# Exposing EU policy gaps to address the Sustainable Development Goals

## STUDY

**European Economic and Social Committee**

# Study on exposing EU policy gaps to address the Sustainable Development Goals

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## General information

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| AUTHORS | *Guillaume Lafortune* <br> *Guido Schmidt-Traub* |
| CONTACTS | *guillaume.lafortune@unsdsn.org* |

## Acknowledgements

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## Acronyms and abbreviations

CAT – Climate Action Tracker
COR - European Committee of the Regions
CSO – Civil Society Organisation
DG – Directorate-General
EEA - European Environment Agency
EFTA - European Free Trade Association
ESS – European Statistical System
EU – European Union
EESC – European Economic and Social Committee
EFTA - European Free Trade Association
ESAC - European Statistical Advisory Committee
IEEP – Institute for European Environmental Policy
IPCC – Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
JRC – Joint Research Centre
MFF - Multiannual Financial Framework
MSP – Multi Stakeholder Platform
ODA – Official Development Assistance
OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDG – Sustainable Development Goals
SDO – Sustainable Development Observatory
SDSN – Sustainable Development Solutions Network
SIDS - Small Island Developing States
SILC – Survey of Income and Living Conditions
TFEU - Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
UN – United-Nations
UNECE - United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNFCCC - United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
VNR - Voluntary National Review

**Executive summary**

The European Union (EU), its institutions and member states have played a key role in the design and adoption of Agenda 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Paris Climate Agreement. Yet, the absence of an overarching EU 2030 Strategy for sustainable development is an important impediment for greater integration of the SDGs into EU governance, budgeting and monitoring instruments and mechanisms. As a result, the EU and the European Commission in particular are not seen by many observers as leaders in promoting and implementing Agenda 2030 (Kloke-Lesch, 2018; Nicholson, 2018; Demailly and Hege, 2018; Baldock and Charveriat, 2018).

The lead EU monitoring report on the SDGs "Sustainable Development in the European Union" produced annually by Eurostat tracks performance against a well-designed indicator framework drawing primarily on official Eurostat statistics, as well as statistics from other official and non-official sources. Yet, the report does not allow for the review of the performance of the EU as a whole against time-bound targets, and it does not estimate the "distance to targets" that individual EU member states have to travel to achieve the SDGs. Owing to its overwhelming reliance on official statistics, the report omits important dimensions of the SDGs, including international spillover effects or aspects of the "Leave-No-One-Behind" commitment. Eurostat's mandate limits the organisation's ability to address the shortcomings of an otherwise strong report. In particular, the organization likely cannot assess "distance to target" at EU or member state levels except in the few cases where corresponding targets have been formally adopted by the European Council. Similarly, it cannot co-design SDG monitoring with civil society and other stakeholders.

To fill these gaps left by the official SDG monitoring process, the EESC may, in close collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders – including the EU Multi Stakeholder Platform for the SDGs, coordinate the production of a "shadow report"[1] that would complement the official Eurostat report on the SDGs. For each indicator, this complementary report would propose quantitative thresholds that denote the achievement of SDG targets by 2030. Such thresholds need to be developed using a transparent decision tree and expert consultations. Wide consultations would need to be conducted to select the best suited indicators in official and non-official statistics leveraging the wealth of data and research produced in universities, think tanks, NGOs and other institutions. Such a shadow SDG monitoring report would also comprise qualitative assessments of countries' strategies for implementing the SDGs.

The analysis underpinning a shadow report process would be guided by three core principles: 1) Sound methodology; 2) Participative process and 3) Connection with the policymaking processes. The methodology for the quantitative analysis may be derived from the methodology developed for the SDSN/Bertelsmann SDG Index and Dashboards reports since 2016. The EESC secretariat and members, via its Sustainable Development Observatory (SDO), are well placed to mobilize organisations with diverse interests and from different sectors. The processes of preparing and discussing the shadow report may also facilitate policy dialogue and partnerships between civil society and EU institutions. It will provide additional data and insights that can help strengthen the connection

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[1] Shadow reports are a method for non-government organisations (NGOs) to supplement and / or present alternative information to inform decision-making on specific issues. (adapted from The Advocates of Human Rights, web page)

between the SDGs and EU governance mechanisms (e.g. within the European Semester) or monitoring mechanisms (e.g. within the Better Regulation agenda).

## Introduction

Agenda 2030 and the related 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by all member states of the United Nations (UN) in 2015, describe a universal agenda that applies to and must be implemented by all countries. In contrast to their predecessors – the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – the SDGs apply to all 193 UN member states, developed and developing countries alike. The goals aim to end extreme poverty in all its forms, tackle inequalities, protect the planet, promote peace, and ensure prosperity for all. Each goal has specific targets to be achieved by 2030.

