COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg, January 2017   Revised Information Document

Overview of follow-up on progress in implementing the
United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Goal 5: "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls"
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A summary of relevant processes and related documents in 2016

Official list of Sustainable Development Goals Indicators

The indicator framework for the follow-up of the progress achieved in relation to the UN Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was conceived and developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals (IAEG-SDGs), specifically created on 6 March 2015 by the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) and composed by Member States and regional/international observers. The list of indicators was included as Annex IV to the IAEG-SDGs Report (E/CN.3/2016/2/Rev.1) presented at the 47th session of the UN Statistical Commission held in March 2016 and then taken note of by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) at its 70th session in June 2016. A general agreement has been reached on all indicators, even though the list is considered as a starting point towards a definitive indicator framework. According to ECOSOC Resolution 2006/6, the estimates used to redefine the list of indicators must be collected in cooperation with national statistical authorities, since individual countries' situations may notably vary from regional averages.

The 4th meeting of the IAEG-SDGs was held from 15 to 18 November 2016 in Geneva, hosted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). It consisted of a Members meeting and a plenary session with the participation of national representatives, several international organisations and NGOs. The aims of the meeting were to:

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1) Finalise the initial tier system for indicators
2) Establish a process for the refinement of indicators
3) Review work plans for Tier III indicators[1]
4) Discuss options for those indicators that do not have a proposed custodian agency
5) Review data flows from national to regional and global level and discuss best practices for the delivery of these data

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The meeting decided to advance all indicators that still appear as unclear and to select custodial agencies that should manage the data collection for each indicator. The plenary also discussed the respective roles of national government and UN agencies for the processing of such data.

As reported by the work programme for March 2017/March 2018 presented during the meeting, the next steps to be tackled by the IAEG-SDGs include the regular updating of the work plans for Tier III indicators and of the data available for Tier I and II indicators; when needed, a review of the indicators will be necessary for their correct classification. Moreover, the harmonisation of the categories for data disaggregation is to be achieved – something that entails the review of all those indicators based on them. Finally, two meetings of the IAEG-SDGs have been planned: one in March 2017 and the other in the fall of 2017 (dates still to be confirmed).

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[1] According to the tier classification for SDGs, Tier 1: Indicator conceptually clear, established methodology and standards available and data regularly produced by countries; Tier 2: Indicator conceptually clear, established methodology and standards available but data are not regularly produced by countries; Tier 3: Indicator for which there are no established methodology and standards or methodology/standards are being developed/tested.

The following table shows the currently agreed indicators for the follow up of Goal 5 on gender equality, as established by the IAEG-SDGs:

Goal 5 targets	Indicators
5.1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere	5.1.1: Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex
5.2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation	5.2.1: Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age 5.2.2: Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence
5.3: Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation	5.3.1: Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18 5.3.2: Proportion of girls and women aged 15-49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, by age
5.4: Recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate	5.4.1: Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location
5.5: Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life	5.5.1: Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments 5.5.2: Proportion of women in managerial positions

5.6: Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences	5.6.1: Proportion of women aged 15-49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care 5.6.2: Number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee women aged 15-49 years access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education
5.a: Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws	5.a.1: (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure 5.a.2: Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control
5.b: Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women	5.b.1: Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex
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	5.c.1: Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment

Member States should apply Goal 5 targets alongside the implementation of all SDGs. However, there is one specific Goal that is particularly linked with SDG 5 and particularly relevant for the CoE work on gender equality: SDG 16.

The following table shows the agreed indicators for the follow up of Goal 16:

Goal 16 targets	Indicators
16.1: Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere	16.1.1: Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population, by sex and age 16.1.2: Conflict-related deaths per 100,000 population, by sex, age and cause 16.1.3: Proportion of population subjected to physical, psychological or sexual violence in the previous 12 months 16.1.4: Proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live
16.2: End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children	16.2.1: Proportion of children aged 1-17 years who experienced any physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers in the past month 16.2.2: Number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population, by sex, age and form of exploitation 16.2.3: Proportion of young women and men aged 18-29 years who experienced sexual violence by age 18
16.3: Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all	16.3.1: Proportion of victims of violence in the previous 12 months who reported their victimisation to competent authorities or other officially recognised conflict resolution mechanisms 16.3.2: Un-sentenced detainees as a proportion of overall prison population

