

Political commitment at the highest level and a whole-of-government strategic framework provide a central stage for policy coherence. The national 2030 Agenda implementation process is led by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). The country's vision *The Finland we want by 2050*, adopted in 2014 and updated in 2016 aims at reconciling economic, social and environment imperatives. (National Commission on Sustainable Development, 2016^[1]). It provides a long-term strategic framework for a whole-of-society commitment to sustainable development. The government's plan for the 2030 Agenda, submitted to the Parliament in 2017, is the framework for implementation, national follow-up and review up until 2030. The Plan focuses on two key areas: (i) a carbon-neutral and resource-wise Finland; and (ii) a non-discriminatory, equal and competent Finland. It also outlines both domestic and international commitments, and makes an explicit commitment to policy coherence to support sustainable development (PMO Finland, 2017^[2]). The development policy, which is an integral part of Finland's foreign and security policy, contains four priority areas based on the 2030 Agenda and SDGs: gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women; supporting economies in developing countries in creating jobs, sources of livelihood and wellbeing; democratic and functioning societies; better food security and access to water and energy; and the sustainability of natural resources (PMO Finland, 2016^[3]).

Enhanced coordination across and within government underpin policy coherence and foster policy integration. The Prime Minister's Office coordinates national implementation. An inter-ministerial Coordination Network, consisting of sustainable development focal points from each line Ministry, supports the coordination function of the Prime Minister's Office. The National Commission on Sustainable Development (NCSD), a Prime Minister-led multi-stakeholder forum, brings together public and private sector, CSOs and Academia, and municipalities and regions with the task of integrating sustainable development into Finnish policies, measures and everyday practices at different levels. The Development Policy Committee (DPC), a parliamentary body, is tasked to follow up on SDG implementation from the development policy perspective, and monitor the implementation of the Government Programme in compliance with development policy guidelines (PMO Finland, 2016^[3]). Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the collaboration between these two committees is being intensified. Traditionally, policy coherence for development has been operated under the responsibility of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs with a thematic focus on issues such as food security, aid for trade, migration, tax and development, and peace and development (OECD, 2017^[4]). With the 2030 Agenda, PCSD is becoming a shared responsibility for all governmental bodies.

Systematic and participatory follow up and review enhance stakeholder engagement and policy coherence at all levels. Finland relies on a wide range of sources to build its evidence base and inform policy. These include scientific panels, think-tanks, research institutions, citizen engagement and an active civil society. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda will be reported annually to the Parliament, as part of the Government's annual report. From 2017 onwards, each branch of government provides information for the Government's annual report on the steps taken to advance the 2030 Agenda. The DPC, which monitors and assesses the implementation of Finland's international development commitments, will play a key role in the follow-up and review of the global dimension of the national implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Finland has also been developing a new national follow-up system that enables stakeholder participation (Box 1). Finland has in place the key building blocks for ensuring a coherent implementation of the SDGs going forward.

Table 1. Institutional Mechanisms for PCSD in Finland

PCSD Building Blocks	
Political commitment	The Government's implementation plan for the 2030 Agenda submitted to Parliament in February 2017 makes an explicit commitment to PCSD and includes concrete measures as well as domestic and global commitments.
Policy integration	All line ministries are required to compile on a yearly basis their policies and measures for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as part of the Government's annual report. They are also requested to include information essential to the promotion and monitoring of sustainable development in the yearly budget planning, as well as in their follow-up indicators. Several procedures, which vary from one ministry to another, are in place for identifying trade-offs and synergies. However, it is recognised that trade-offs are often very difficult to reconcile even when identified, since they entail politically sensitive issues and deep-rooted ideological differences. Many of the conflicts are therefore addressed and eventually solved at the political (ministerial) level.
Intergenerational timeframe	The government's implementation plan is based on the long-term vision, principles and goals set forth in the Society's Commitment, which extends until 2050. It intentionally has a long-term perspective to urge intergenerational debates and considerations. In 2017, the Government established an Agenda2030 Youth Group to engage young people more in political planning and help ensure a long-term perspective in decision-making.
Policy effects	In its 2030 Agenda implementation plan, the government commits to explore the use of a sustainable development impact assessment tool to identify systematically the unintended effects of policies. The existing impact assessment process for bill drafting will be improved to ensure better alignment with the SDGs and to enhance coherence between actions undertaken at national and global levels. Steps will also be taken by the Prime Minister's Office in 2018-2019 to include sustainable development impact assessment in key policy and legislative motions. The National follow-up system includes indicators on transboundary and intergenerational issues which can be used to inform decision-making.
Coordination	Led by the Prime Minister's Office, an inter-ministerial network supports horizontal coordination between line ministries. The NCSO, chaired by the Prime Minister, strives to integrate the strategic objectives of sustainable development into all sector policies and measures, and supports decision-making for sustainable development nationally and in international cooperation. The mandate for these mechanisms extends to information sharing, capacity-building and coordination rather than arbitration. Nevertheless it has been successful in building common understanding and consensus, thus preventing deadlock situations in the administration and in broader society.
Local involvement	The Prime Minister's Office has conducted roadshows at sub-national level to increase awareness and commitment of cities and regions in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Cities and towns are represented in the NCSO and have been engaging actively in the operational commitments for sustainable development under the Society's Commitment framework.
Stakeholder participation	Among the main tools to foster participation are the operational commitments which provides organisations and active citizens with the opportunity to pursue sustainable development goals on their own. This tool has provided various actors with an effective and sensible way of participating in the implementation. More than 750 commitments to action promoting sustainable development have been made encompassing all sectors of society: companies, schools, non-governmental organisations, administration, trade unions, political parties, cities, and even private individuals. Finland has been developing a new national follow-up system that enables stakeholder participation. The NCSO includes 16 representatives from the business and industry (including agriculture), 3 largest labour unions and their youth sections, 28 non-governmental organisations (including environment, women, children, indigenous peoples Saami, Somali immigrants, sports, education, consumer, disabled peoples association and many others) as well as representatives from municipalities, regions, church and research and development. A sustainable development expert panel established in 2014 supports and challenges the work of the government and NCSO. The Panel is composed of 8 eminent professors from different disciplines. Since spring 2017, the government partners with 20 young people from different backgrounds and regions via the Agenda2030 Youth Group.
Monitoring and reporting	Each policy branch contributes to the annual 2030 Agenda implementation report, which is part of the government's annual report to the parliament. In addition, the state's budget contains ministries' reports on how the 2030 Agenda is integrated in their budget, planning and implementation. An independent assessment of Finland's sustainable development policy will be conducted every four years, in parliamentary election years, starting 2019. The PMO, the NCSO and the Development Policy Committee co-host an annual event to discuss current status and trends, based on sustainable development indicators, data assessment and contributions by experts and civil society. An ongoing annual cycle review enables a participatory review process (Box 1).

