastic tax suddenly became a politically feasible idea.

Having an open mind is not enough. Even if we do not realise it, each of us has an inclination for governance by either rules (hierarchical governance), partnerships (network governance) or market-based solutions (market governance), or a specific combination of these. This preference can be personal, organisational, part of a national culture, or all of the above. Generally speaking, we often notice that German and Eastern European policymakers tend to favour legal instruments, the Scandinavians and Dutch prefer

network tools, and Irish officials may be inclined towards market-based solutions. This means that, tentatively, skills and traditions to tackle certain types of SDG challenges may be better developed in some countries than in other countries; this implies a need for peer-to-peer learning on PAG between countries.

These three basic governance styles hierarchical, network and market governance are each defined by specific values, mindsets and preferential tools. Table 2 shows some characteristics of each style. It is easy to see that each style has its own, strong internal logic. Not surprisingly, the styles are compatible with three main 'world views' distinguished in cultural theory (hierarchism, collectivism and individualism) (Thompson et al., 1990). In practice, the styles are usually combined, with one style dominating the mix.

Table 2 | Three distinctly different governance styles

Governance styles	Examples of typical features of the styles
Hierarchical governance	Rational, reliable, stability, legitimacy, justice, accountability, risk averse, government-centered, centralised, planning and design, authoritative, instructions, one-way communication, dependency, subordinates, obedience, rules-based, command and control
Network governance	Partnerships, collaborative learning, co-creation for innovation, informal arrangements, trust-based, harmony, communication as dialogue, process management, diplomacy, mutual dependence, mutual gains approach, consensus, voluntary agreements, covenants
Market governance	Rational, cost-driven, flexible, competition as driver for innovation, price, marketing, decentralised, bottom-up, individualist, autonomy, self-determination, empowering, services, contracts, incentives, awards and other market-based instruments

Source: Meuleman, 2020b

Research has shown that many decision makers do not stick to one governance approach but – by intuition or calculation – use a broad toolbox that draws on multiple approaches (see references in Meuleman, 2018, 2008). They think beyond the governance style that their organisation or culture may be used to. A successful approach that deals with such governance challenges is metagovernance or 'governance of governance'. It is not governance itself (like meta-physics is not physics), but an approach and method to tackle conflicts between hierarchical, network and market governance styles, and create synergetic combinations. The Commission's Quality of Public Administration Toolbox highlights metagovernance of hierarchies, networks and markets as a way to promote public officials to be open-minded about how they interact with each other and external stakeholders. It defines metagovernance as a term which "encapsulates the concept of public servants being able and encouraged to select, blend or switch between the most suitable governance style, according to circumstance, each having pros and cons" (EC, 2017). Or put in different wording: 'Metagovernance is a means by which to produce some degree of coordinated governance, by designing and managing sound combinations of hierarchical, market and network governance, to achieve the best possible outcomes' (adapted from Meuleman, 2008). It is by definition context-related, in a dynamic way. This approach is not just theory, but good practice. It's also not rocket science.

Like sustainable development, metagovernance has three dimensions: it is about creating balanced combinations of tools from three different governance styles, notably hierarchical, network and market governance. And like with the SDGs, the three dimensions should be seen as communicating vessels: it is impossible to take them apart and consider them separately without consequences.

Those who apply metagovernance ('metagovernors') use various strategies when they design and manage a governance framework (Meuleman, 2018a):

- Framing of problems to make the solvable in an existing governance environment.
- Designing a framework by combining elements of different governance styles into compatible arrangements.

- Switching from one to another (main) governance style.
- Maintaining a chosen governance framework or arrangement, for example, protecting it against perverse/undermining influences in the governance environment.

3.3. EU and Member States' examples of sustainability metagovernance

Being able to develop and implement tailor-made solutions to complicated and complex challenges posed by the SDGs requires appropriate out-of-the-box thinking. Many scholars have found that the EU level, and in particular the European Commission as its executive organisation, is an excellent place to practice metagovernance (for example Grote and Gbikpi, 2002; Jessop, 2005; Meuleman, 2008; Cini, 2012; Porras-Gómez, 2014; Caviedes and Maas, 2016; Tömmel, 2016). In 2009, Jessop (Jessop, 2009, p.89) noted that the EU had developed "a wide and deep array of both governance and metagovernance capacities that enable it to influence economic and social policy in most areas and on most scales". He also observed a division of metagovernance labour between the European Council, the specialised sectoral Councils of ministers and the European Commission:

> *The European Council is the political metagovernance network of prime ministers that decide on the overall political dynamic around economic and social objectives. The European Commission plays a key metagovernance role in organizing parallel power networks, providing expertise and recommendations, developing benchmarks, monitoring progress, exchanging best practice, promoting mutual learning, and ensuring continuity and coherence across Presidencies.*

Using metagovernance has become part of the governance 'software' of the Commission's work, although the term is seldom used. An example of this recognition is the following:

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to public sector organisation. There is a need for a differentiated approach that takes into account the costs and benefits of designing and managing different governance-style combinations for the achievement of desired outcomes and optimized resource allocation based on different needs (EC, 2017).

Open Method of Coordination

One of the first expressions of metagovernance at the level of the EU was the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), an approach established by the Lisbon European Council (March 2000), to implement the Lisbon Strategy (Radaelli, 2003). This was an attempt to combine effectively the classical hierarchical governance of the EU with 'new modes of governance' (Héritier, 2003). The OMC was especially meant for areas with limited EU competences, where there was the desire or need to coordinate and collaborate. The OMC is principally based on jointly identifying and defining objectives to be achieved (adopted by the Council); jointly established measuring instruments (statistics, indicators, guidelines); and benchmarking, i.e. comparison of EU countries' performance and the exchange of good practices (monitored by the Commission). According to Jessop, 2009), this had instituted permanent reflection about the nature of problems; monitoring of different approaches to coordination; a flexible repertoire of responses that can be deployed on different scales, with different scales for different sets of problems; and an orientation which includes intertemporal as well as inter-scalar aspects.

The EU's governance of governance system is tailored to the multi-level structure of the EU, the need to balance contradictory policy objectives, governance modes and implementation strategies at EU and national government levels, as well as the differences among the Member States (Tömmel, 2016). European governance has evolved "from a simple state interventionist model to a complex system of 'governance

of governance', employing both hierarchical and non-hierarchical governance modes combined in innovative ways" (Caviedes and Maas, 2016).

The rationale to start a metagovernance intervention can be anything related to unsatisfactory performance. Two good examples of SDG-relevant OMC-type two-level collaboration are the European Semester cycle of economic and social governance and the two-yearly Environmental Implementation Review (EIR) process (Box 2).

Box 2 | The EU Environmental Implementation Review (EIR) as metagovernance intervention

Weak implementation of EU environmental policy and law results in economic, social and environmental costs. In 2005 it was concluded that the dual approach of 'stick' (i.e. legal enforcement procedures and fines: a hierarchical governance approach) and 'carrot' (i.e. EU funding of environmental infrastructure on e.g. waste and water: a market governance approach) were not sufficient to close the existing implementation gaps and to create a level playing field across the European Union. Therefore, in 2016 a new tool was announced, the two-yearly Environmental Implementation Review (EIR), which would add a third approach of analysis, dialogue and collaboration on the ground (i.e. network governance). In February 2017, the first EIR cycle started with the publication of 28 country reports with a 'snapshot' of the state of implementation in each Member State. This was followed by a series of national (stakeholder) dialogues on the main implementation challenges, the launch of a peer-to-peer tool to exchange experience between the member countries, and political debates at EU level on the common trends and challenges. The second EIR package was published in April 2019.

The result is an increased awareness about the implementation gaps, and that the European Commission now possesses a broader and more flexible toolbox to monitor and stimulate environmental implementation in the Member States, which can be used situationally, e.g. by switching from one to another style when appropriate. When legal tools are not effective because they cannot address systemic problems, dialogue and/or funding can be used. When there is no appetite for dialogue, legal procedures may create the necessary pressure. When a national dialogue shows that the problem could be solved with reallocation of funds, this could be a track to explore also at the EU level.

This case can be seen as application of metagovernance, because it started with the observation that the existing governance framework was (a) not functioning in a satisfactory way, because (b) it was lacking an essential part: the 'stick' and 'carrot' were there but the 'dialogue' toolbox was missing. Moreover, (c) it was decided that the EIR would become an addition to legal infringements and EU funding, not replacing these instruments: it would add to and therefore broaden the governance toolbox of the Commission.

3.4. Fifty 'shades of governance' – a toolbox

The three classical governance styles – hierarchical, network and market governance - can be compared along 50 dimensions, on which they each take different operational forms (Meuleman, 2018). This means that the full "metagovernance toolbox" that can be used for implementation of the SDGs has at least 150 operational forms. This toolbox (Figure 5 and Annex 2) can be used to support design and evaluation of a governance framework in a specific situation.

Figure 5 | The metagovernance toolbox

Source: Meuleman, 2020b

Not all of the operational forms of the three styles are concrete tools; some point at the conceptual background of a dimension, for example. Some operational forms are easy to grasp. Below are four examples of the 50 given in the toolbox:

- When looking at the three styles' communication approaches, it is clear that hierarchy prefers giving information, network governance employs dialogue, and market governance would point to a public relations campaign.
- Leadership styles in hierarchical, network and market governance settings are, respectively, command and control, coaching and supporting, and delegating and enabling.
- Hierarchy works well in solving problems framed as crises, network governance is good at dealing with complex, "wicked" problems, and market governance is suited for routine problems which require efficiency.
- Strategy means planning for a hierarchical governor, learning for a network governor and getting competitive advantage for a market-style governor.

For the SDGs, the metagovernance approach can be useful guidance for coping with the different governance traditions in different policy areas. For example, energy governance is currently dominated by market governance in many countries. It is linked to climate action, which often leans toward hierarchical solutions (legally binding agreements). Air pollution policy is also rules-based, while transport policies are often market-based. The circular economy is fueled by bottom-up network-style innovation, but needs to be in synergy with industry policy, which frames rules for markets.

4. SDG IMPLEMENTATION IN EU MEMBER STATES AND EC: ACTIONS & GOOD PRACTICES

For the analysis of how governance and public administration can help in implementing the SDGs, we use the analytical framework that was developed for the already-mentioned study for the European Parliament (Niestroy et al., 2019). This framework aggregates

a number of concepts on governance for sustainable development, including the OECD PCSD framework (see also section 2), to seven key themes: commitment, horizontal and vertical coordination, participation, knowledge, monitoring and the long-term view, also linking them with the Agenda 2030 principles of universality, interconnectedness, leave no one behind, and partnerships. Empirical information in this section is also based on this study (including the examples in Boxes 3-12).

4.1. Political leadership, commitment and strategies

The 2030 Agenda is not very explicit about its theory of change and does not state how its SDGs should be achieved. The responsibility for implementing these goals and for defining the means to achieve them lies within each UN Member State. The goals need to be translated in the national context, which requires a strategic understanding of what the SDGs mean in that context.

4.1.1 Leadership and commitment

Commitment of public administration organisations to the 2030 Agenda is a matter of leadership (political and administrative) and the priorities of public officials set in their daily work.