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	16.4.1: Total value of inward and outward illicit financial flows (in current United States dollars) 16.4.2: Proportion of seized small arms and light weapons that are recorded and traced, in accordance with international standards and legal instruments
16.5: Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms	16.5.1: Proportion of persons who had at least one contact with a public official and who paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials, during the previous 12 months 16.5.2: Proportion of businesses that had at least one contact with a public official and that paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials during the previous 12 months
16.6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels	16.6.1: Primary government expenditures as a proportion of original approved budget, by sector (or by budget codes or similar) 16.6.2: Proportion of the population satisfied with their last experience of public services
16.7: Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels	16.7.1: Proportions of positions (by sex, age, persons with disabilities and population groups) in public institutions (national and local legislatures, public service, and judiciary) compared to national distributions 16.7.2: Proportion of population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive, by sex, age, disability and population group
16.8: Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance	16.8.1: Proportion of members and voting rights of developing countries in international organisations
16.9: By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration	16.9.1: Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority, by age

16.10: Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements	16.10.1: Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months 16.10.2: Number of countries that adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information
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.a.1: Existence of independent national human rights institutions in compliance with the Paris Principles
16.b: Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development	16.b.1: Proportion of population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed in the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law

Regional Survey on the planning, implementation, follow-up and review of the implementation of the SDGs in Europe

The UNECE and the Regional UN Development Group for Europe and Central Asia launched a joint survey in December 2015 to collect inputs on the:

1) plans and approaches of governments to integrate the SDGs and related targets in their national strategies and to implement them in their countries;
2) plans of governments to build and conduct monitoring and review at the national level of the SDGs and related targets;
3) expectations of governments towards the regional UN system in view of SDG implementation and follow-up.

39 member states (out of 56) responded to the regional questionnaire, including 33 member states of the Council of Europe.[2] On the basis of this survey, UNECE made the following remarks:

Updating strategies and mainstreaming SDGs

Efforts to implement Agenda 2030 in member states seek to build on existing policy frameworks. Many countries had in place development strategies [...] which are being adapted to the needs of the SDGs. However, there are differences in the degree of readiness and the progress made so far in incorporating SDGs in existing frameworks. In some cases, this depends on the timing of the cycle for developing or updating these development strategies. In a few countries, new strategies were developed around the time SDGs were adopted and this facilitated a fuller incorporation of the SDGs. In others, updating and revisions of existing strategies are required and will take place, in many cases, in accordance with already planned schedules. In countries that are seeking EU accession, sustainable development strategies seek complementarity with the European integration agenda.

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[2] Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom.

Priority setting and the integrated character of Agenda 2030

Many countries stressed the integrated nature of the SDGs and, in some cases, urged some caution regarding the definition of priorities which could be seen as privileging some targets over others. A few countries, mainly from the EU, expressed a strong position against "cherry-picking" SDGs – both nationally and internationally. All goals are horizontal and intrinsically linked, so an integrated approach is necessary for implementation. However, this is not incompatible with the identification of areas that could receive particular policy attention. Countries showed different approaches and criteria to identify these priorities. While a few countries are already in a position to name these priorities, most of them are engaged in different processes that would eventually identify them.

No changes in budgeting mechanisms

Practically no country envisages changes in budgeting processes in connection with the implementation of the SDGs. However, there are a few instances, in particular in countries with UN presence, where SDG implementation is seen as an opportunity to improve existing procedures, for example, encouraging a shift towards medium-term budget planning or reinforcing the orientation towards programme budgeting. In some cases, strategies incorporate previsions for sustainable financing mechanisms, resulting in an improvement of the existing financing for sustainable development. Medium-term action plans are linked to the budget preparation process.

Building an inclusive regional review platform

Many replies to the survey expressed interest in a regional review platform that brings together member States, the UN system and other relevant regional and sub-regional organisations, based on the provisions of Agenda 2030 [...]. It is perceived that UNECE could play a robust role in convening and co-ordinating the regional review platform, in close cooperation with the regional UN system and involving partners such as the European Union, regional development banks, OECD, or networks such as the European Sustainable Development Network, bringing in their expertise, avoiding duplication, connecting with their processes and ensuring coverage of the broad and complex SDG agenda.

2016 High Level Political Forum

The High Level Political Forum (HLPF) is the main UN forum for sustainable development issues, which plays a key role for the follow-up and review of the results achieved by member states as regards the SDGs established by the 2030 Agenda. It takes place every year under the auspices of ECOSOC – and every four years at the level of Heads of State and Government under the auspices of the General Assembly. Its current functions are to provide political leadership, to guide the implementation of the Agenda, to track all progresses achieved through the national reports presented by states on a voluntary basis and address new/emerging issues.