**Figure 1: The Sustainable Development Goals**



The European Union (EU), its institutions and member states have played a key role in the adoption of the Agenda 2030, the SDGs and Paris Climate Agreement. In particular, the EU and its member states were critical in the push for an integrated, universal agenda that continues the MDGs' focus on extreme poverty in all its forms and adds critical issues of environmental sustainability, social inclusion, economic development, and governance challenges (European Commission, 2015).

The Agenda 2030 combines the principles of a social market economy with environmental sustainability. These principles underpin the work of the European Union but are less frequently evoked in the other regions. Article 11 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) stipulates that "Environmental protection requirements must be integrated into the definition and implementation of the Union's policies and activities, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development" (European Union, 2007). One might therefore consider the SDGs as a "European Agenda" that the whole world has signed up to.

The European Commission and the Council[2] have stated publicly on several occasions the commitment of the EU to monitor closely the implementation of Agenda 2030 and the related SDGs. A summary of the main actions taken by the European Commission, the Council and EU Parliament is provided in

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[2] "The Council" refers to the Council of the European Union representing member states' governments (usually Ministers). It is different from the "European Council" which is the institution of the EU that comprises the heads of state or government of the member states, along with the President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission.

Box 1. Following the European Commission's "Communication on the next steps for a sustainable European future" presented by First Vice-President Timmermans in November 2016, a Multi-Stakeholder Platform on the SDGs was launched in 2017 to mobilise knowledge from various stakeholders and inform policymaking in the EU (European Commission, 2016a). The launch of this Platform was followed a few months later by the publication of the first indicator list and overarching report produced by Eurostat – the statistical agency of the EU – to monitor the implementation of the SDGs in the EU (Eurostat, 2017).

Yet, the absence of an overarching EU 2030 sustainable development strategy with clearly-defined targets in all areas, leads to important flaws in how the European Commission via Eurostat monitors the SDGs. The summary and conclusions from the public debate organised by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in November 2017 (EESC, NAT/737), right after the first Eurostat Report was launched, revealed the main concerns of the civil society. Participants welcomed Eurostat's report and noted that rigorous criteria for indicator selection were used but perceived the conclusions of the Eurostat report as too optimistic with regards to the challenges faced by the EU member states on sustainable development[3]. The absence of pre-identified targets for most SDG indicators in the report makes it impossible to track "distance to target" and to assess whether countries are on track to achieve the goals.

With regards to the preparatory process, participants raised concerns about the limited involvement of civil society organisations in the preparation of the report. They also noted the need to consider a broader range of data, including non-official data sources, to arrive at a more comprehensive appreciation of implementation challenges of the SDGs not only at the EU level but also in member states. At the same time, participants noted that some of these issues (notably the consideration of non-official data, assessments of distance to targets, and co-design with civil society) were outside the mandate of Eurostat.

In response to this public debate and in recognition of the need to consider options for deepening SDG monitoring inside the EU, the EESC has commissioned the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) – a global knowledge network to support the implementation of the SDGs – to prepare this report. The study aims to identify the strengths and limitations in the monitoring of the SDGs in the EU and to make recommendations for how to address them and move forward. To this end SDSN has consulted widely among key stakeholders involved in the implementation of Agenda 2030 in the EU. The conclusions and recommendations are also informed by SDSN's long-standing experience in supporting the monitoring and the implementation of the SDGs around the world.

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[3] A summary of the Eurostat's 2018 "Sustainable Development in the European Union" results is accessible in Annex 1.

**Box 1: EU institutions and the SDGs**

In November 2016, the European Commission released its first "Communication on the next steps for a sustainable European future" presented by First Vice-President Timmermans. The report outlines the EU approach to implementing the SDGs and identifies two work streams: 1) Mainstream the SDGs in the European policy framework and current European Commission's priorities; and 2) Launch a reflection paper to further develop a longer-term vision and the focus of sectoral policies after 2020, preparing for the long-term implementation of the SDGs.

In this Communication, the European Commission announced the creation of a Multi-Stakeholder Platform (MSP) bringing together the different stakeholders of the public and the private spheres to support the implementation of the SDGs in the EU. The European Commission also committed to providing regular reporting on the EU's progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Finally, it resolved to launch a reflection work to develop further a longer-term vision with a post-2020 perspective. The Communication was accompanied by a staff working document providing an overview of the main European actions and policies related to the SDGs.
Further, the Communication on "Proposal for a new European Consensus on Development: Our World, our Dignity, our Future" and the Joint Communication from the European Commission and the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy "A renewed partnership with the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP)", both adopted in November 2016, lay out the foundations for renewed Partnerships between the EU and developing countries largely based on Agenda 2030. A joint declaration by the EU Parliament, the Council, and the European Commission was adopted in June 2017.