As regards the role of political leadership, an established good practice is to take up the responsibility of SDG implementation at the highest level. This good practice existed in around half of the EU Member States in 2018. Here, leadership for the implementation and governance of the SDGs is with the Heads of State and Government (HoSG), typically the Prime Minister or Deputy Prime Minister, i.e. at the centre of government – and the Prime Minister's Office (or similar) with a lead coordination function.

While leadership at the top is an important indicator of the SDGs being a political priority, this level of leadership needs to be supported by sufficient coordination mechanisms at the working level in the ministries. In every case of central leadership, such a coordination mechanism exists to facilitate this. In states where there is no central leadership on the SDGs, the coordination mechanisms which link ministries horizontally across government are the main mechanisms for policy coherence at the political level.

Leadership is a key dimension of PAG and is important beyond formal political leaders and managers. There are various types of leadership, with 'participatory leadership' as a strongly emerging form which has particular relevance as regards the inclusiveness ('leave no one behind') principle of the SDGs (see e.g. WHO, 2016). In this approach, team leaders encourage participation from their team and delegate authority to the team members. Leadership not only varies along different purposes (situational leadership, see Hersey and Blanchard, 1988)) but also across the different governance styles that were introduced in section 3 (Meuleman, 2018a).

Commitment from public officials requires that they have sufficient basic information on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. This is often lacking. The UN offers online basic training (e.g. UNITAR), but this is not enough to provide the necessary level of knowledge. The UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration has therefore recommended to make basic training on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, as well as on the 11 principles of effective governance for sustainable development, mandatory for all public servants, including officials at the executive and managerial levels (UN-CEPA, 2020a). Generating a common understanding about how different departments can synchronise their efforts to achieve the SDGs and promote multidisciplinary approaches could be an especially timely addition to training programmes. Basic training on ICT tools has become obligatory everywhere, and there is no reason why this could not be introduced for training on the fundamentals of the SDGs.

4.1.2 Strategies, strategising or both?

How do countries integrate the SDGs in their national plans and strategies? Are such plans and programmes regularly reviewed and updated, based on progress monitoring)? Are they operational and connected to measures and means, including the national budget? Who is reviewing progress? How precise are the targets that countries set for themselves? These are all questions relating to the principle of accountability in the Agenda 2030.

When it comes to commitment and strategy, just two EU countries have no overarching cross-sectoral strategy, and six countries have one but without a recent update. Most of these countries plan to revise their sustainable development strategies or development plans with the SDGs. Seventeen countries already have updated national strategies. In around half of all the Member States, these strategies appear to be operational. Only a few countries go as far as to link their overarching strategy to the national budget. A national strategy for sustainable development needs high-level leadership, to enthuse, to maintain course, and to show this leadership in all coordination tasks. In some countries, a national sustainable development strategy is the centre point of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Finland and Germany are examples of countries with an overarching strategy.

Box 3 | Finland and Germany as examples with an overarching strategy.

Finland has a very advanced strategy and a robust monitoring framework. It updated its sustainable development strategy to align with the SDGs and now has a national sustainable development strategy that gives a vision to 2050: 'A prosperous Finland with global responsibility for sustainability and the carrying capacity of nature' and a government implementation plan for 2030 Agenda, adopted in 2017 and that is based on the strategy.

A clear strength of the German strategy is its robust monitoring and review framework. The German strategy has 38 goal areas with more than 60 targets and indicators and is structured around the 17 SDGs. Most targets are quantified and time bound. As a very good example of taking the principle of universality seriously, Germany also reports on spill-over effects, measuring its global impacts. Progress is reported via indicator reports every 2 years. In addition, a report by the federal government reports on progress every 4 years. Germany has the most advanced peer review mechanism for its strategy.

Others have the tradition of a national development plan where the SDGs are main-streamed. Other countries again do not have national strategies. That does not mean that there is no strategic political thinking. It could be, for example, that a choice has been made to focus on strategy as a process (strategising) of mainstreaming the SDGs. Austria is an example where a formal national strategic plan was found less important than starting actions to mainstreaming the SDGs in all ministries. Slovakia is another good example (Box 4). A detailed, comparative overview of the state of play in 2018 in all EU MSs can be found in Niestroy et al., 2019 (p 24-25).

Box 4 | Slovakia's sustainable development strategy

Slovakia is an inspiring example, although some elements are still work in progress. The country had a first sustainable development plan in 2005 and its first national sustainable development strategy in 2011. In 2017, it adopted a roadmap for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda which defined the basic institutional, implementation and monitoring framework for implementing the 2030 Agenda in Slovakia.

In 2018, six national priorities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda were adopted by government after conducting a broad stakeholder participation process. Inspired by the OECD study ('Measuring Distance to the SDG Targets'), and based on existing analytical materials, the Institute for Forecasting of the Slovak Academy of Sciences suggested a set of key areas for the development of Slovakia by 2030, identifying major challenges and priorities for the country in the context of the SDGs. As a follow-up, the Vision and National Development Strategy of Slovakia until 2030 is currently being drafted, which will be based on the six national priorities.

Strategy as a process of learning by doing is, just like strategy as planning, a 'strategy school' described in Mintzberg's seminal book 'Strategy Safari' (Mintzberg et al., 2005). A reason to choose one strategy approach over another could be the main/dominating governance style in the administration. Different strategy schools have different affinities with each of the three basic governance styles. From a metagovernance perspective, national sustainable development strategies could combine strategy as planning, as inclusive process (strategising), and as using competition and other market-based approaches. National sustainable development strategies are often of a mixed type. It is clear that a holistic set of policies cannot be realised with only legislation, only market-based instruments, or only discursive, bottom-up network initiatives. Such strategies may have a legal basis – in a number of countries, sustainable development is even anchored in the constitution – but are usually mainly a combination of agenda-setting for the medium to long term and a short-term action plan.

In 2002, the UN issued guidance suggesting that national sustainable development strategies should be in the first place

> *a coordinated, participatory and iterative process of thoughts and actions to achieve economic, environmental and social objectives in a balanced and integrated manner. . . It is a cyclical and interactive process. . . rather than producing a 'plan' as an end product (United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UNDESA, 2002)).*

This guidance shows a preference for a network form of strategy and not a blueprint planning type, which is understandable considering the complexity of the challenge. In 2005, a comparative study on nine European examples concluded that coordination should be at the highest level (prime minister) but the strategy at the same time should foster ownership, actions and commitment in all parts of society (Niestroy, 2005). Meanwhile, in some countries, sustainable development strategies are already in their third or fourth round, and other countries have started adopting such strategies, along with their Voluntary National Reports (VNRs) for the HLPF.

4.2. Horizontal coordination (multi-sector) and policy coherence

The comprehensive and all-encompassing nature of the SDGs requires leadership and coordination across the government. Leadership and coordination are in themselves important aspects of sustainable development governance, but are also inextricably linked.

Two-thirds of EU Member States have visible coordination mechanism with clear engagement across all ministries, and almost all have some coordination function in place. The mechanisms are typically coordination groups of ministers, underpinned by inter-departmental working groups, both of which meet regularly. In a few cases, these coordination mechanisms are institutionalised as councils or commissions, which can include broad groups of government actors, or even a wider spectrum of stakeholders. Coordination at the ministerial level as well as through working groups shows coherence in leadership as well as at the administrative level.

In some cases, such as Ireland, Netherlands, Poland and Sweden, a new coordination mechanism has been created to specifically address horizontal coordination and policy coherence for the SDGs. Such new coordination mechanisms, as well as the previously existing mechanisms, are often accompanied by a secretariat and consequently additional capacity for coordination is made available. In some cases, the coordination mechanism includes participation of stakeholders, for example in Latvia where the National Development Council is the policy coordination mechanism and also includes non-governmental actors. There are a number of countries with designated focal points within ministries to support internal mainstreaming of the SDGs and collaboration, such as France, Slovenia and the Netherlands, while in Germany 'Ministry coordinators' have a similar function.

An additional aspect of coordination, which is a key part of policy coherence for the SDGs, is the way in which coordination between external and internal implementation of the SDGs takes place. Few states have an explicit focus on bridging the gap between the domestic and international aspects of the 2030 Agenda. In some countries, steps to ensure coherence are taken through the coordination mechanism itself, or it is tackled as a specific task. Of the countries where there is centre of government leadership, Finland (Box 5) and Germany (Box 6) have dedicated coordination mechanisms to bridge the internal-external divide.

Box 5 | Leadership and coordination in Finland

A good practice example of leadership and horizontal coordination comes from Finland. In this case there is clear central leadership by the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister's office is responsible for coordination and acts as the secretariat. Coordination includes representatives from the Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development (FNCSD). The coordination task is also supported by an Inter-ministerial Network Secretariat, consisting of sustainable development Focal Points from all 11 line ministries. Crucially, a whole-of-government approach is demonstrated through this mechanism, mandating that all sectors are a part of achieving the SDGs.

The Prime Minister is also the chair of the FNCSD, a key high-level stakeholder and expert participation mechanisms, extending leadership on the SDGs beyond ministers and the government to the whole of society. The FNCSD is supported by a secretariat: Secretary General (at the Ministry of Environment), Deputy Secretary General (at the PM Office), and other experts. This institutional design demonstrates a commitment to an inclusive and coherent approach to the SDGs at the highest level of leadership.

In Germany, there is joint leadership in the international setting between the environment and development ministries to enable close coordination. While this is an important aspect of achieving the SDGs globally, there is still some progress to be made to include this level of policy coherence in national government.

Box 6 | Leadership and coordination in Germany

Germany presents an example of functioning coordination between departments with quite strictly separated remits (silos). At the highest level, the Federal Chancellery demonstrates clear commitment to the agenda and is the Chair of State Secretaries Committee on Sustainable Development. The State Secretaries Committee on Sustainable Development includes representatives from all ministries to facilitate cross-sector coordination. This coordination mechanism is supported by a permanent inter-ministerial working group for sustainable development. Through this, all ministries are required to adhere to a 'whole-of-government' approach and need to participate in the sustainable development inter-ministerial working group. Since the revision of their sustainable development strategy in 2017, coordinators have been appointed in each ministry with the mandate to mainstream internally (in addition to the cross-departmental coordination). These are often individuals at Director/Director-General level. This demonstrates leadership beyond ministerial commitment, and a whole-of-government approach being put into practice. For coordination in international bodies, there is typically a co-lead by the Ministry for Environment and the Ministry for Development Cooperation (e.g. in the new EU Council Working Party for Agenda 2030) to ensure coherence between domestic and international aspects.

The translation of the SDGs in a national context is done on three tracks: 'in, with and through' Germany. The latter facilitates the government addressing the spill-over (external / transboundary) impacts, which is included in reporting, and in indicators where possible. This is manifested in a distinction between impacts in Germany and other countries in reports, for example. This shows thorough recognition of the transboundary impacts of development and the transboundary nature of the SDG framework. The approach to assess such impacts is also applied through a sustainable development impact assessment, which includes reporting on transboundary effects of policy development and implementation.

Most countries still struggle to put in place effective coordination mechanisms between the external and internal dimension of SDG implementation: the relations between national and international SDG implementation. Moreover, coordination mechanisms alone are no guarantee for success if they cannot connect the different administrative silos effectively.