The last HLPF (the third since its creation and the first since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda) was held in New York from 11 to 15 July 2016, on "Ensuring that no one is left behind". The session reviewed the progresses obtained on goals and launched a Report (E/2016/75) summarising them; 22 member states – among them, nine Council of Europe member states – presented their voluntary reviews. The session also included a ministerial meeting entitled "Implementing the post-2015 development agenda: moving from commitments to results", whose Declaration (E/HLS/2016/1) has been adopted by the Forum. At the end of the 2016 HLPF, the General Assembly adopted a Resolution (A/RES/70/299) on the next steps to be taken; and the ECOSOC drew up a Report (E/HLPF/2016/8) on the issues tackled by the forum. Finally, the then President of ECOSOC – Mr Oh Joon – presented a summary of the meeting.

In particular, the Ministerial Declaration stressed that – apart from the annual progress report on SDGs – an in-depth report (*Global Sustainable Development Report*) concerning the follow-up and implementation of SDGs will be produced every four years in order to inform all Heads of States and Governments on the occasion of the high-level political forum convened under the auspices of the General Assembly. In order to draft such Report, the Declaration also requested the creation of an independent group of 15 experts representing different backgrounds, disciplines and institutions, ensuring geographical and gender balance.

During the 2016 HLPF, a general evaluation of the progress achieved concerning Goal 5 was carried out – including by member states' national reports. However, the official review will take place during the next HLPF (which will be held from 10 to 19 July 2017, on "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world"). Every Forum will tackle a limited number of SDGs so that the follow-up is more focused and States have the time to progressively implement them. The allocation of SDGs' follow-up is emphasised in the above-mentioned Resolution A/RES/70/299 (paragraph 5).

Report of the UN Secretary General on Progress towards meeting the SDGs
(E/2016/75, 3 June 2016)

The progress achieved in recent years concerning gender equality-related issues is stressed in the Report launched on the occasion of the 2016 HLPF. The Secretary General presented the Report – which will be used as a benchmark for the implementation period of the 2030 Agenda – as "an accurate evaluation of where the world stands on the 17 Goals, using data currently available to highlight the most significant gaps and challenges".

SDG 5 is analysed in pages 9-10 of the Report, as follows:

39. Gender equality and women's empowerment have advanced in recent decades. Girls' access to education has improved the rate of child marriage declined and progress was made in the area of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, including fewer maternal deaths. Nevertheless, gender equality remains a persistent challenge for countries worldwide and the lack of such equality is a major obstacle to sustainable development.

40. Assuring women's rights through legal frameworks is a first step in addressing discrimination against them. As of 2014, 143 countries guaranteed equality between men and women in their constitutions; another 52 countries have yet to make this important commitment. In 132 countries, the statutory legal age of marriage is equal for women and men, while in another 63 countries, the legal age of marriage is lower for women than for men.

41. Violence against women and girls violates their human rights and hinders development. Most of such violence is perpetrated by intimate partners, with available data from surveys conducted between 2005 and 2015, in 52 countries, (including only one country from the developed regions) indicating that 21 per cent of girls and women aged between 15 and 49 experienced physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of an intimate partner in the previous 12 months. Estimates of the risks of violence experienced by women with disabilities, women from ethnic minorities and women above the age of 50 are not yet included, owing to data limitations. Additionally, human trafficking disproportionately affects women and girls, since 70 per cent of all victims detected worldwide are female.

42. Globally, the proportion of women aged between 20 and 24 who reported that they were married before their eighteenth birthday dropped from 32 per cent around 1990 to 26 per cent around 2015. Child marriage is most common in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, with 44 per cent of women married before their eighteenth birthday in Southern Asia and 37 per cent of women married before their eighteenth birthday in sub-Saharan Africa. The marriage of girls under the age 15 is also highest in those two regions, at 16 per cent and 11 per cent, respectively. Social norms can and do change, however, with the rate of marriage of girls under the age of 15 declining globally from 12 per cent around 1990 to 7 per cent around 2015, although disparities are found across regions and countries. The most rapid reduction in child marriage overall was recorded in Northern Africa, where the percentage of women married before the age of 18 dropped by more than half, from 29 per cent to 13 per cent, over the past 25 years.

43. The harmful practice of female genital mutilation/cutting is another human rights violation that affects girls and women worldwide. While the exact number of girls and women globally who have undergone the procedure is unknown, at least 200 million have been subjected to the procedure in 30 countries with representative prevalence data. Overall, rates of female genital mutilation/cutting have been declining over the past three decades. However, not all countries have made progress and the pace of decline has been uneven. Today, in the 30 countries, for which data were available, around 1 in 3 girls aged 15 to 19 have undergone the practice, versus 1 in 2 in the mid-1980s.