In June 2017, the Council reiterated the strong commitment of the EU and its member states to implement in full the 2030 Agenda and to achieve the 17 SDGs. It underlined in its conclusions that further efforts were needed to strengthen the monitoring and community engagement around the SDGs. The Council called on the European Commission to set out by mid-2018 an implementation strategy with timelines, objectives and concrete measures to implement the 2030 Agenda in all EU policies. Further, it called on the European Commission to identify by mid-2018 gaps where the EU needs to do more by 2030 in the areas of policy, legislation, governance structures for horizontal coherence and implementation. Finally, the Council called on other UN member states and all stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

In October 2018, the conclusions from the European Council meeting mention explicitly the strong commitment of the EU and its Member States to the implementation of the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs.

**Main actions by and statements from the European Council, the European Commission, the Council and the EU Parliament in support of sustainable development in the European Union**

| 2010 | |
|---|---|
| June, 10th | Adoption by the European Council of the Europe 2020 strategy — the EU's agenda for growth and jobs for the next decade. |
| **2015** | |
| February, 5th | The European Commission releases its Communication which sets out its views on the new global partnership needed to deliver the SDGs. |
| September, 25th | The 193 UN Members unanimously adopt the new Sustainable Development Agenda (Agenda 2030) |
| **2016** | |
| January, 1st | The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda officially come into force |
| November, 22nd | -- The European Commission releases its first Communication on the next steps for a sustainable European future<br>-- European Commission Communication "Proposal for a new European Consensus on Development: Our World, our Dignity, our Future"<br>-- Joint Communication from the Commission and the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy "A renewed partnership with the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP)" |
| **2017** | |
| May, 22nd | Launch of the Multi-Stakeholder Platform to support and advise the European Commission and all stakeholders involved on the implementation of the SDGs at EU level |
| June, 20th | Conclusions adopted by the Council reiterate strong commitment of the EU and its member states to implement in full the 2030 Agenda and achieve the 17 SDGs. |
| June, 27th | Joint Declarations (European Parliament, Council and Commission) – "The new European consensus on development 'our world, our dignity, our future'" |
| November, 20th | Launch of the Eurostat's Report on "Sustainable Development in the European Union — Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context" |
| **2018** | |
| September, 18th | Launch of the 2nd Eurostat Monitoring Report for the SDGs |
| October, 11th | Contribution of the SDG Multi-Stakeholder Platform to the Reflection Paper "Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030" |
| October, 18th | Conclusions from the European Council meeting reiterate the strong commitment of the EU and its Member States to the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. |

Source: Authors

## 1.     Objectives of the study

The SDGs are a powerful tool that can help frame a long-term economic, social and environmental vision for the EU. This is particularly important in the current political context, when a lack of social inclusion is helping drive protest votes across the EU. Most EU member states are struggling to implement the deep transformations needed to address the challenges of climate change and transition to circular economies[4]. The recent contribution of the SDG Multi-Stakeholder Platform to the Reflection Paper "Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030" (October 2018) identifies 15 major challenges in the EU in terms of income and other forms of inequalities, access to services for various population groups and environmental outcomes and circular economy (SDG Multi-Stakeholder Platform, 2018a). The recent Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change Special Report on 1.5 Degrees confirmed that the EU is not on track to meet Paris goals (IPCC, 2018). The SDGs provide a useful and timely framework for organisation and mobilisation.

Meeting the SDGs requires effective monitoring mechanisms and stakeholder engagement to make governments accountable and stimulate actions. Sound metrics and data are critical for turning the SDGs into practical tools for problem solving by (i) mobilizing governments, academia, civil society and business; (ii) providing a report card to track progress and ensure accountability; and (iii) serving as a management tool for the transformations needed to achieve the SDGs by 2030 (SDSN, 2015a). As such, SDG17 (Partnerships for the goals) encourages all UN member states to develop their own indicator set to monitor the implementation of the SDGs: "17.19 By 2030, build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product […]".

Yet, as highlighted in SDSN (2015a) (Sachs et al., 2017), effective monitoring of the SDGs requires the identification of long-term targets for sustainable development to be achieved by 2030. Otherwise, countries may end up adjusting "targets" along the way to reflect the achievement of less ambitious goals (what some observers call "moving the target to hit the bullet"[5]). Also, several SDGs require data and metrics that tend not be collected by official statistical systems in developed countries. For example, international spillover effects embodied into trade are currently not officially reported by countries (Sachs et al., 2017). Similarly, there are comparability issues and missing official data on topics such as the protection of oceans and fisheries, justice and strong institutions and sustainable production and consumption, which require to go beyond official statistics and leverage non-official data produced by the civil society. The "Leave-No-One-Behind" principle of the SDGs requires a deeper look at inequalities across the European Union.