4.2.1 Policy coherence for sustainable development

Improving horizontal coordination has always been promoted as a key governance element for implementing sustainable development policies. In parallel, there has been the concept of 'policy coherence for development' (PCD), which aimed at taking into account the impacts of domestic policies (of northern countries) on countries in the global south. With Agenda 2030 this concept was widened to 'policy coherence for *sustainable* development' (PCSD), which on the one hand qualifies the original directionality (northern – southern impacts) with sustainability aspects. On the other hand, the term has become broad and addresses the need for coherent policies in general. The OECD is very active in this agenda (see for example OECD, 2019c).

Fostering policy and institutional coherence is a great challenge for implementation of the SDGs. Tackling air pollution in cities combines SDGs 3 (health), 7 (energy), 9 (industry and infrastructure), 11 (cities), 13 (climate), 16 (institutions) and 17 (partnerships), and requires action at local, regional, national and even international levels. Incoherence can result in governance failure with high social, economic and environmental costs. Improving policy and institutional coherence are different but they are two sides of one coin, the coin of implementing the SDGs. Coordination and integration are usually the approaches people mention first, but there are many more "means of implementation."

There are many concepts and mechanisms that can contribute to coherent implementation of the SDGs, such as coordination, integration, alignment, multi-level governance,

compatibility, Reconciliation, capacity-building, public-sector reform and empowerment. Some pragmatic recommendations are (Meuleman, 2018b):

- Promote policy coherence always in synergy with promoting institutional coherence.
- Combine various concrete tools that promote coherence, using "toolboxes" from different governance styles: hierarchical (regulatory), network (collaboration) and market (efficiency/incentives) governance. The three families of tools express different and sometimes contradicting, but in principle complementary, cultural values, traditions and assumptions.
- Introduce a European and/or international peer-to-peer learning tool for the promotion of coherence, financing the travel and accommodation costs of experts from one country who are willing to advise another country through expert missions, study visits or small workshops. It could be based on existing peer-to-peer tools (e.g. two recent European Commission tools on environmental implementation and regional policy).

4.3. Vertical coordination (multi-level)

Between EU institutions and local authorities stand national and subnational authorities, who provide the 'translation' of broad ambitions into concrete tasks. These are transferred as mandates for implementation at a local level. The relations between all these levels are called multi-level governance, and it typically operates in one of two ways: either top-down or bottom-up.

4.3.1 Top-down, bottom-up and real-time collaborative multi-level governance

The 2030 Agenda calls for a partnership approach to implement the SDGs, not only between public administration, business and civil society, but also among public institutions. The latter implies that the coordination between different levels of administration should also become characterised by inclusiveness. The bold decisions required to achieve the SDGs can only be carried through when those who are governed feel included and understood by those who govern. SDG 16 calls for effective institutions at all levels, and clearly one determinant of effectiveness is the way institutions work together across levels. Three different approaches to multilevel governance can be distinguished which should be combined to support the SDGs.

Top-down multilevel governance

This is characterised by a *hierarchical mind-set* regarding the levels, which has several benefits: it emphasises rule of law and offers a clear structure; it defines responsibilities and provides stability; and it is usually slow, which may also be a positive quality, as frequent changes in policy and law create unpredictability for citizens and businesses. Nevertheless, it often takes many years before a proposed policy or legal agreement decided at the top 'trickles down' to concrete implementation by local authorities. In the EU, there is even an additional legislative level, which can add years to the decision-making process. At the same, time speed can be important in order to avoid high environmental, social and economic costs of non-implementation.

Bottom-up multilevel governance

This is based on *subsidiarity* and *empowerment*. In the EU, subsidiarity is enshrined in the Treaty on the European Union. It aims to ensure that decisions are taken at the most "appropriate" level, with appropriateness referring to the capacity and relevance of each governing level to make decisions on an issue and implement the related policies. Empowerment makes bottom-up governance more effective, since measures can be taken at the lowest level where they can be implemented sufficiently. Empowering subsidiary levels of government has led many cities to become hotspots of sustainability innovation. It has also stimulated them to form networks such as the Covenant of Mayors

on climate change. The bottom-up mindset can be instrumental in fostering inclusive local governance, promoting ownership and enhancing co-production and customisation of policies and services. Empowerment of local governments is important because those authorities are best placed to understand their communities' needs. However, this approach can be a slower way to scale up good practices, while economies of scale may be able to do so more quickly. The approach also requires higher administrative levels to alleviate financial or legal constraints for the lower levels.

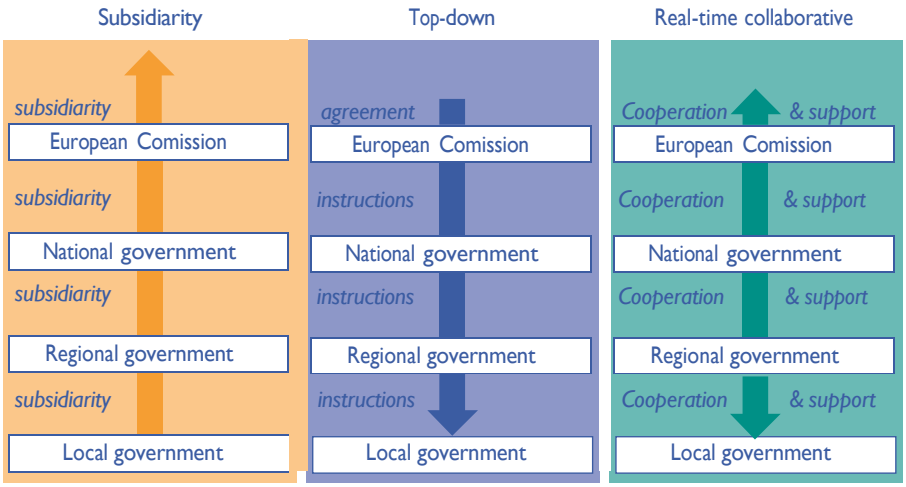
Real-time collaborative multilevel governance

Both traditional approaches to distribute remits across governance levels result in a slow transfer of ideas. A hierarchical system typically is slow in transferring ideas from the national to the local level, while subsidiarity tends to delay innovations' move from local to national level, and beyond. Fortunately, a third approach is developing, which we could call *real-time collaborative multi-level governance* (Meuleman, 2019). This requires stepping out of comfort zones as, for urgent issues, government bodies would establish mechanisms for "real-time" cooperation between all relevant levels. Working together on urgent challenges simultaneously could involve, among other tools, the use of digital platforms to receive and collect data on policy and service delivery issues and to keep track of actions taken towards resolution of challenges with transparency and accountability. In the Netherlands, "inter-administrative dossier teams" between national, regional and local authorities already exist, and this could be a good practice to learn from.

Combining the three multilevel governance approaches

The three approaches (Figure 6) represent the three distinct governance styles which are based on, respectively, rule of law, empowerment and incentives, and collaboration and co-production. We need all three approaches. The real-time collaborative approach will not replace but is an important addition to the classical styles. The approaches complement but can also undermine each other, depending on how they are combined and on the context in which they are used. The traditional approaches can be too slow to address urgent and complex problems. The third way seems faster, but can be undermined when distrust replaces trust, or when incentives lead to competition between authorities. An any case, the trick will be, as Davis and Rhodes (2000) have argued for public sector reform in general, "to mix the three systems effectively when they conflict with and undermine one another."

Figure 6 | Three ways to organise multi-level governance (after Meuleman, 2019)



4.4. Stakeholder participation & partnerships (multi-actor)

The participation of civil society and stakeholders, as well as coordination with sub-national governments, has been at the heart of governance or sustainable development from the onset: Sustainable development cannot be brought about by governments alone, it requires ownership and bottom-up engagement. It also links closely to the core principle of the SDGs of 'leaving no one behind'.

Involving stakeholders in sustainable development processes, governance and strategic decision-making has become a somewhat mainstream norm across Member States. Stakeholder participation varies widely between Member States. Rather often, it is institutionalised and done on a regular basis. Most countries take efforts to make SDG implementation processes inclusive, some countries plan to do so (Spain, Romania, Malta), and in others, this may continue to be lacking. The fact that stakeholder consultation on strategic developments is not a baseline for all countries, is a key area for improvement.

Four different types of mechanisms for stakeholder participation on the SDGs exist in EU countries through: a (sometimes) one-off consultation; an enhanced process of participation, as forum or other informal body; or a dedicated body, either established as an independent sustainable development council, or as a body intertwined with the government coordination structure which also includes stakeholders in an integrated manner (e.g. 'Government Council'). Some states have additional elements for participation, often in relation to a specific venue (like the VNR or HLPF) or aspect of policy. The difference between an independent council and an integrated body is not necessarily a sign of further institutionalisation, as the difference between the designs of these two different kinds of mechanisms is often the result of contextual factors.

Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Portugal, Poland, and Sweden all have independent bodies, but no institution that is integrated within the government setting. These are all councils, or more loose forums, which are independent of government, but participation is based on collaboration or advice to government bodies, rather than integration in decision making or planning. Sometimes this can be less, in particular in the case of Poland and Denmark, where the connection to government activities is not systematic. Alternatively, Czechia, Latvia and Slovakia have integrated councils but not independent ones.

Seven Member States have developed a dual approach with a formal institutional setting for participation processes integrated with the national government *and* an independent body. These include France, Croatia, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Finland. In Luxembourg, for example, there is an independent High Council for Sustainable Development, which works as an advisory council to the government, and the Inter-departmental Commission for Sustainable Development and co-design subgroup for revision of the sustainable development strategy (Box 7).

Box 7 | Luxembourg and stakeholder involvement

Luxemburg offers an example of a mechanism which can be seen as being somewhere between 'involve' and 'empower' and demonstrates an excellent example of how to truly integrate stakeholders in the governance process. Within their renewed Inter-departmental Commission for Sustainable Development, there is a subgroup working on a co-designing process for the revision of the National Sustainable Development Strategy. This working group and process is co-chaired by representatives from the Ministry of the Economy and Ministry of Development Cooperation, and includes NGOs, the Sustainable Development Council and the private sector. By their nature, co-design processes are a step beyond the traditional stakeholder participation mechanisms (through either consultation or advice) and allow for participation in decision-making. This is an example of integration of stakeholders at a high-level position, focused on policy coherence and strategic development in an empowering and integrative way.

Another example is Finland, with a longstanding Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development (FNCSD), integrated within government, and the bottom-up Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development.

Some countries that do not have a specific consultation process for the development of their sustainable development strategies or policies, or for their Voluntary National Reviews on the SDGs, still have other forms of participation. Examples of these include Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania and the Netherlands. However, to open strategic developments up for consultation is a cornerstone of participation and engagement of society in the SDGs, and other bodies or committees achieve different outcomes and are not a replacement for consultation. Some have other participation mechanisms in the form of a bottom-up stakeholder-led initiative or a similar enhanced process, while others have institutionalised steps such as a committee or forum which exists either integrated within the national government context, as an independent council or advisor connected to the national government, or other additional measures.

An important example of measures to include stakeholders, without a formalised mechanism is in the form of a business or industry forum or panel. An example of this is Romania, where a network for engagement with the private sector exists. Other examples of these bottom-up initiatives include those in the United Kingdom and Italy. In Italy, there are plans to launch an integrated commission for stakeholder participation.

4.5. Partnerships beyond PPP?

Strengthening partnerships is central to the entire implementation approach of the SDGs. SDG 17 includes targets to enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships to encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships. The chapter on 'means of implementation' of the 2030 Agenda asserts that the entire 2030 Agenda will be judged on the success of partnership constructs and their implementation of every Goal.