44. In every region, women and girls do the bulk of unpaid work, including caregiving and such household tasks as cooking and cleaning. On average, women report that they spend 19 per cent of their time each day in unpaid activities, versus 8 per cent for men. The responsibilities of unpaid care and domestic work, combined with paid work, means greater total work burdens for women and girls and less time for rest, self-care, learning and other activities.

45. Globally, women's participation in parliament rose to 23 per cent in 2016, representing an increase by 6 percentage points over a decade. Slow progress in this area is in contrast with more women in parliamentary leadership positions. In 2016, the number of women speakers of national parliaments jumped from 43 to 49 (out of the 273 posts globally); women accounted for 18 per cent of all speakers of parliament in January 2016.

Voluntary national reviews

The 2015 Declaration "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (adopting the 2030 Agenda) enshrined how the follow-up of the SDGs is to be undertaken through reporting and reviewing mechanisms at three levels: global, regional and national. The purpose of the national reviews presented during the 2016 HLPF was to track progress in national implementation, including on legal frameworks, new provisions, and taking into consideration the interrelated nature of the SDGs. The national reviews are made on a voluntary basis and they are carried out by different countries every year. At the 2016 HLPF, 22 States presented theirs.

The following national reviews were presented by Council of Europe member states. Among other issues, they also dealt with the implementation of SDG 5 and offered an overview of the national situation as regards gender equality.

- Estonia: sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/estonia
- Finland: sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/finland
- France: sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/france
- Georgia: sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/georgia
- Germany: sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/germany
- Montenegro: sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/montenegro
- Norway: sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/norway
- Switzerland: sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/switzerland
- Turkey: sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/turkey

Ministerial Declaration of the 2016 high-level political forum on sustainable development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, on the theme "Ensuring that no one is left behind"

(E/HLS/2016/1, 29 July 2016)

The Ministerial Declaration issued after the 2016 HLPF reaffirms member states' commitment to achieve the objectives encompassed by the 2030 Agenda. It tackles the importance of SDGs, including SDG 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment (pp. 2-4).

We, the Ministers and high representatives [...]

4. Have considered the theme of the 2016 high-level political forum, [...] and highlight in this regard that the dignity of the human person is fundamental and that we endeavour to reach the furthest behind and the most vulnerable first. To ensure that no one is left behind, we are working to eradicate poverty and hunger and achieve sustainable development in its three dimensions, inter alia, by promoting inclusive economic growth, protecting the environment and promoting social inclusion in an integrated manner. We will ensure gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment.

8. Emphasise that universal respect for human rights and human dignity, peace, justice, equality and non-discrimination is central to our commitment to leaving no one behind. [...] We envision a world in which every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality and all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment have been removed. We will strive for a world where young women and young men are key agents of change, supported by a culture of innovation, sustainability and inclusiveness, to enable a better future for themselves and their communities [...].

10. Stress that realising gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls will make a crucial contribution to progress across all the Goals and targets. Women and girls should enjoy equal access to quality education at all levels, health-care services, economic and natural resources and civil and political participation as well as equal opportunities with men and boys for employment, leadership and decision-making at all levels. We will work for a significant increase in investments to close the gender gap and strengthen support for institutions in relation to gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at the global, regional and national levels. We strive for a world where all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls will be eliminated, including through the engagement of men and boys. The systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is crucial.

Report of the High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council at its 2016 session

(E/HLPF/2016/8, 16 August 2016)

The ECOSOC Report describes and summarises all the events happened during the 2016 HLPF and all the issues tackled. It also contains a part on Goal 5 (pp. 10-11).

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41. […] The high-level political forum included a panel discussion on the theme "Creating peaceful and more inclusive societies and empowering women and girls", chaired by the Vice-President of the Council, Jürg Lauber (Switzerland).

42. The discussion was moderated by Irene Khan, Director-General of the International Development Law Organisation. Statements were also made by the following panellists: Lakshmi Puri, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women; Beatrice Ayuru, Founder of Lira Integrated School; and Robert J. Berg, Chair of the Alliance for Peacebuilding and Trustee at the World Academy of Arts and Science, and by the following lead discussants: Anca-Ruxandra Gliga, Advocate at the United Network of Young Peacebuilders and in the children and youth major group; and Gaia Gozzo, Head of Governance at CARE International.

43. An interactive dialogue ensued, during which the panellists responded to comments and questions by the representatives of China, Sweden, Benin, Denmark, Iraq and South Africa; and the representative of the League of Arab States; as well as the representative of the major group for women.