The objective of this study is to make proposals for how to strengthen the monitoring of the SDGs in the EU in the post 2020 perspective. More specifically, this study aims to:

1) Identify current limitations in official monitoring of the SDGs in the EU

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[4] An economic model based on sharing, leasing, reuse, repair, refurbishment and recycling, in an (almost) closed loop, which aims to retain the highest utility and value of products, components and materials at all times (European Parliamentary Research Service, January 2016)

[5] See for instance "Moving the target to hit the bullet: Generation of utilization of physicians in Canada" (Evans and Wolfsen, 1978)

2) Suggest practical steps to develop a "shadow report" for monitoring the SDGs in the EU, which will include a complementary qualitative and contextual information to support the implementation of the goals in the EU as a whole and in each individual EU member state

3) Articulate the role that the EESC and its Sustainable Development Observatory (SDO) could play in the context of the post 2020 Agenda to strengthen civil society involvement in the monitoring of the SDGs in the EU and strengthening evidence-based policymaking.

## 2.    Methodology

## 2.1    Overall approach

This study builds primarily on SDSN's experience in producing indices to monitor the SDGs in close collaboration with a large network of experts from the civil society. SDSN regularly publishes and contributes to studies, reports and working papers related to the Agenda 2030, SDGs and Paris Climate Agreement[6].

The study compares the methodology and findings of the EU monitoring report on the SDGs to other reputable sources. Since 2015, various organisations have developed indicator lists and online tools to track countries' performance on the SDGs[7]. Yet most of them provide a range of indicators available but do not include a methodology for assessing distance to targets and/or summarizing and aggregating results at goal level. For the purpose of this study, the Eurostat report and findings are compared to the two other reports that have developed a methodology for calculating aggregated country scores for each goal.  This includes the OECD "Distance to target" Report (OECD, 2017) published in June 2017 which provides an assessment of where OECD countries stand on each SDG. The "Distance to target" Report includes 13 more detailed country profiles – with 12 of them applying to EU or EFTA countries[8]. The other report is the SDSN/Bertelsmann "SDG Index and Dashboards Report" published annually since 2016 that provides an assessment of the 193 UN member states on the SDGs using a mix of official and non-official data (Sachs et al., 2018).

A short online survey was conducted with civil societies involved in the EU sustainable development agenda. This survey, designed specifically for this study, aimed to understand stakeholders' opinion on the results, limitations and production process of the Eurostat monitoring report on the SDGs in the EU. The survey comprised 11 questions, including a mix of open and closed questions. Each response to closed questions were complemented with more detailed explanations. Feedback was collected from 13

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[6] The SDSN has been a leading contributor to SDG indicators and monitoring since its 2014 report "Assessing Gaps in Indicator Availability and Coverage" (Cassidy, 2014), the 2015 report "Indicators and a Monitoring Framework for Sustainable Development Goals: Launching a data revolution for the SDGs" (SDSN, 2015a) and the "Global SDG Index and Dashboards" (Sachs et al., 2016, 2017), which has also been published in the top-rated scientific journal Nature Geoscience: "National baselines for the Sustainable Development Goals assessed in the SDG Index and Dashboards" (Schmidt-Traub et al., 2017). In addition to the global SDG Index and Dashboards, the SDSN has also published the "U.S. Cities Sustainable Development Goals Index 2017" (Prakash et al., 2017).  Other SDSN reports provide recommendations on specific themes which matter for SDG implementation such as "The Contribution of Science in Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals" (Schmalzbauer and Visbeck, 2016), and others are related to the question of evidence-based policymaking and data for sustainable development such as "Counting the world: Building modern data systems for sustainable development" (UNSDSN, 2017). These reports benefit from inputs from geographic and thematic networks.

[7] See for instance: "SDG Global Database" (United Nations Statistics Division), "The Atlas of Sustainable Development Goals" (World Bank), "The SDG Tracker" (Oxford Martin School) or "SDG Tracking Tool" (Arab Development Portal).

[8] Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, The Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Sweden.

organisations, including NGOs, academics, trade unions and business associations. The survey was sent electronically to 26 organisations, so the response rate is equal to 50%. Annex 3, 4 and 5 provide respectively the list of survey respondents, the survey tool and detailed surveys answers.

Finally, these survey results were complemented with phone and face-to-face interviews with various stakeholders in Brussels and with SDSN's networks in EU member states and other countries.

## 2.2    Framework and criteria for assessment

The study builds on a theoretical framework presented in table 1. In 2015, SDSN released a report (SDSN, 2015a), which identified three principal objectives for SDG data and monitoring. These objectives were derived from over 18 months of consultative work with contributions from some 500 organisations and thousands of individuals. SDG data and monitoring should: 1) Provide a report card to track progress and ensure accountability; 2) Mobilise governments, academia, civil society and businesses; 3) Serve as a management tool for the transformations needed to achieve the SDGs by 2030. These criteria have been updated and refined for this study to provide a comprehensive assessment framework to evaluate whether the current monitoring of the SDGs in the EU achieves its objectives. We identify three pillars to evaluate the robustness and fitness of the SDG monitoring in the EU (which mirror the three principal objectives labelled above): 1) Methodological soundness; 2) Participative process and 3) Connection with the policymaking process.