It has been questioned whether the envisioned revitalised global partnerships are fundamentally different from the most popular existing arrangement, namely public-private partnerships (PPPs). The PPP concept became popular in the slipstream of the New Public Management (NPM) ideology from the 1980s onwards. The focus on cost-efficiency is important but this is *not* the main objective of the 2030 Agenda's vision of partnership, which emphasises effectiveness (i.e. reaching the objectives) and inclusiveness. Over the years, PPPs have had successes and failures (Beisheim et al., 2014).

PPPs should probably be transformed, or a separate type of partnership must be developed. Adding civil society to PPP as an afterthought is not enough. Putting wings on a car doesn't ensure that it will fly, it is still a car. Partnerships for the 2030 Agenda should be inclusive, with in principle an equal weight of CSOs, business and government organisations. 'ABC partnerships' (administration, business, civil society)' with new roles for each of the three partners, who are partnering on equal footing, might be an idea (Meuleman et al., 2016). However, this can only work if CSOs are interested, willing and capable of taking up new responsibility as actors in SDG partnerships.

4.6. Monitoring and review

4.6.1 Measuring progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda

A robust monitoring and review framework is crucial for an effective and operational implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Many countries already had a system of regular progress reporting in place that they now continue to use for following up on SDG

implementation. For other countries, the SDGs were the occasion to launch or relaunch a dynamic of regular progress reporting.

Monitoring and review are not only a task for central government; also Parliaments could play an important role. Denmark, for example, has launched an annual SDG progress report to parliament in 2018. It also uses an SDG reporting mechanism to address future issues. Spain plans to hand an annual comprehensive report to parliament. The Netherlands already had a tradition of annual reports on policy coherence and will continue to do so.

Progress reports are quite common. They are not so regular in all countries, however. A reasonable rhythm would be to report on progress every year, or every other year. Whereas the progress reports are often indicators reports, just a few countries have additional more in-depth evaluations on a longer cycle. Interestingly, only some countries have conducted an assessment or gap analysis on where they stand with regards to the SDGs (Latvia, Netherlands and Sweden). In some countries this analysis has been conducted by or with independent experts (Italy, Poland and Finland).

The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs put a lot of emphasis on data and indicators. We see some of this data emphasis reflected in the countries. Most of the countries have revised or updated their indicators with the SDGs. The 2030 Agenda encourages countries to add national indicators to follow up on SDG implementation, so countries often mix UN, EU and national indicators. Some countries only use Eurostat indicators, either because of a lack of own statistical capacity or because they find the EU indicators more relevant. Several countries find the Eurostat reports useful to compare their performances with EU averages. A few countries based the selection of national indicators on a participatory approach (e.g. France and Finland).

Furthermore, three countries make a link between SDGs and existing 'beyond GDP' initiatives that follow the same idea of using a more holistic measure of progress. This is the case with Belgium, France and Italy. The challenge with these initiatives and with the SDGs in general, is that while they enable and encourage interesting and holistic tools, crucial accountability actors like parliaments, courts of auditors, NGOs, media etc. do not always use them. The question of how indicators and data can be used to inform policy choices and debates or to raise awareness is a crucial one.

Although the 2030 Agenda emphasises 'leaving no one behind', just two countries (Denmark and Romania) have specifically mentioned efforts to take measures to implement this principle, including via better measurement and data disaggregation.

Eurostat presents progress on the 2030 Agenda at the EU level in annual reports. Since 2020, these reports are also integrated in the European Semester country reports. There is an ongoing discussion on the (100) SDG indicators Eurostat that is using, among others because the indicators on the PAG Goals 16 and 17 are relatively weak, in particular. The discussion on meaningful SDG indicators is an example of how difficult it is for scientists, policymakers and stakeholders to step out of their silos or comfort zones and engage towards an agreement.

A growing role is taken up by national Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs). Their European network EUROSAI, actively supported by the European Court of Auditors ECA, as well as the global organisation INTOSAI, have recently turned their eye on assessing how the commitments to the 2030 Agenda are being realised.

4.7. Knowledge input and assessment tools

This section discusses knowledge input through three key tools for policymaking: 1) mechanisms to strengthen the science-policy interface; 2) impact assessments for sustainable development; and 3) SDG budgeting,

Integrating knowledge from different sources (independent experts, science, and other ministries) can foster reflexivity and learning, as well as evidence-based policy making (e.g. via impact assessments). Strengthening the science-policy interface for sustainable development is important for well-informed policy choices, especially given the complexity of sustainable development challenges.

4.7.1 Science-policy-society for sustainability

Many EU countries recognise the important role that science can play to inform policies towards sustainable development. Nine countries include representatives from science and academia in their sustainable development councils, commissions and other participatory mechanisms and two others plan to do so. These councils and commissions often serve as an independent strategic advisory body giving policy recommendations or commenting on drafts of new sustainable development strategies or plans and include several stakeholders, including academia representatives. Most are longer-standing, while some are rather recent initiatives influenced by the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and its principle of partnership.

Some countries give a more specific role to academia. This is the case in Italy, where scientists had a special role in what served as a first context analysis of where Italy stands on SDG implementation and that prepared the way for the strategy. Academia and research were involved in context analysis as stakeholders and had an additional role: the draft analysis was sent to research institutes to give a feedback and this step was useful to review and update the analysis and revise the strategic objectives. Slovakia did something similar, in the sense that the Academy of Science was charged to do an analysis of challenges and priorities for SDG implementation in the country.

In just a few countries, a more institutionalised science-policy interface mechanism for the SDGs can be observed. One example is Germany which already had an independent sustainable development council with experts from different spheres of society. It has now also launched a specific science platform to support SDG implementation. Finland added a group of scientists to its SD Commission. In the context of the French roadmap elaboration process, the French Research Ministry has launched a working group focusing on the role of science in the implementation of the SDGs.

4.7.2 Sustainability impact assessment

A sustainability impact assessment (SIA) is a tool to bring sustainable development objectives into decision making processes at an early stage in decision-making processes. Most EU Member States use economic ex ante assessments, usually based on cost-benefit analysis (CBA); they have environmental impact assessments (EIAs) which are mandatory by EU law; and few have social impact assessments. The economic assessments are usually integrated in regulatory impact assessments (RIAs) (see e.g. Box 8). A comprehensive sustainability test or assessment exists in just a few countries.

Box 8 | Denmark and impact assessment

Denmark already assessed new legislative proposals in terms of their economic, environmental and gender equality consequences before the SDGs. As part of the Action Plan, the government has announced several times that it will henceforth assess the consequences of new legislation and major initiatives for the SDGs when considered relevant in a Danish context and in case the impact is significant.

Since 2016, the SDGs have been integrated into the national bill pertaining to the budget for development cooperation indicating which SDGs are addressed by each budget allocation. In line with the SDGs, Denmark remains committed to provide 0.7 per cent of GNI in Official Development Aid. Denmark also plans to launch an SDG Fund that will combine public and private funds to mobilize further private capital.

Some countries have relaunched the impact assessment (IA) as a tool for sustainable development. Germany developed a new online sustainability check tool for new laws that is based on the 17 SDGs as part of the RIA system. Greece has developed guidelines on SDGs to inform the RIA process. Latvia uses the SDGs in mid-term assessment of sectoral policies. Others plan to or currently work on new methods to improve IAs and reinforce evidence-based policy making and policy coherence. The Netherlands, for example, are about to develop an SDG test for policy coherence, Romania plans to establish a consultative body to assess future policies and particularly interesting seems the idea to include transboundary impacts in regulatory impact assessments. Poland has developed new guidelines in that sense and Spain plans to incorporate external and global impacts on SDGs in RIAs.

The European Commission's IA system is a key tool under the broader 'Better Regulation Guidelines and Tools'. In 2001, the Commission had developed a EU Sustainable Development Strategy (COM(2001) 264) with an approach to anchor sustainable development in the Union's policymaking by looking at economic, social and environmental impacts together in an SIA, as it was then stated in the European Council Conclusions on the EU Sustainable Development Strategy (2001). The result was a 'marriage' of RIA and SIA, laid out in the Communication on Impact Assessment (COM(2002) 276 final) which contained first guidance on IAs, and the Action Plan "Simplifying and Improving the Regulatory Environment" (COM(2002) 278 final) on simplifying and improving EU legislation. It introduced obligatory IAs for all new initiatives proposed by the Commission, in which impacts on the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environment) are to be assessed, and stakeholder consultations to be held.

Although this could have implied a balance between the three dimensions of sustainable development, the environmental dimension has often been undervalued, among others because assessment of environmental pressure or benefits is usually not easy (Zeng et al., 2020). In 2020, five years are their adoption by the UN, the SDGs were not yet integrated in the Better Regulation / IA package. Various adjustments to the IA mechanism could improve this. This paper is not the place to present a list of all potential ways to integrate the SDGs, but some are often-mentioned in debates and not only concern the EU level, but are *mutatis mutandis* also applicable to the Member States:

- Mainstreaming the SDGs fully and transparently in the Better Regulation Guidelines. Notwithstanding the ambitious targets and ambitions to achieve sustainable development, the daily practice of EU policymaking takes place on the basis of significantly different criteria and benchmarks (Renda, 2017). There is a need to see how a better balance can be achieved between the environmental, economic and social dimensions of BR and in particular in the guidelines and tools on IA, evaluation and stakeholder consultation, and thus make BR a tool to support implementation of the SDGs. This could be done by integrating a 'sustainability first' principle and/or a mandatory application of the 'do no harm' principle of the European Green Deal.
- Refocusing and renaming the IA as SIA. The IA system of the Commission (and the respective guidelines and tools), and its extension to the co-legislators, is one of the key instrument in the BR guidelines and tools for mainstreaming the SDGs. Refocusing and renaming the Commission's IA to SIA would be coherent and an important signal to administrations, businesses and civil society.
- Integrating the SDGs in the IA methodology with obligatory reference to relevant SDGs. In each (S)IA procedure, the SDG(s) which the initiative aims to promote, as well as all SDG(s) that might be impacted positively or negatively (synergies and trade-offs), including interactions and spill-over effects, should be mentioned explicitly. This should be done, preferably, at the level of the SDG targets, and an effective methodology needs to be developed to make synergies and trade-offs transparent.

- Improving independency of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board (RSB). The RSB should become more independent from the Commission and include experts on sustainable development. Expertise on sustainability is necessary (beyond experts on social and environmental policies) for the systemic perspective, for identifying interactions between the SDGs, and addressing synergies and trade-offs, as well as for practical aspects of mainstreaming the SDGs.
- Introducing an ex-ante sustainability budget assessment. SDG-informed BR tools should also be used to evaluate and assess annual EU budgeting, including the foreseen mid-term review of the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF). The rationale is that budget proposals and decisions may have far-reaching consequences with unknown impacts.
- Adding a sustainability governance module to the Better Regulation guidelines. As governance targets (in SDGs 16 and 17, as well as the a), b), c) targets of each of the other SDGs) are an essential component of effective implementation of the SDGs, a governance module should be added to the guidelines that explains how the cross-cutting governance SDGs and targets can be taken into account.
- Prioritising multi-criteria analysis (MCA) and making CBA more transparent. Options to tackle complex challenges such as covered by the SDGs cannot be mainly assessed by standard cost-benefit analysis (CBA), which are developed for (profit-oriented) interventions in markets (JRC 2017, p. 16). Social and environmental initiatives cannot be assessed sufficiently with CBA. MCA is more suitable, because it is a more transparent method and can be adopted to specific situations. It should become the preferred tool.