Summary of the 2016 HLPF by the then President of ECOSOC (Mr Oh Joon)

Mr Oh Joon came to the following conclusions at the end of 2016 HLPF. His summary also tackles gender equality and draws a path for the follow up and reviews of the implementation of SDGs by member states.

Creating peaceful and more inclusive societies and empowering women and girls

Women and girls constitute half of humanity, and we must tap into their potential by empowering them. The targets under SDG 5 should be implemented in conjunction with the other SDGs that have gender-sensitive targets, including SDG 16 [Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels]. It is important to build synergies between policies for gender equality and economic development. Implementing SDG 5 requires the systematic mainstreaming of gender perspectives in all aspects of the agenda including in data, statistics, means of implementation and follow-up and review, as well as increases in investment and support to gender equality institutions at all levels.

Inclusion of women requires active roles of all stakeholders, governments, parliaments, civil society, women's organisations, faith-based organisations, and the private sector. Building momentum is critical in order to transform social norms and is a fundamental building block of women leadership. Education systems should be enhanced to better support women and girls, including by promoting women entrepreneurship. Increased transformative investment towards gender equality will be needed, including in the context of ODA.

There is a need for a gender data revolution. Gender disaggregated data is critical for analysis, planning and management. In particular, the 15 indicators under SDG 5 should be taken forward and should form the basis for evidence-based implementation, monitoring and accountability building. Beyond official statistics, using more women-generated data can play a role in monitoring SDGs and in assessing whether policies have an impact.

[...] Conflict today is localised, pluralistic, involves religion, ethnic conflicts and calls for different strategies to augment state-to-state conflict resolution strategies. [...] Conflict resolution can benefit from collaboration between state and civic capacities. Involving women leaders and women groups in conflict resolution is often very efficient. Strengthening gender approaches is key to building peaceful and inclusive societies.

Follow-up and review

Monitoring and measuring progress is important and benefits all. A global effort to improve data quality and availability is needed to provide an accurate picture of progress and make informed decisions. Trust in the data produced is very important for citizen's engagement. Many countries have put monitoring processes in place. Civil society can act as collectors and producers of data.

Many countries reported that they have built or are building indicators based on national priorities, sometimes based on "nationalised" global indicators. National statistical offices have a central role in national follow-up and review processes, including for the development of national indicators. Data are currently lacking for monitoring many SDGs, including at the global level. In many countries, data are missing on basic indicators such as maternal health. Enhanced support from the international community to build capacity of national statistical offices is critical and urgent. Existing partnerships between countries and international agencies in terms of statistics were mentioned.

In order to review progress on the Agenda, enhancing efforts to collect disaggregated data will be critical. Available data should be made more accessible. Establishing platforms for sharing available data relevant to progress on the SDGs were mentioned as an example of low-hanging fruit. Further efforts will be needed to turn big data into useful data. Regulatory frameworks and ethical standards will need to be developed in order to appropriately manage the implications of big data.

The HLPF's role as the central platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs is extremely important. All countries must take advantage of the forum and find new ways to report on progress. The Forum's reviews must be robust, voluntary, effective, participatory, transparent, and integrated with other follow-up and review activities. Increasing the reporting burden of countries should be avoided, making full use of existing reporting mechanisms, including those under international conventions and treaties. Follow-up and review needs to be fed back to national implementation. Sustained political attention is critical, and in this regard the annual SDG progress report will make a welcome contribution.

European Commission Communication on the next steps for a sustainable European future - European action for sustainability

COM(2016) 739 final, 22 November 2016

On 22 November 2016, the European Commission released a Communication presented by Vice-president Timmermans with guidelines for a new EU strategy of sustainable development. The Commission aims to integrate the EU policy framework and Commission priorities with the UN Agenda 2030 and related SDGs, in order to assure their implementation at regional level. The Communication also deals with the follow-up and funding of SDGs implementation by the Commission.

The European Commission has also published a Factsheet on "Next steps for a sustainable European future - European action for sustainability: Questions & Answers", summarising the main points of the Communication. The following extracts are taken from the Fact Sheet and provide an overview of plans integrate the SDGs into the EU development strategy.

How will the Commission implement the SDGs?

[...] The EU's answer to the 2030 Agenda will include two work streams: the first is to mainstream the SDGs in the European policy framework and current Commission priorities; the second is to launch reflection on further developing our longer term vision and the focus of sectoral policies after 2020, preparing for the long term implementation of the SDGs. [...] The First Vice-President will play a coordinating role in taking forward the Commission's work in actively implementing the 2030 Agenda.