1) Methodological soundness

The first objective of SDG monitoring is to provide an accurate and robust assessment of the performance of countries (or any other entities) on each of the goals. Monitoring tools need to be grounded in a solid methodological approach to inform policymaking effectively.

The **indicator selection should be comprehensive and robust** in terms of statistical validity and reliability to ensure that the information presented is highly accurate and relevant for policymakers.

The methodology should allow the **evaluation of SDG performance in terms of both levels and trends.** Both dimensions are important to identify a) levels: relative strengths and weaknesses across goals at one point in time to inform areas where urgent policy interventions may be necessary; b) trends: goals where progress is largely insufficient (or even moving in the wrong direction) which may also require specific policy interventions to modify the trajectory. A country may be starting from a favourable position but have declining trends and, conversely, a country may start from a poor position but see fast improvements. Therefore, the two dimensions matter to inform accurately policy interventions.

Finally, in the context of the SDGs, monitoring reports need to evaluate performance against pre-defined **time-bound targets** (SDSN, 2015a; OECD, 2017). The adoption of the SDGs was essentially a political process. As a result, quantitative targets are specified for only a few SDGs (e.g. zero extreme

poverty[9], gender parity[10]). Other goals and targets are left vague with no international consensus on how to quantify them. As highlighted in Agenda 2030, it is the responsibility of each national government to operationalize and to adapt SDG targets to the local context. Yet, where SDG targets have not been quantified or where national targets fall below the ambition of Agenda 2030, we believe it is the role of the civil society to fill these gaps and identify science-based quantitative thresholds that operationalize the SDG targets. Without such thresholds, it becomes impossible to estimate distance to targets and SDG monitoring loses its ability to evaluate whether countries are on track or off track.

2) Participative process

The second fundamental objective of SDG monitoring is to mobilise stakeholders to strengthen the evidence base, build buy-in, and increase uptake of the findings. As recognized in The Road to Dignity by 2030 (United-Nations, 2014), national monitoring of the SDGs should "build on existing national and local mechanisms and processes, with broad, multi-stakeholder participation." Countries can thus define the nature of the indicators, their specifications, timing, data collection methods, and disaggregation to suit their national needs and priorities. The complexity and transformative nature of the SDGs and Agenda 2030 requires re-thinking traditional statistics and research to favour partnerships across various stakeholders. Partnerships involving public and private stakeholders are needed to fill gaps in our knowledge, establish global norms and standards to increase the ease and security of sharing and using data, help countries develop robust national strategies for data development, and – crucially – help mobilise urgently needed financial resources (SDSN, 2015a).

A successful participative process for monitoring the SDGs should include a sound **consultation process inside institutions** (e.g. sectoral departments, national statistical office, internal networks) and **outside institutions** (including with civil society organisations and various research groups). Monitoring tools should also **identify clearly priorities for future research and major data gaps** to mobilise knowledge around those issues and fill the gaps.

Finally, considering the momentum in terms of research and data for the SDGs, monitoring tools should remain **open to amendments** in order to integrate new knowledge and science as they evolve in close collaboration with experts and the research community.

3) Connections with policymaking processes

The success of SDG monitoring also must be measured by its impacts on policies, which in turn requires a close connection to the policymaking cycle. There are many ways to integrate monitoring reports into regulatory and policymaking processes. Beyond the regulatory and policy tools, certain criteria included in monitoring exercises favour such integration.

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[9] Target 1.1: By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than $1.25 a day

[10] SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

**Regular reporting** holds government accountable at regular intervals. Ideally, the reporting schedule should be designed in a way that allows to inform important policy and regulatory debates that occur throughout the year.

The **reporting of disaggregated data** is also crucial to inform action. For this study the term "disaggregated" comprises both data by population groups (e.g. gender, income level, disability) and across sub-entities (member states, regions, municipalities).

Finally, the success of a monitoring exercise should also be measured by its **connection to key policy and regulatory tools and processes**. This is more complex to evaluate but this study makes an attempt to gauge the degree of integration between SDG monitoring in the EU and a selection of EU governance tools (European Semester, MFF, Better Regulation Agenda) and other benchmarks and scoreboards (the European Pillar of Social Rights).

**Table 1: Criteria for assessing the robustness & fitness of SDG monitoring in the EU**

| METHODOLOGICAL SOUNDNESS<br><br>*Provide a report card to track progress using sound data and metrics* | PARTICIPATIVE<br><br>*Mobilize governments, academia, civil society and businesses* | CONNECTION WITH POLICYMAKING PROCESSES<br><br>*Serve as a management tool for the transformations needed to achieve the SDGs by 2030* |
|---|---|---|
| Availability and comparability of data to monitor target achievement | Internal & external participation (including civil society organisations) | Regular reporting (including real time data) |
| Evaluate current *levels* and *trends* for each indicator | Identify priorities for researchers and the data community | Report disaggregated data (by population groups and sub-entities/sub-national level) |
| Definition of time-bound targets | Open to revisions and amendments as the knowledge base evolves | Integrated into policy and regulatory tools and processes |

Source: Authors. Derived from SDSN, 2015.