SDG Budgeting

SDG budgeting can be defined as countries creating tools to link the SDGs to the budget, for example to make budgets more readable, coherent, or more performance oriented to ensure the budget delivers for sustainable development. Ten EU Member States have stated that they link or plan to link the SDGs to their budgetary process, either directly or indirectly: Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden (Box 9).

Box 9 | Italy's Well-being indicators (BES)

Italy has linked the SDGs to an existing ambitious initiative: in May 2017, the National Institute of Statistics published 100 SDGs indicators, among them 38 National Institute of Statistics Indicators for Equitable and Sustainable Welfare (BES). The project behind these indicators started in 2011. The 'Equitable and Sustainable Well-being Project' (BES indicators) aims to move beyond economic indicators and towards a more holistic vision of policy objectives, - very much like the SDGs. A law was adopted in 2016 related to the integration of BES indicators into economic and financial reporting. In 2017, four BES indicators were included in the budget ('Economic and Finance document' annual document that reports the quality and trends of public expenditures). In 2018, twelve BES indicators were included in the budget document by the Ministry of Economy and Finance. This is a way to. measure how Italian policies impact well-being, inequality, CO2 emissions etc., and a way to list in the same document concrete actions and tools to achieve these and other national sustainable development targets. The Italian Ministry of Finance will be tasked to create strong synergies between the implementation of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSDS) and the formal economic policies Italy also made active use of academia in the preparation of its context analysis and strategy. Academia and research were involved in context analysis as stakeholders and had a special role; the draft analysis was sent to research institutes to give a feedback and this step was useful to review and update the analysis and revise the strategic objectives.

The 2019 European Green Deal has made this a priority:

> *National budgets play a key role in the transition. A greater use of green budgeting tools will help to redirect public investment, consumption and taxation to green priorities and away from harmful subsidies. The Commission will work with the Member States to screen and benchmark green budgeting practices. This will make it easier to assess to what extent annual budgets and medium-term fiscal plans take environmental considerations and risks into account, and learn from best practices. (EC, 2019a).*

There are several ways in which countries use or plan to use the SDGs as a tool for a more coherent budgetary process. The first method by which governments integrate SDGs is that they include qualitative, and more rarely quantitative, elements on SDG implementation in the budget documents they propose to parliament. These reports can take different forms. In Finland, during the preparation of the 2018 budget, the Ministry of Finance asked each ministry to include a short paragraph under each of the main titles in the budget proposal. In these paragraphs, ministries provided information on how sustainable development would be reflected in their sectoral policies during the 2018 financial year. In its 2019 budget, the SDGs were fully integrated in several ways. They were then systematically used in the justifications for the main expenditure titles, to bring out the connections between the appropriations and sustainable development more clearly. In Sweden, ministries are encouraged to show the link between their area and the SDGs in budget documents in a descriptive way. In the document presenting the 2016 budget, the SDGs were mentioned around 100 times, and around 200 times in 2017 according to our interviews. The SDGs are handled differently by different ministries; some reference them more often than others.

Integrating the SDGs can also increase accountability and performance evaluation. To this end, forging links between budgets and SDGs, especially the indicator framework, can reveal the progress of a country towards the SDGs and help assess the government's performance in a more holistic way. While most countries use performance-based budgeting that relies on results indicators, the SDGs could add an additional, holistic layer of criteria to evaluate the sustainability of a budget. Italy integrated sustainability indicators in its budgetary process to measure the impact of policies on well-being and environmental sustainability. Slovenia has clearly linked the SDGs to national objectives and adapted them to their national context and challenges, prior to adopting 30 key performance indicators (KPIs) to evaluate national development including budget performance. Slovenia plans to integrate these indicators into the budget. France has started experimenting with the use of 10 'wealth indicators' that are complementary to GDP, such as carbon footprint or healthy life expectancy. The 2015 'Sas Act' requires the government to publish an annual report upstream of budget discussions that provides details on France's progress. Unfortunately, the Act did not deliver so far on the initial objective of these new wealth indicators which was to inform the budgetary debate. The report and these indicators have not become firmly established in the French political debate—the latest report was published several months after the budget discussions—but the SDGs could be an opportunity to give them a new lease of life. In an interministerial document, France announced in February 2018 that it will align its budget performance indicators with the SDGs 'where relevant and possible'.

Moreover, a few countries already have tools in place to tag how different budget appropriations contribute to certain SDGs or targets. Ireland does this for its aid budget and plans to widen the approach to other SDGs. France also does this for its aid budget and for environmental aspects of sustainable development. In its 2019 budget, Finland included a chapter in the general strategy and outlook of the budget proposal, focusing on its SDG related priority area of a carbon-neutral and resource-wise Finland in the budget and producing an overview of the appropriations relevant to that focus area.

Finally, making the link between SDGs and the budget may also mean to better allocate resources to some aspects of sustainable development or to increase investments for sustainable development in general. Very few countries signalled that they were using

the SDGs in such a concrete way. Denmark launches an SDG fund mixing public and private resources, Slovakia plans to create an investment plan for sustainable development and Sweden announced an action plan, specifically on SDG 10.1 (reducing income inequality) in its 2017 budget bill.

4.8. Long-term thinking

While a long-term perspective is a core principle underpinning governance for sustainable development and the concept of sustainable development itself, it is difficult to incorporate this in governance mechanisms. One option is all-party arrangements in parliaments, assuming that this provides continuity across government terms. Besides that, there are specific institutions for this. An important feature of policymaking for the long-term is that it is fundamentally about handling uncertainty, and that it aims to prevent lock-in effects (Meuleman and In t Veld, 2010).

Thirteen EU Member States use mechanisms attempting to account for the long-term perspective in their governance for sustainable development. These range across a wide spectrum of institutional settings and demonstrate varying amounts of institutionalisation. Some include the question of maintaining a long-term perspective in their governance, but not with any additional steps. Examples are Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia and Poland, where strategy documents, often even before the SDGs, adopted a long-term approach (for example, until 2050) and the government considers this approach as facilitating a long-term perspective.

Four Member States (Belgium, Denmark, Luxemburg and Slovenia) have developed at least one additional measure to facilitate a long-term perspective in the form of a working group, or a strategy paper that is focussed on the long term. This is a relatively weak form of institutionalisation as these mechanisms do not hold significant authority to steer the long-term implementation of the SDGs.

Some countries have all-party parliamentary committees. Denmark is a good example (Box 10).

Box 10 | Danish parliament 'Folketinget': the 2030 network [2017]

An interesting institutional innovation took place in the Danish Parliament, where an all-party 2030 network was set up to create a forum to contribute to knowledge sharing and debate, and thereby raising awareness in the parliament and in the public, to promote the focus on the SDGs as a Danish priority in international fora, and to convene a regular dialogue with the responsible minister on the Danish Action Plan for 2030 Agenda. In the setting up, it was aimed as the first priority (and succeeded) that the network had members from all parties represented in the parliament. It was not a criterion to have at the same time MPs from all committees in the network, but the spectrum of committees represented is considered as sufficiently broad. The group has established a '2030 panel' of 22 experts and stakeholders to support the political work of the 2030 network through analysis and knowledge inputs. It is a rather unique science-policy interface mechanism directly at the parliament. Furthermore, a new sub-committee under the Budget Committee was established in the Folketinget, which is developing recommendations on how to mainstream the SDGs in the budget process.

Another interesting example is the 'Committee for the Future' in the Finnish parliament (Box 11).

Box 11 | Finnish parliament 'Eduskunta': 'Committee for the Future'129 [1993]

In the Finnish Committee for the Future, the practice of scrutiny seems most advanced. Its main task used to be to prepare the parliament's response to the government's Report on the Future (at least once during a governmental term). This is now expanded to include the Government's Agenda 2030 Report. A systematic impact assessment is not applied, however. Resolutions from the Committee oblige the government and even bind subsequent governments. The government reports annually its progress, to which the committee gives statements. Other tasks include statements (draft submissions) to other committees in relation to other government reports or budget and foresight projects, as well as reports to on various kinds of societal issues and technological developments. With its background as committee dealing with future questions, there is a strong link to the area of technology assessment, which is a classic area in which parliaments do interface with science. This in general is an interesting link to explore for all parliaments active in the SDGs. Furthermore, the Committee for the Future has requested the government and is involved in the resulting piloting of a sustainability check of the budget.

Germany also has an institution with a specific remit for the consideration of a long-term perspective within the existing mechanism or structure in its Parliamentary Advisory Committee for Sustainable Development (PBNE) (Box 12).

Box 12 | German parliament 'Bundestag': Parliamentary Advisory Committee for Sustainable Development (PBNE) [2004]

The German PBNE was the first dedicated parliamentary body for sustainable development and has raised awareness for the issue and the need for a cross-cutting approach since its establishment in 2004. It is experienced in maintaining momentum even with changes in membership. It is well versed in the application of a (light) sustainability impact assessment, which became part of the government's regulatory impact assessment, and it established related procedural rules. A recently developed online tool for a sustainability checks will now be tested. The PBNE organises topical debates, typically with external experts, and adopts resolutions on the German SD strategy. The recent international peer review of the German SD strategy recommended strengthening of the PBNE.

This kind of example demonstrates the way in which a long-term perspective can be anchored within the governance system without designing new institutions that might be too politically sensitive or require too many additional resources. In this example, 'intergenerational equity' was one of three key areas through which policy was assessed. This structure existed up until very recently, when the Parliamentary Advisory Committee signalled that they planned to revise their assessment to align with the SDGs and exclude the assessment of the long-term perspective.

Other countries have specific arrangements. Two Member States have developed institutions which hold the specific remit of facilitating a focus on the long term in governance and sustainable development. Malta has a Guardian for Future Generations, and Hungary a Parliamentary Commission for Future Generations (formerly the Ombudsperson for Future Generations). These two mechanisms are not only focused on bringing long term considerations inherent in sustainable development into present policy-making, but they also have functions of oversight and connections horizontal between ministries, and offer scrutiny of the government often through a formal parliamentary process. They represent not only a means through which to prioritise the issue

of long-term governance, but also a means through which to integrate horizontally this concept. However, none of these mechanisms were the result of the SDGs and in all cases, they were developments in sustainable development governance sometimes over a decade before the SDGs came into force.

5. LESSONS LEARNED

Looking forwards, the experience from the EU, its Member States and more widely suggests that there are challenges ahead for managing the implementation of the SDGs that can be addressed through; mission-oriented PAR; peer-to-peer learning; dynamising multilevel governance; making public institutions agile; changing mindsets, developing engagement competence, and strengthening negotiation skills; making best use of digital government; boosting financial tools and SDG budgeting; and 'teaching silos to dance'.

5.1. Towards mission-oriented public-administration reform for the SDGs

Improving the quality of public administration and governance is essential to deliver on the SDGs by 2030. This is not only because we have the specific SDGs 16 and 17 – and the governance targets in all the other SDGs – but also because such delivery is not possible without effective PAG. The challenges addressed by the SDGs show that systemic and other changes are necessary in all policy sectors, and institutions, instruments and work processes need to be (re)directed to facilitate, enable and at least not hamper SDG implementation.