Source: OECD (2017^[51]) and PMO Finland (2016^[53]) and (PMO Finland, 2017^[61])

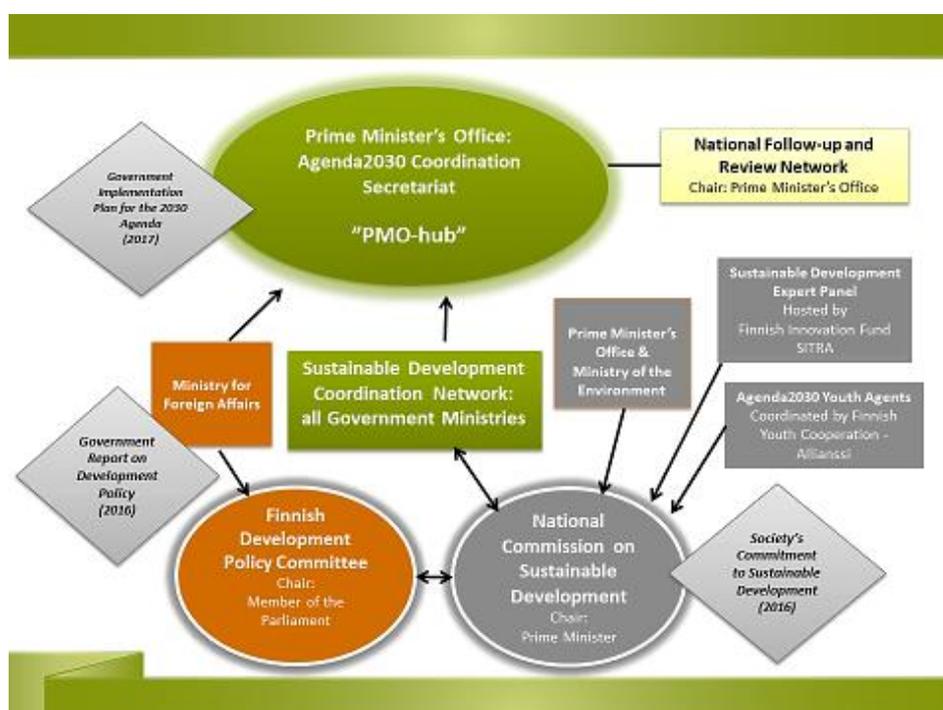
Box 1. A participatory follow up and review system for sustainable development

Finland's national follow-up and review system is anchored in the eight objectives of the long-term strategic framework. Policy-making is linked to the eight objectives via ten indicator baskets, which in turn consist of 4 – 5 indicators, and are connected to more than one objective. The baskets serve as the framework for discussions on interpretations and put a lens on entities that are relevant in terms of political decision-making. The indicators in each basket will be reviewed, interpreted and updated once a year, by relevant authorities. The purpose is to assess the significance of the change in the indicator value from the perspective of sustainable development. This is followed by a public, multi-stakeholder dialogue where anyone can present different interpretations and introduce new information. This process helps to inform political decision-making.

The open discussion takes place on the Prime Minister's Office (kestavakehitys.fi/seuranta) sustainable development website on a rolling basis to discuss a different basket each month. After the update of all baskets, the NCS and the PMO organise an annual event on the state and future of sustainable development. The event coincides with the Parliament discussion on the Government's Annual Report to the Parliament.

Source: PMO Finland (2017^[6]).

Figure 1. Main institutional mechanisms, policy documents and key actors for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Finland



Source: OECD (2017^[5]).

References

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