## 3.    Results

The primary tool used to monitor the SDGs in the EU is the Eurostat report entitled "Sustainable development in the European Union — Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context" (Eurostat, 2017, 2018). The report builds on the EU SDG indicator list released for the first time in July 2017 and updated annually. The establishment of this indicator list was foreseen by the European Commission Communication "Next steps for a sustainable European future". A first edition of the report was released in November 2017 followed by a second edition in September 2018. The report comprises 100 indicators structured around the 17 SDGs.

A summary of the 2018 goal level results for the EU28 is provided in Annex 1. Over the most recent five years, the Eurostat report finds that the EU as a whole made progress towards almost all goals. More specifically, SDG3 (Good Health And Well-Being) shows the most significant progress, followed by SDG4 (Quality Education), SDG7 (Affordable And Clean Energy), SDG11 (Sustainable Cities And Communities) and SDG12 (Responsible Consumption And Production). By contrast, the Eurostat report points out that the EU as a whole has moved away from the achieving SDG10 (Reduced Inequalities).

Using the framework and criteria presented in section 2.2, this section discusses whether this primary tool for SDG monitoring in the EU is "fit for purpose".

### 3.1    Methodological soundness

This first sub-section focuses on the methodology adopted by Eurostat to monitor the SDGs in the EU. Using the assessment criteria identified in section 2.2, it highlights the strengths and weaknesses in the indicator selection, scope of the results presented (levels and trends) and also discusses whether the current monitoring of the SDGs in the EU allows to evaluate distance to pre-defined 2030 targets.

*a) The Eurostat Report and SDG indicator list covers a fairly comprehensive indicator list but there are a number of important gaps*

The Eurostat report provides an excellent indicator list based on what official statistics[11] currently measures and reports. The report rightly goes beyond the Inter-agency and Expert Group (IAEG) indicators (e.g. on climate change). It builds on the EU strengths and recognized expertise in collecting high-quality and comparable data for EU member states on a wide range of economic, social and environmental issues. In the 2018 edition of the Eurostat report, about two-thirds (65%) of the indicators come from the European Statistical System (ESS) which includes notably the Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC), the Government budget appropriations or outlays for research and development (GBAORD) and Labour Force Surveys (LFS) (figure 2). These indicators are compiled

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[11] The term "official statistics" corresponds to data collected and reported by national governments usually via their National Statistical Institutes. By contrast, the term "non-official" data and statistics is used in this study to qualify data collected and reported by non-State actors (researchers, think tanks, universities, NGOs, businesses, etc.).

following the rigorous norms and procedures described in the "Quality Assurance Framework of the European Statistical System" to ensure high standards in terms of data quality and impartiality (ESS, 2012). Another one-quarter of the data (26%) comes from services and agencies of the European Commission including various DGs (e.g. AGRI, COMM), the European Environmental Agency (EEA) and the EU Joint Research Centre (JRC). The remaining indicators come from international institutions such as the OECD and World Bank (3%) and other institutions (6%) including Transparency International, the European Bird Census Council, the European Institute for Gender Equality and the Covenant of Mayors.