[...] The SDGs are a collaborative agenda between all levels of government and civil society, signed by all UN members. Implementation will be taken forward in partnership with all stakeholders. To that end the Commission will launch a new multi-stakeholder Platform.

How will the Commission measure implementation of the SDGs?

[...] The EU, in coordination with its Member States, is committed to playing an active role at each level, to maximise progress towards the SDGs, to ensure accountability to citizens, and to ensure that no one is left behind. [...] At national level, Member States are asked by the United Nations to put in place systems for measuring progress and reporting. The Commission will contribute by monitoring, reporting and reviewing progress towards the sustainable development goals in an EU context.

[...]. From 2017 onwards, the Commission will carry out more detailed regular monitoring of the sustainable development goals in an EU context, developing a reference indicator framework for this purpose and drawing on the wide range of ongoing monitoring and assessment across the Commission, Agencies, European External Action Service and Member States.

How will the Commission finance the implementation of the SDGs?

[...] The Commission has already largely incorporated economic, social and environmental dimensions, which are at the heart of the SDGs, into the EU budget and spending programmes. The performance framework of EU spending programmes for 2014-2020 already contains relevant elements to report on the three dimensions. [...] Looking ahead at the Multiannual Financial Framework beyond 2020, the Commission will explore how EU budgets and future financial programmes can best continue to adequately contribute to the delivery of the 2030 Agenda and support Member States in their efforts.

How will the EU promote the 2030 Agenda around the world?

[...] The Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy for the European Union sets out the strategic direction for the EU's external action and identifies clear links to the 2030 Agenda. [...] The SDGs will be a cross-cutting dimension of all the work to take forward the Global Strategy. The Global Strategy underlines that there is a direct link between our security and prosperity in our surrounding regions, including the EU Enlargement and neighbourhood countries. Echoing the SDGs, promoting resilience of states and societies at all levels is a way to promote stability and sustainable development globally, while reinforcing Europe's own security and prosperity.

The new European Consensus on Development [...] will be an important element of the EU's global response to the challenge of the 2030 Agenda [...]. It places particular emphasis on cross-cutting drivers of development, such as gender equality, youth, sustainable energy and climate action, investment, migration and mobility, and seeks to mobilise all means of implementation: aid, investments and domestic resources, supported by sound policies.

What is next?

The Commission will mainstream the sustainable development goals into EU policies and initiatives [...].The Commission will provide as of 2017 regular reporting of the EU's progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and will launch reflection work on developing further a longer term vision in a post 2020 perspective.

The Commission will also launch a multi-stakeholder Platform with a role in the follow-up and exchange of best practices on SDG implementation across sectors, at Member States and EU level.

Another document accompanying the Communication on the next steps for a sustainable European future is a Staff Working Document with an overview of how European policies are already contributing to the implementation of SDGs. The following summarised actions undertaken by the EU concern SDG 5 on gender equality.

Examples of key existing EU actions in this field	
External actions	Domestic/EU oriented actions
- Gender equality is at the core of European values and enshrined in the EU political and legal framework. The EU strategy and action plan to promote gender equality and women's empowerment 2016-2020 aims at transforming the lives of girls and women through EU external relations by focusing on ensuring girls and women's physical integrity, promoting their economic and social rights and their empowerment and strengthening their voice and participation. - The EU pursues a twin-track approach to gender equality in its development cooperation policy: gender mainstreaming and gender specific actions in a number of areas. Activities range from capacity-building, support to women's empowerment, disseminating information on gender equality through guidelines to best practices and awareness raising. - The EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy is emphasising the importance of mainstreaming human rights and gender issues across policy sectors and institutions. Gender Equality is thus to be included in the political and policy dialogue with partner countries. For example there are EU guidelines on violence against women and girls. Gender equality is also integrated in the EU crisis management missions and operations. - The European Neighbourhood Policy applies a gender mainstreaming policy in its relations with third countries. In the EU enlargement process, gender equality is included as one of the requirements in the action plans that the European Commission is following up in the context of accession negotiations.	- The EU has made significant progress over the last decades with regard to gender equality. This is mainly thanks to equal treatment legislation, gender mainstreaming (integration of the gender perspective into all other policies), and specific policy and funding measures for the advancement of gender equality. - The strategic engagement for gender equality (2016-2019) sets the framework for the EU's future work towards gender equality, and is accompanied by proposed concrete actions. It sets out the Commission's work plans towards improving gender equality, in increasing female labour market participation, reducing the gender pay, earnings and pension gaps and thus fighting poverty among women, promoting equality between women and men in decision-making, and combating gender-based violence and protecting and supporting victims. - As part of the European Semester, the EU's yearly cycle of economic and budgetary coordination, several Member States have been receiving Country-Specific Recommendations in the area of gender equality, including the availability of quality affordable (full-time) childcare, reducing financial disincentives to work or work more for second earners, the gender pay gap and the harmonisation of retirement age for men and women. - The Commission is moreover working towards a concrete European pillar of social rights, which will identify a number of essential principles which will serve as a compass for upwards convergence as regards social and labour market