Einstein's aphorism that we cannot solve our problems with the same kind of thinking we used when we created them, is applicable to PAG. Of course, today's public administration organisations are not the same as 20 years ago. They are always changing, in particular since the 1990s, when in many EU countries, and some years later also at the European Commission, NPM thinking became popular. But change does not per definition result in more effectiveness – just like not every innovation is an improvement.

In the early 2000s, most public sector reform programmes (most notably in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany and the European Commission) and dedicated OECD reports promoted market governance and network governance, and stimulated restoration of certain aspects of hierarchical governance that were considered as having become too weak and needed to be stimulated according to the NPM doctrine, such as control and accountability procedures. Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011) mention resistance to NPM in a multi-country comparative research on twelve OECD countries in, for example, France, Germany and the Mediterranean countries, where it was considered as not matching with their cultural, ethical and political features. They also showed that public sector reform often starts with NPM objectives, but then diverges in a later phase to take into account national specificities (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011).

In the end, NPM has shaken up existing, often rigid and bureaucratic PAG structures and processes, and brought in management expertise, technologies and innovation from the private sector. This was refreshing but also had its weaknesses. Public administration has a different purpose than a private company, and NPM's focus on efficiency tended to distract from effectiveness. In addition, it was, like traditional hierarchical PAG, dogmatic. Implementing the 2030 Agenda, however, requires a non-dogmatic, pluralist approach. As the UN has repeatedly stated, there is no one-size fits all approach to implementing the 2030 Agenda. What the SDGs require is effective and tailor-made governance instead of efficient and standardised modernisation recipes.

Therefore, when we discuss PAG reform, the first question should be: in which direction should we steer the change, or: what is the purpose of the change? Governance (form) should follow policy priorities (function) and not the other way around. Modernisation is a means to an end, and not an end in itself. If we accept that the 2030 Agenda is a holistic policy agenda for all EU Member States and the EU institutions, it is logical that the principles and objectives of public sector modernisation should be derived from the SDGs, both as regards policy priorities and concerning the requisite policy and institutional coherence.

In the EU's research and innovation policy, such a clear direction became the beginning of a comprehensive change programme. Triggered by independent advice (Mazzucato, 2018b), the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation developed a "mission-oriented" approach. Looking at missions of the past — like the Apollo programme — and how to apply their lessons on today's challenges, Mazzucato found that "missions must be bold, activating innovation across sectors, across actors and across disciplines. They must also enable bottom-up solutions and experimentation". This could be an inspiring example, a role model for revising PAG reform.

5.2. Boosting reform: How to set up peer-to-peer learning?

Reform to make PAG more ready for implementing the 2030 Agenda is many things, but in any case, it is not about copy-pasting successes from elsewhere. Therefore, mechanisms will be important which stimulate that sustainability and where administration experts can learn from each other, within and across countries. Exchange of the two sides is highly valuable, for example, to realise that the *intervention logic* of a certain policy, e.g. health, agriculture, requires a matching *intervention ability/capacity* of public institutions, to be effective. For example, transforming a food production system based on quantitative growth into a more sustainable, circular agricultural system based on qualitative development will also require a reform of rules, mechanisms and skills.

The peer-to-peer tools established by the European Commission for the implementation of EU environmental and regional development policies represent a good practice (e.g. European Commission, 2017b). These more recently established tools are based on longer experience of the Commission with peer learning and twinning, most notably in its TAIEX programme between its Member States and countries neighbouring the EU.

'Peer support' or more extensive 'peer reviews' are normative: they have hidden assumptions and norms about reality and about what is right or wrong, which may or may not be recognised or acknowledged. The first assumption behind peer tools is that there are people 'out there' are of equal standing and experience: the 'peers'. However, in societies with strong class differences only peers are acceptable that have the same class background as those who would benefit from peer support. India is a classic example – but also the UK has the signature of a class society (although this is a political taboo). In egalitarian countries like the Scandinavian nations and the Netherlands, the ruling dogma is that everybody is equal and therefore could be a peer. The second assumption is that people are always open to learning, and to change. This also differs across countries. Exposure to criticism as well as change can be dangerous – you might lose face, or power, or even worse, both. In many Asian countries it is a risk to have a provocative opinion – not only could this result in losing face but it could also destroy harmony. Investing in simple peer tools such as expert visits, small expert workshops or study visits might be good precursors of a more extensive peer review, which may be considered when the entry version was successful.

All in all, peer learning support systems should be very useful for accelerating Agenda 2030, – and they are also cost-effective. It would be useful to investigate under which conditions peer learning for PAG and SDGs could be scaled up to create a critical mass for fundamental change.

5.3. Dynamising the multilevel governance for SDGs

Looking through a multi-level lens brings about new perspectives and ideas for more joined-up and mutually reinforcing work. Below are some examples where this has happened or could be stimulated.

A collaborative multilevel approach could enable a top-runner approach, forming coalitions of the willing that turn into coalitions of the winning. This can build on experiences with the mutual gains approach (see section 5.5) for complex, multi-actor and multi-sector challenges.

The European Semester is a relatively successful dialogue mechanism between the EU and national level. An important step forward was the integration of the progress on the SDGs as from the 2020 European Semester cycle. This could be elaborated further. More and more countries take action to integrate SDGs into their national budgetary processes. As we have seen, countries are using the SDGs as a tool in their budgetary process in many different ways and with different objectives, for example to improve budget coherence or transparence. The EU could learn from these country experiences. SDGs could be seen as a tool in discussions with countries about priorities for public spending and for public spending reduction. They could be a tool to assess impacts of public spending cuts to make sure that countries do cut first what contributes the least to the SDGs and do not cut sustainable public spending.

Commission expert groups with Member States are another venue for this. Sustainability themes are discussed in sectoral expert groups and there could also be a cross-cutting group on the implementation of the SDGs, i.e. roughly following the design of the Council Working Party 2030, but enriched by (independent) experts from Member States.

Digitalisation offers an opportunity to improve coordination and integration of policies and policy learning between authorities and in interaction with stakeholders. Peer-to-peer tools could benefit from adding online modules, for example. Better governance for the SDGs at EU and national level needs to be linked with the EU's Digital Agenda.

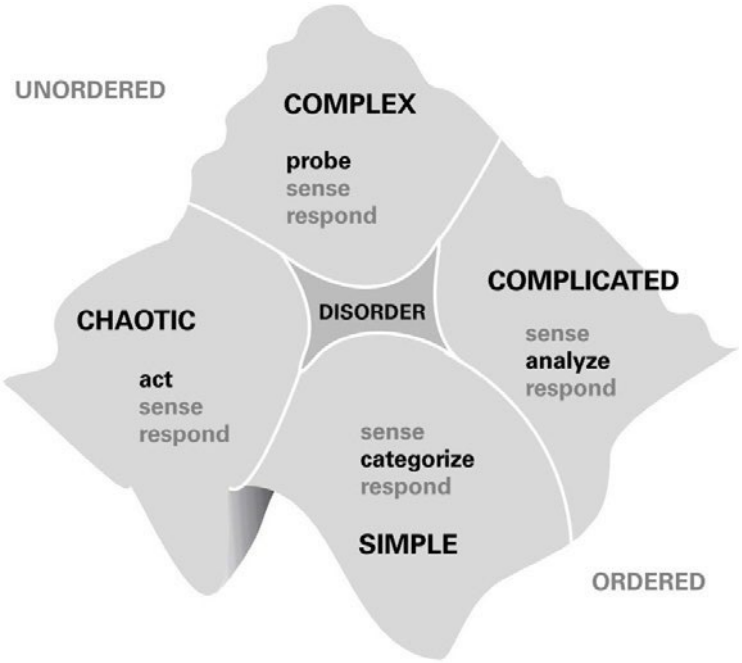
Dynamise on the stakeholder side. However, a more dynamic stakeholder engagement at and between the Member State and EU level is not something that can be done overnight.

5.4. Making public institutions agile: dynamic adaption to different problem types

Another example of where sustainability and governance experts will need each other is how to align policies and governance with the different types of problems, in terms of what kind of systems are underlying the challenges. For public policy as well as governance, it makes a huge difference whether a system is simple or complicated, where the links between interventions and results are relatively clear, whether it is complex or even chaotic.

Such differences are important for administrative organisation and governance design. Sustainability challenges are often embedded in complex systems, which typically entail so-called wicked problems (Rittel and Webber, 1973). While this is not new for public administration experts, sustainability experts may add new insights from their experience. The presentation of different management responses linked to different problem types by Snowden and Boone (2007) is highly relevant for both sustainability policy and governance (Figure 7).

Figure 7. | Different management responses in different system environments



Source: Snowden & Boone, 2007, p.4

The different approaches could also be linked to the three basic governance styles, with market governance performing best on simple problems, hierarchical governance on complicated problems, and network governance on complex and chaotic problems. This could become part of internal training on PAG – e.g. on issues such as policy coherence, inclusive policy making or scenario exercises.

5.5. Changing mindsets, engagement competence, negotiation competence

5.5.1 Changing mindsets

Readying public administration for the 2030 Agenda is very much about changing mindsets. First, this is about realising that the 2030 Agenda requires strengthening and focusing the capacity of public administration. Second, because many governance failures can be directly linked to the mind-set of one of the three governance styles: they are the result of, or part of the logic of each style.

The logic of hierarchical governance, for example, leads to several weaknesses, such as the tendency to create "red tape" (too much bureaucracy), to not being able to deal with complexity and uncertainty (for example because the idea is based on a clear and fixed division of tasks), and to create opposition (for example because actors who have something important at stake are not listened to).

The mindset of network governance can lead to typical deficiencies, such as having endless talks with no results. Another common problem is the lack of clear lines of responsibility; in a multi-party process, everyone can blame the others if it fails. The key value of trust is also a risk; as a Dutch saying goes, "trust arrives by foot but leaves by horse", meaning that trust can be lost quickly and takes time and effort to be restored. A related weakness is that network governance is sensitive to manipulation.

A market governance mindset has historically aimed to create a smaller and smarter state but resulted in many countries in a highly complex and fragmented public sector which operates beyond the direct control of elected politicians. The use of market

mechanisms in public policies has resulted in a loss of democratic control over independent agencies, prioritising efficiency rather than effectiveness, and in private monopolies. Market governance slogans have become part of our 'software': mental 'apps' that are always running in the background. They have in common that they are often believed to be universally applicable.