**Figure 2: Data sources used in the Eurostat monitoring report (2018)**
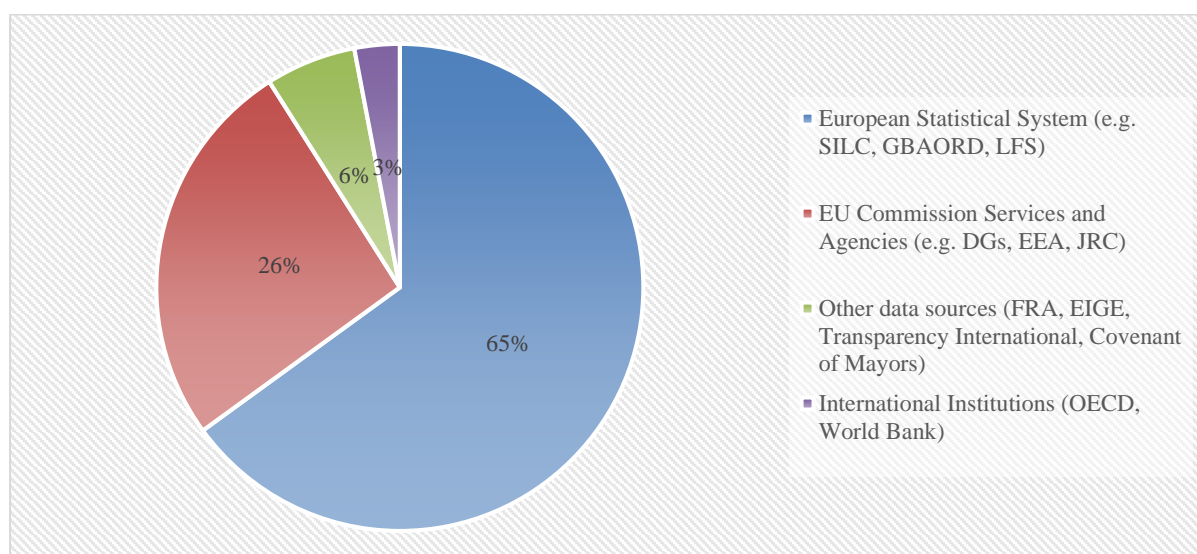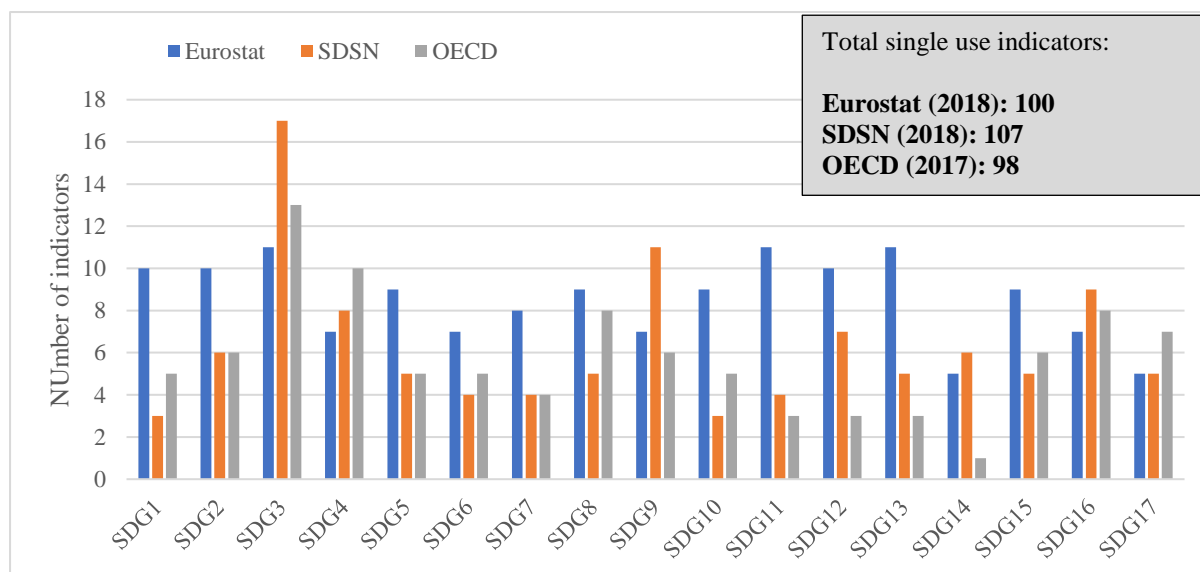


Source: Authors

A comparison of the number of indicators used under each goal in the Eurostat, SDSN and OECD report is included in figure 3. The total number of indicators is comparable across all three reports, but Eurostat sometimes uses the same indicators for various goals[12] which explains why the median number of indicators used for each goal is equal to 9 for Eurostat compared to 5 for the SDSN and OECD reports. As for the SDSN and OECD reports, SDG3 (Good Health and Well-Being) includes the largest number of indicators (11). SDG11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG13 (Climate Action) also include 11 indicators. By contrast, SDG14 (Life Below Water) and SDG17 (Partnership For The Goals) are monitored by fewer indicators (5).

The Eurostat report covers a fairly comprehensive set of indicators and includes results from innovative research produced by the European Commission. The indicator list retained by Eurostat matches rather well the content of the SDGs. As recommended by SDSN in 2015, the report uses subjective data from household surveys (SILC, Eurobarometer), providing citizen-centric measures for instance on the perception of corruption and other well-being measures. This is combined with more direct objective measures in particular for monitoring resource use and pollution outcomes (GHG emissions, water pollution etc.). Eurostat made an effort to integrate cutting-edge research conducted by the JRC including to estimate soil erosion by water (SDG2 and SDG15), fish stocks exceeding fishing mortality

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[12] Labeled "Multipurpose indicators" by Eurostat.

at maximum sustainable yield (FMSY) in North East Atlantic and estimated trends in fish stock biomass in North East Atlantic (SDG14).

**Figure 3: Number of indicators per SDGs**



Source: Authors

A comparison between the Eurostat, OECD and SDSN SDG monitoring reports suggests that Eurostat went quite far in identifying a fairly wide range of indicators for all goals. For instance, on SDG14 (Life Below Water), the range of indicators selected is much more comprehensive than what is commonly reported in other "official reports" and by the OECD, providing a more balanced view of EU performance in achieving this goal.