- To ensure the highest quality of EU humanitarian aid policy, gender issues are always considered in EU humanitarian operations, for example through the EU humanitarian Gender-Age Marker and through support to programmes and projects linked to reproductive health in emergencies, including sexual and gender-based violence. The EU Action Plan for Resilience includes a gender perspective by underlining the role of women in building resilience in households and communities affected by crisis.	performances, focusing on the needs and challenges in the field of employment and social policies. Some of the main areas covered include equal opportunities, gender equality and work-life balance.
- EU Trade policy supports the external projection of the EU's work on Corporate Social Responsibility including through supportive provisions in its trade agreements.	- The EU prepares an Annual Report on equality between women and men in order to monitor progress made in the area of gender equality at EU level.
- EU funding instruments such as the European Neighbourhood instrument, the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance, the European Development Fund, the European Instrument for Democracy & Human Rights, the Partnership Instrument and the Humanitarian Aid funding instrument.	- The Commission believes that Corporate Social Responsibility is important for the sustainability, competitiveness, and innovation of EU enterprises and the EU economy and as such supports businesses to be and to become socially responsible, inter alia through the respect of gender equality in businesses.
	- In the context of EU Cohesion Policy's efforts to achieve economic, territorial and social cohesion, a range of cross-cutting principles are mainstreamed: there are legally binding ex-ante conditionalities - including a horizontal one on the promotion of equality between men and women, the integration of a gender perspective and non-discrimination based on sex - which are determining the access to dedicated funding from the European Structural and Investment Funds. In addition, cohesion policy has a thematic objective dedicated to social inclusion, poverty and discrimination. Supporting women in work is another priority.
	- EU funding instruments such as the Justice Programme, the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme, Horizon 2020, the European Structural and Investment Funds and the Emergency Support Instrument.

Simultaneously to the release of the Communication, Eurostat published a complementary study entitled "Sustainable development in the European Union - A statistical glance from the viewpoint of the un sustainable development goals", with the current situation concerning SDGs implementation in the EU and in Member States. The following extracts show the current EU situation concerning some of SDG 5 indicators.

Gender pay gap

[...] A significant part of the gender pay gap is due to the fact that women are over-represented in lower paid industries. However, other factors also play a role. These include vertical segregation in the labour market, traditions, stereotypes and unequally distributed care responsibilities. The result of the gender pay gap is that women tend to earn less over their lifetime. This can affect future pension rights and may result in women being more prone to experiencing poverty in old age.

The gender pay gap in the EU is 16.1 %. This is 1.6 percentage points lower than in 2006 in the EU-27. [...] The gender pay gap varies by 25 percentage points across Member States. Estonia has by far the largest gender pay gap in the EU at 28.3 %. [...] The central and eastern European countries report gaps of 15 % or lower, with Estonia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia the exceptions. The smallest gaps can be seen in some southern European countries, in particular Italy (6.5 %), Malta (4.5 %) and Slovenia (2.9 %). The EFTA countries have relatively high gender pay gaps of 15 % or more.

Women's representation in national parliaments

SDG 5 also calls for women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all decision-making levels in political, economic and public life. [...] Women make up more than half of the EU population and electorate, yet they continue to be under-represented in decision-making positions at all levels. [...]

Women hold 29 % of seats in national parliaments in the EU. This reflects positive but slow progress compared with 2003 when women occupied only 20 % of seats. The overall EU figure conceals very large variations in the share of women in national parliaments across Member States, from nearly half in Sweden to only 10 % in Hungary. In 12 Member States the female representation in national parliaments is 30 % or more. Two of these have already achieved balanced participation, with more than 40 % of seats in national parliaments held by women in Sweden and Finland. In contrast, the lowest proportion of female representatives can be seen in some eastern and southern European countries. Particularly in Hungary, Malta and Romania less than 15 % of parliamentary seats are held by women. The EFTA countries Iceland and Norway have shares of female parliamentarians comparable to the best performing EU Member States. Also the EU candidate countries Serbia and FYR Macedonia have higher shares than the majority of EU Member States.