The following examples of NPM slogans are known to result in governance failure in areas relevant to the 2030 Agenda (Meuleman, 2018c):

- The expression **'best practice'** is not value neutral. It is related to the market governance value of competition ("who is the winner, who is the best?"). 'Best practice' is almost always a meaningless term. It suggests that every alternative practice has been considered and rigorously evaluated based on some agreed criteria. Alternative wording would be 'good practice', 'successful practice', or 'inspiring example'; the latter was systematically used by the European Commission in its Toolbox Quality of Public Administration (European Commission, 2017b). The 'best practice' ideology is the opposite of the principle of the SDGs that there is no one-size-fits-all and that the best solutions are contextualised.
- **'Less is more'** is inspired by efficiency thinking, which would normally be a secondary objective of an organisation. As soon as the primary objective suffers from efficiency measures, something is wrong. Therefore, it is not a universally sound principle. 'Less is more' is often used to suggest that governmental organisations should be smaller, actually meaning 'Less state is more market'. Related to the 'less is more' mantra is the idea that governments should be 'steering, not rowing' (Peters, 2011); they should make policies but utilise other sectors to deliver public services. 'Less is more' has stimulated privatisation of, for example, health services in many countries. The Covid-19 crisis has shown some negative impacts of this on SDG 3 (good health and well-being), such as the lack of stock of medical equipment in hospitals.
- Another NPM slogan is **'evidence-based policy making'** (Meuleman, 2013). On the one hand, it is the opposite of policy being based on prejudices and populism. It is sometimes interpreted as a claim that policies need an indisputable, 'true' knowledge base. This claim is in contrast with the low level of certainty that social sciences consider realistic with regard to the politics of complex, disputed, so-called 'wicked' problems of the sustainability agenda. Hence, it has been overtaken by the more nuanced 'evidence-*informed* policy making'.
- The NPM concept **'better regulation'** has in the past been used as a euphemism for 'less regulation' and had the connotation of 'cutting red tape'. The downside of breaking down regulation can be less reliability, legitimacy and steering power of government. Used in a more literal sense, the impact can be very positive in terms of effective governance. The European Commission's Better Regulation initiative (EC, 2015b) includes, besides a 'refit' exercise of existing EU legislation, a philosophy which is pluralist and close to the concept of metagovernance. First Vice-President Timmermans of the European Commission formulated this as follows during a panel discussion in Brussels in 2015:

  > *What I would challenge is the way we operate in the Brussels system: to think that if there is a problem, we create a law to solve that problem. I am not sure that the modern economy, the sustainable economy is best served by the premise that for every problem there should be a legal solution. (…) At least, [we should be] looking into the possibility whether the same goal could also be attained by a combination of different methods.*[1]

- New Public Management also introduced **public-private partnerships** (PPP), resulting in both benefits and flaws. On the positive side, it has provided

1 European Commission First Vice-President Timmermans on 27 May 2015 in Brussels during DG Environment's 'Beaulieu Café' on 'Better Regulation and the circular economy', quoted in Meuleman, 2018c).

governments with investments, technology and innovation options beyond their budget and capacities. The downsides of PPP as blueprint for partnerships between governments and societal partners include that PPP – for the administration - is mainly about cost-saving, that the business partner in the partnership is often dominant, and that it is not designed to include civil society organisations as partner on equal footing. The first is against the 2030 Agenda's effectiveness principle, the second against accountability and the third against inclusiveness.

- "Breaking down the silos" has become almost a mantra in debates on governance for sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda, as requirement to fulfil its comprehensive, holistic and systemic approach. As addressed in section 5.8, an adaptation here is 'teaching silos to dance', relating to the need for capacity building and skills development in the public service.

5.5.2 Engagement competence

Besides the need to review and change mindsets, SDG implementation also requires capacity building in the public sector, for example as regards engagement of stakeholders, and negotiation skills on complex issues.

Engagement of stakeholders requires engagement competence at the governmental organisation that initiates or leads the engagement process. This means:

- The organisational culture is open to the right of citizens and non-governmental stakeholders to participate in public affairs.
- Clear mandate and resources to engage in stakeholder participation are present.
- The organisation is flexible to engage in discussion processes. to learn and, if needed, revise own positions.
- Meaningful stakeholder engagement needs careful planning of the engagement process, a skilled application and a profound evaluation of results.

The issue of changing the mindset links to the concept of mindfulness, which was based on experiences in highly responsive organisations (HROs) in the USA (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2011). "Mindfulness" is used here in the connotation of combining ongoing scrutiny of existing expectations, bringing in new experiences, the willingness and capability to make sense of unprecedented events, dealing with context and improving foresight It is also related to metagovernance capacity.

As mentioned in section 4.1, a general training on the 2030 Agenda should be mandatory. A useful basis for tailored training courses is available online, provided by UNITAR. Such a training will create a joint understanding and vocabulary on the meaning of the SDGs, which is important to create new mindsets.

5.5.3 Negotiation skills for sustainability challenges

Implementation of the SDGs while taking into account principles such as inclusiveness, is difficult to achieve with classical win-lose negotiation methods, where governments and other actors try to create a compromise. However, in a compromise, everybody loses a little (or more than a little). A compromise often results from a situation in which there is little trust between parties. This is normal in a hierarchical governance approach; some partners (in this case: governmental actors) are 'more equal' than other partners. In a market approach, trust is a delicate issue. Involved parties are, in principle, autonomous and will strive for their own interests. If one chooses a more participatory approach, then building trust is required. Networks rely on mutual understanding of interests, and on the notion that actors are more or less interdependent. This context requires a type of negotiation that concentrates on creating a consensus (everybody may win, to a certain extent).

In the early 1990s, Harvard University in the USA developed the so-called Mutual Gains Approach (MGA), which does exactly this (Susskind et al., 1996). This approach

is especially suitable for complex issues in which many stakeholders are involved, such as sustainable development. A core concept of MGA is to make a distinction between positions and interests which are lying behind these positions. Knowing each other's interests opens up a wider range of possible actions than positions/standpoints. Another difference with the classical 'compromise' approach is that one starts not with trying to simplify the issue, but on the contrary, to make the problem more complex. Looking at the interests of stakeholders outside the direct focus of the policy issue may provide more interesting package deals in the end. Negotiating techniques for a multi-stakeholder environment, such as the MGA approach, require excellent communication skills of the involved public officials.

This is clearly an area where training is essential. In the 1990s, the Netherlands Environment Ministry organised a mandatory three-day training on the MGA approach for all policy officers and their managers. In addition, a group of middle managers was trained to become in-house trainers. This resulted in a strong common vision, language and methodology about how to deal effectively with stakeholders with conflicting interests. It is probably no coincidence that this joint mindset and corporate spirit coincided with a decade in which Dutch environment and sustainability policies became exemplary and inspired many other countries. The transition approach in sustainability, for example, emerged in this period.

5.6. Digital government for sustainability

A new scientific and technological revolution is gaining momentum, which is highly relevant for both sustainable development and PAG. The widespread diffusion of information, biological, new-material and alternative-energy technologies has brought about an intelligent and ubiquitous technological revolution. Artificial intelligence, big data, cloud computing and blockchain are gaining ground, providing convenience while bringing challenges and opportunities. Digital tools are also changing the work of public administration (UN-CEPA, 2020b).

Generally, governments are embracing digital technologies to achieve better governance. Still, there are many challenges that have yet to be overcome, especially regarding data security, privacy, the definition of property rights, and the growing digital divide. These are issues that relate to democracy, human right, the SDG principle of leaving no one behind, and overall, the future of government. In addition, the high energy use of digital technologies creates pressure on the environment.

It is important to enhance the capacity of governments to navigate successfully in this new digital era. Owing to rapid technological evolution, the future of government and those who work in government will inevitably change to meet the needs of citizens. It should be ensured that no one is left behind and that technological shifts are geared towards accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Digital transformation is happening on a large scale in human resources management practices. Also, private and public sector organisations are modernising their human resources systems through the adoption of cloud and digital technologies. Human resources professionals must acquire and improve digital literacy and skills to adjust to the rapidly changing conditions of electronic and digital human resources management. The transformation of human resources processes encompasses the digitalisation of employee records and the development of a human resources management system which can be integrated with other organisational data, such as payroll, e-learning, performance management and reward systems (Box 13). Such developments clearly call for integrated human resources management information systems.

New human resources management practices also include e-recruitment through the use of web-based tools. Vacancies are displayed on the website for potential employees.

Applications received through a web portal are shortlisted according to educational and other competencies required for the jobs.

Box 13. France's Public Transformation Campus (UN-CEPA, 2020b)

Box 1.2 An example of the future of government from France is the Public Transformation Campus, which brings together different actors or institutions, such as training schools, enabling the public sector workforce to adapt to new methods of work and innovative action; mixing theory, mainly by means of digital technology, with a lot of practice; working closely with users on real projects; and experimenting in real-life situations. There are tailor-made training programmes for public servants involved in organisational transformation to introduce them to new practices on projects that can be replicable in other administrations. There are e-learning courses, massive open online courses and videos, among other things, freely accessible to all civil servants online through digital training platforms using the newest methods and peer-to-peer sessions to share experiences, test feasibility and act.

5.7. Boosting financial tools and SDG budgeting

Making tax systems more sustainable and introducing sustainable public procurement are crucial enablers of SDG implementation. Both approaches have recently received political support in the context of the European Green Deal:

Well-designed tax reforms can boost economic growth and resilience to climate shocks and help contribute to a fairer society and to a just transition. They play a direct role by sending the right price signals and providing the right incentives for sustainable behaviour by producers, users and consumers. At national level, the European Green Deal will create the context for broad-based tax reforms, removing subsidies for fossil fuels, shifting the tax burden from labour to pollution, and taking into account social considerations (EC, 2019a).

Public authorities, including the EU institutions, should lead by example and ensure that their procurement is green. The Commission will propose further legislation and guidance on green public purchasing (EC, 2019a).

In addition, as the primary political and economic expression of government policy, the budget seems a natural starting point for the integration of Agenda 2030 and its SDG. In section 4.6, it was already shown that assessment of the budget as regards contributions to SDG implementation is an emerging practice with a great potential which can contribute to accountability and performance evaluation.

5.8. Teaching silos to dance

The popular call for "breaking down the silos" reflects the long-standing call for policy integration and policy coherence and recognises the comprehensive, holistic and systemic approach of the 2030 Agenda. But this call deserves a closer look. We can then distinguish three types of silos: political, mental, and institutional.

Institutional silos: Most governmental organisations (and in fact most large organisations) work as classical bureaucracies. They organise their work by dividing complex problems into more simple, partial problems, which are dealt with by separate sectoral or functional bureaucratic entities, which we tend to call "silos." You become a civil servant in one silo, and typically stay within it. Exceptions apply in administrations where civil servants rotate across silos, as this is beneficial for careers (e.g. England, European Commission). Such institutional silos give people the room to work undisturbed, but may

effectively prevent them from working with others, both within government and with stakeholders. Because of the latter, the term silos generally has a negative connotation.

Political silos: In democracies, politicians need to win majorities. This comes with different degrees of competition and power struggles. Individual politicians tend to focus on their file and defend it, in order to raise their own profiles. This can lead to political silos. As political silos are almost inherent to the democratic system, there are limits to tackling them, which also depends on the political culture of the country. Some have constitutional arrangements that reduce or eliminate the decision-making power of individual Ministers (as in Sweden), or give a relatively strong (but still limited) "steering power" to the Prime Minister (as in Germany). In some countries, governments have experimented with so-called project ministers for cross-cutting issues that involve more than one ministry (e.g. the Netherlands).

Mental silos: In addition, and often related, there are mental silos; people have a firm belief that their problem definition and solution are not only the best, but even the only way forward. Different policy sectors like agriculture, transport and environment have their own world view and tend to operate in isolation. There are cultural, political, power-and career- related, cognitive and other reasons why people have 'tunnel views' and argue against change. However, for the comprehensive SDGs, for moving towards sustainable development with a need for policy integration and coherence, we need to step out of our comfort zones.

Without institutional silos, there is no focus, no structure, no accountability and no transparency. Institutional mergers to break down silos may create new governance failures and threaten SDG implementation. Institutional silos therefore have several benefits:

- Silos represent positive features of government organisations such as clear lines of command, responsibility, focus on a given target and having internal "hotspots," where expertise, memory and learning are concentrated. With respect to the SDGs, an accountable "silo" is needed in each country for, inter alia, reporting progress at the national level.
- Silos have a different function and meaning in different administrative cultures. In *Rechtsstaat* cultures like Germany, and hierarchical ones in general, opening up silos has turned out to be more difficult than in consensus cultures like the Netherlands and Denmark, or in public interest models of government like in Australia, New Zealand and the UK (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011, pp. 62-63). Hence, a closer look is required into how they operate, and a general verdict that silos are bad is culturally insensitive.
- Silos provide clear, reliable and stable contact points within a ministry for partners and stakeholders. Without them, it can be difficult to develop enough trust that is needed to make a network approach work. Partnerships and participation increase the challenge of coordination, and thus require clear anchor points. Hence the common assumption that silos prevent stakeholder participation is questionable.

We should also keep silos because there is no perfect alternative, and there may never be one. As Ulrich Beck developed in his 'second modernity': our time is so complex that we need to move from thinking in 'best' tools, i.e. 'either A or B', to the approach of 'A and B' (Beck, 1992). Such redundancies are also good for institutional resilience: if one tool doesn't work, it is easier to switch to another.

Instead of breaking down institutional silos, we should strive to make them more flexible, permeable, interactive and transparent, while keeping their typical strengths and their specific functions in different administrative cultures. It remains a key approach for better policy integration to reinvigorate and improve horizontal coordination. Examples of such horizontal coordination arrangements are widespread, e.g. 'inter-service steering groups' (European Commission), state secretaries' commissions or similar bodies for national sustainable development strategies (Germany, Finland), interdepartmental "dossier teams" (Netherlands), or cross-sectoral project teams. The SDGs reinvigorate

the need to better bridge domestic and external policies, a coordination task that has so far hardly been tackled.

While experience has been mixed, a key lesson is that coordination arrangements do not do the trick by sheer existence, but more efforts need to be put into how to run them. This requires a clever use of procedural tools for facilitating dialogue, with the aim to enable learning about others' assumptions and objectives, building respect for other parties' expertise, recognising different professional competences and skills of other disciplines (including soft skills such as creativity, accuracy and analytical capacity). All of these can bring to bear the potential for cross-fertilisation and new solutions.

A focus on facilitating dialogue, interaction and learning is at the core of opening mental silos. It will likely also require different leadership styles, e.g. switching from commanding to coaching, and capacity building for such adaptive leadership. Leaders will also need to allow, and even stimulate mistakes, as making mistakes is a normal feature of innovation. Important for opening both mental and political silos are new narratives, such as sustainable production and consumption as presenting business and investment opportunities (see also (Persson et al., 2016). New narratives, as well as mutual gains approaches, widen the perspective and enable awareness of synergies.

Translating the universal SDGs into national contexts requires 'common but differentiated governance," as different cultures and institutional traditions need to be taken into account (Meuleman and Niestroy, 2015). Similarly, there is no single best' way to make silos more collaborative: each culture has unwritten rules about how people can work together.

To conclude, silos are features of our institutions, mental comfort zones and political rationales, and they can be very change-resistant. Teaching elephants to dance (Belasco, 1991) has not been easy, and neither is teaching silos to dance (Niestroy and Meuleman, 2016). But we need to go for it. This is a capacity building programme in itself.

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UN-CEPA: Committee of Experts on Public Administration. UN Under-Secretary-General Liu Zhenmin: "CEPA is the only body in the ECOSOC system dedicated to institution building in its many forms. Progress in this area is a foundation of progress on all the Sustainable Development Goals".

UNITAR: Various online courses on the SDGs are made available by UNITAR.

ANNEX I - SDG 16 AND 17 TARGETS

SDG 16 targets
16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.
16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.
16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.
16.4 By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organised crime.
16.5 Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms.
16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.
16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision making at all levels.
16.8 Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance.
16.9 By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration.
16.10 Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.
16.a Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime.
16.b Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

SDG 17 targets (abridged)
Finance
17.1 Strengthen domestic resource mobilization . . . to improve domestic capacity for tax and other revenue collection.
17.2 Developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitments.
17.3 Mobilise additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources.
17.4 Assist developing countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability through coordinated policies.
17.5 Adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for least developed countries.
Technology
17.6 Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation and enhance knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms.
17.7 Promote the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on favourable terms.
17.8 Fully operationalise the technology bank and science, technology and innovation capacity building mechanism for least developed countries by 2017.
Capacity building
17.9 Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the Sustainable Development Goals.
Trade
17.10 Promote a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organisation.
17.11 Significantly increase the exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the least developed countries' share of global exports by 2020.
17.12 Realise timely implementation of duty-free and quota-free market access on a lasting basis for all least developed countries.
Policy and institutional coherence
17.13 Enhance global macroeconomic stability, including through policy coordination and policy coherence.
17.14 Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development.

17.15 Respect each country's policy space and leadership to establish and implement policies for poverty eradication and sustainable development.
17.16 Enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, complemented by multi-stake-holder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources.
17.17 Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.
Data, monitoring and accountability
17.18 By 2020, enhance capacity building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data.
17.19 By 2030, build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product, and support statistical capacity building in developing countries.

ANNEX 2 - A METAGOVERNANCE TOOLBOX FOR SUSTAINABILITY: FIFTY DIMENSIONS

This list of governance features with different operational forms for hierarchical, network and market governance, is based on Meuleman (2018), where they are described in detail.

	Governance features	Hierarchical governance	Network governance	Market governance
Vision, strategy and orientation				
1	Cultures / 'ways of life'	Hierarchism	Egalitarianism	Individualism
2	Relational values	Hegemonism	Tolerance, pluralism	Indifference
3	Theoretical background	Rational, positivist	Socio-constructivist, social configuration theory	Rational, positivist, public choice, princi-pal-agent theory
4	Key concepts	Public goods	Public value	Public choice
5	Mode of calculation	Homo hierarchicus	Homo politicus	Homo economicus
6	Primary virtues	Reliable	High discretion, flexible	Cost-driven
7	Common motive	Minimising risk and predictability	Satisfying identity	Maximising competi-tive advantage
8	Motive of subordinate actors	Fear of punishment	Belonging to group	Material benefit
9	Roles of government	Government rules society	Government is partner in a network society	Government delivers societal services
10	Metaphors	Machine, stick, iron fist	Brain, sermon, word, dialogue	Flux, carrot, invisible hand
11	Strategy styles	Planning and design style; power style; compliance to rules and control procedures	Learning style; Chaos style: coping with unpredictability; deliberation	Power style; getting competitive advantage

	Governance features	Hierarchical governance	Network governance	Market governance
12	Response to resistance	Use of power	Persuasion of rebels	Negotiated deals, using incentives
13	Orientation of organisations	Top-down, formal, internal	Horizontal, informal, open-minded, external and internal	Bottom-up, suspicious, external and internal
14	How actors are perceived	Subjects, voters	Partners	Clients, customers
15	Selection of actors	Controlled by written rules (instructions)	Free, ruled by trust and reciprocity	Free, ruled by price and negotiation
16	Aim of stock-taking of actors	Anticipating protest/ obstruction/ opponents	Involving stakeholders to get better results and acceptance	Finding reliable contract partners, know competitors
Institutions, instruments and tools				
17	Institutional logic	Line organisation, centralised control systems, project teams, stable/fixed	Soft structure, with a minimum level of rules and regulations	Decentralised, semi-autonomous units/ agencies/teams; contracts
18	Typical policy instruments	Law-making, control mechanisms, penalties, fees	Networks, stakeholder involvement	Incentives, awards
19	Addressing organisational silos	Keep silos for structure	Teach silos to dance	Break down the silos
20	Unit of decision making	Public authority	Group	Individual
21	Main control mechanism	Authority	Trust	Price
22	Coordination mechanism	Imperatives; ex-ante coordination	Diplomacy; self-organised coordination	Competition; ex-post coordination
23	Transaction types	Unilateral	Multilateral	Bi- and multilateral
24	Degree of flexibility	Low to medium	Medium	High
25	Commitment among parties/partnerships	Medium to high/ public-private partnerships	Medium to high/ multi-stakeholder partnerships	Low/public-private partnerships
26	Communication styles	Communication about policy: giving information	Communication for policy: organizing effective dialogue, connecting	Communication as policy: influencing, incentives, PR campaigns
27	Roles of knowledge	Expertise for effectiveness of ruling; authoritative knowledge	Knowledge as a shared good; agreed knowledge	Knowledge for competitive advantage; cost-effective knowledge
28	Type of science-policy interface	Chief scientist; embedded science model	Partnership model: dialogue	'Speaking truth to power' model
29	Approaches to impact assessment1	Evidence-based policy making	Inclusive assessment of policy options	Cost-benefit analysis
30	Access to information	Partial: Segregated information	Partial: Fragmented information	Total, determined by price
31	Accountability style/ tools	Order and observance	Interactive persuasion, participation, co-working	Market competition

	Governance features	Hierarchical governance	Network governance	Market governance
Processes, people and partnerships				
32	Context	Stable	Continuously changing	Competitive
33	Process and project management	Project management (control)	Process management (contextuality)	Project management (flexibility)
34	Public sector reform approaches	Top-down	Inclusive	Outsourced expertise
35	Innovation	Large-scale, national and universal innovation	Innovation at both central and local levels	Innovations in organisation, more than content
36	Relation types	Dependent	Interdependent	Independent
37	Societal interactions	Interventions	Interplays	Interferences
38	Roles of public managers	Clerks and martyrs	Explorers producing public value	Efficiency and market maximisers
39	Leadership styles	Command and control	Coaching and supporting	Delegating, enabling
40	Degree of empowerment inside organisations	Low	Empowered lower officials	Empowered senior managers
41	Values of civil servants	Law of jungle	Community	Self-determination
42	Key competences of civil servants	Legal, financial, project management, information management	Network moderation, process management, communication	Economy, marketing, public relations
43	Objectives of management development	Training is an alternative form of control over subordinates	Training helps 'muddling through'	Training helps making more efficient decisions
44	Dealing with power	Coercion	Manipulation	Competition, lobbying
45	Conflict resolution types	Classical negotiation, power-based (win-lose)	Mutual gains approach to negotiation (win-win); diplomacy	Classical negotiation, competition-based (win-lose)
Problems, solutions and their linkages				
46	Suitability for problem types	Crises, disasters, problems that can be solved by executing force	Complex, unstructured, multi-actor issues	Routine issues, non-sensitive issues
47	Reframing	A relevant problem is framed as disorder	A relevant problem is framed as lack of consent	A relevant problem is framed as inefficiency
48	Typical governance failures	Ineffectiveness; red tape	Never-ending talks, no decision, undemocratic	Economic inefficiency, market failures
49	Role of public procurement	Establish stable relations with suppliers; leverage for government policy	Stimulate innovation partnerships	Stimulate competition among suppliers; create new markets
50	Typical output and outcome	Laws, regulations, control, procedures, accountancy reports, decisions, compliance	Expert networks, consensus, voluntary agreements, covenants	Services, products, contracts, outsourcing, voluntary agreements

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