Current issues on SDG5

UN Women programme "Making Every Woman and Girl Count"

A public-private programme named "Making Every Woman and Girl Count" was launched on 21 September 2016 during an event organised by UN Women, the Government of Australia, the Gates Foundation and Data2X (UN Foundation). The launch event was attended by Heads of State and Governments, by Ministers and other high-level officials. The programme follows up on the Joint Announcement on Implementation of Agenda 2030: Accelerating Progress Towards Gender Equality made on the occasion of the Women Deliver Conference (May 2016).

The aim is to emphasise the need of accurate and disaggregated data by sex in order to address policy and decision making in a more effective way. Moreover, the project seeks to facilitate a coordinated action at national, regional and global level, as well as to ensure that such data can be available to citizens. According to UN Women, the collection of detailed data is a fundamental tool to meet the ambitions and measure the progress of all SDGs, and especially SDG 5 on gender equality. This is how UN Women itself described the reasons for setting "Making Every Woman and Girl Count" in motion:

Gender statistics are rarely prioritised in data collection and the resources devoted to them, both at the national and international level, remain grossly insufficient. Investing in gender statistics will enable the creation of evidence that is essential to inform more effective and targeted decision-making to reach those furthest behind first, and make meaningful and lasting changes in the lives of women and girls everywhere. [...] Currently, over 80 per cent of the indicators in SDG 5, the goal referring to women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership, cannot be measured. [The programme] will support countries to improve the production, accessibility and use of gender statistics over the next five years, including efforts to enhance the capacities of national statistics institutions.

And this is how UN Women describes the initial steps to take:

1) partnership at the country level: [...] between 2016 and 2020, the project will be implemented in 12 pathfinder countries through partnerships with national statistical offices and in coordination with other actors;
2) regional technical support projects: projects will provide policy and programmatic support to countries [...] to advocate for and dismantle barriers to the regular production of gender statistics; to support the implementation of national plans to monitor the SDGs; and to promote South-South cooperation and sharing of best practices.
3) global policy support: [...] the project will coordinate all activities [...] and will link normative and technical work at the global level to the regional and national levels. Activities include: monitoring the SDGs through methodological work, data compilation and dissemination; and programmatic work to improve data on violence against women and unpaid care and domestic work.

Wonder Woman (appointed and later dropped) as SDG 5 Ambassador

On 21 October 2016, the comic-book character Wonder Woman was officially chosen by the UN to lead the campaign "Stand Up for the Empowerment of Women and Girls Everywhere" as SDG 5 Ambassador. "While we have achieved progress towards gender equality in many parts of the world, women and girls continue to suffer discrimination and violence. Gender equality is a fundamental human right and a foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world", said Cristina Gallach – UN Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information – at the ceremony that took place in New York. She also highlighted that such a choice was made since Wonder Woman is well known for her struggle in favour of justice, peace and equality so her character could help Goal 5 to reach more attention and a larger audience. Diane Nelson, President of DC Entertainment and of Warner Bros. Consumer Products, added that apart from "the exemplary work that amazing real women are doing in the fight for gender equality, it is to be commended that the UN understands that stories – even comic book stories and their characters – can inspire, teach and reveal injustices".

Since the very beginning, several critics were raised against this controversial decision, above all by UN workers themselves, who also launched a petition to the Secretary General in order to reconsider the nomination. Such petition emphasised that "the United Nations was unable to find a real-life woman that would be able to champion the rights of all women on the issue of gender equality and the fight for their empowerment. The United Nations has decided that Wonder Woman is the role model that women and girls all around the world should look up to". Protesters mainly argued that for such an important role as Goal 5 Ambassador, the UN should have chosen a woman/man able to advocate for gender equality, been interviewed and have opinions, not just a sort of "mascot". The choice of Wonder Woman was also criticised for being an extremely negative representation of body image, both due to her sexualised character and to her American Flag costume promoting a message of pop culture imperialism.

During the two months following the nomination, the petition collected more than 44,000 signatures. Wonder Woman's campaign officially came to an end on 16 December 2016: "From the UN's side, there was no plan for it to be much longer than this," initially announced the UN's chief of NGO relations and advocacy Jeffrey Brez. Nevertheless, Mr Brez then admitted to the CNN that the decision to end the character's role was taken soon after the nomination due to the wave of critics raised; in any case, "the objective was to reach out to Wonder Woman fans to raise awareness of UN Sustainable Development Goal No. 5. We did that. We are very happy," he added.

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