To illustrate the wide range of choices that can be made in indicator selection, table 2 compares indicators used for SDG14 in the three reports. On balance the Eurostat report uses the broadest and most appropriate set of *official measures* among the official reports we have consulted.

**Table 2: Comparison of indicators used to measure SDG14 (Life Below Water)**

| Eurostat (2018) | OECD (2017) | SDSN/Bertelsmann (2018) |
|---|---|---|
| Surface of marine sites designated under NATURA 2000 | Coverage of protected areas in relation to marine areas | Mean area that is protected in marine sites important to biodiversity |
| Estimated trends in fish stock biomass in North East Atlantic | | Ocean Health Index- Biodiversity |
| Assessed fish stocks exceeding fishing mortality at maximum sustainable yield | | Ocean Health Index – Clean Waters |
| Bathing sites with excellent water quality by locality | | Ocean Health Index - Fisheries |
| Mean ocean acidity | | Fish Stocks overexploited or collapsed by EEZ |
| | | Fish caught by trawling |

Source: Authors

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Yet, as argued by SDSN and various civil society organisations in Europe, several SDGs require data and metrics that are not collected by official statistical systems in developed countries (SDSN, 2015a; UNSDSN, 2017; SDG Watch Europe, 2017; Finnish Environment Institute, 2018). For example, international spillover effects are currently not officially reported by countries. Spillover effects occur when the actions of one country, or the lack thereof, affect the ability of others to fulfil their obligations under the SDG Agenda. Such spillovers must be understood and measured since countries cannot achieve the goals if others do not do their part. For example, rising sea levels will submerge Small Island Developing States (SIDS) unless all countries curb greenhouse gas emissions. Another example is that African elephants and rhinos face extinction unless demand for ivory and horns is curbed outside of Africa. The necessary interactions across countries also include increased Official Development Assistance (ODA) to poor countries to help them co-finance the investments needed to achieve the Goals, and all countries must avoid a race to the bottom on taxation and transparency to protect the public revenues required to finance the achievement of the SDGs. The SDGs also cover the "global commons," such as the management of the high seas, the oceans, and the atmosphere. If the scarce resources of the commons are not properly managed, they can be overused and depleted, leading to the "tragedy of the commons" (Sachs et al., 2017). Since richer countries tend to have more resources and greater capabilities to access the resources of the global commons, they tend to use them at the expense of poorer countries.

Beyond the few metrics included on ODA and EU imports from developing countries, the foreign actions of the EU – including negative spillover effects – is absent from the Eurostat monitoring report. SDSN, working closely with experts and researchers, has produced extensive work to document and measure spillover effects aggregated at country level. Using tools such as Multi Regional Input-Output (MRIO) tables and lifecycle assessments, it is nowadays possible to estimate the negative environmental impact embodied into trade. Similarly, we publish assessments on financial secrecy, tax havens and exports of major conventional weapons that are produced by reputable sources. Table 3 provides examples of spillover measures included in the SDSN/Bertelsmann Report.

**Table 3: Examples of additional spillover measures included in the SDSN/Bertelsmann Report (not covered by the current EU SDG monitoring)**

| Environmental | Economic | Security |
|---|---|---|
| Imported groundwater depletion | Tax Haven Score | Exports of major conventional weapons |
| Net imported SO2 emissions | Financial Secrecy Score | |
| Net imported emissions of reactive nitrogen | | |
| Imported CO2 emissions, technology-adjusted | | |
| Imported biodiversity threats | | |

Source: Authors

The example of $CO_2$ emissions provides a good illustration. Under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) rules, countries report their territorial or production-based emissions covering all sources on their own territory. This metric is relatively easy to measure, but it allows countries to lower their national emissions by outsourcing emissions-intensive sectors, such as steel or cement, to other countries and then re-importing the products. Such outsourcing has driven a significant share of reductions in per capita emissions, observed over the last decades in several

developed countries, including in Europe. The import of CO2-intensive industrial products therefore constitutes a negative spillover effect: a damage imposed by one country on the rest of the world that is not reflected (yet) in global market prices (SDSN, 2017).

At the same time, one must acknowledge that existing spillover measures also have their limitations partly due to the complexity of the issues being measured. These have been documented rigorously in the 2017 edition of the SDSN/Bertelsmann SDG Index and Dashboards. Some spillover effects are currently not measurable (e.g. environmental impacts to trade in virtual water embodied in food products), existing measures have in some cases biases (e.g. accounting for the degree of water scarcity when measuring imported ground water depletion) and more generally more research is needed to connect individual supply chains (e.g. production of a pair of jeans) or specific products, such as palm oil from South-East Asia, to metrics available at the national level (Sachs et al., 2017).

The absence of spillover measures in the monitoring of the SDGs in the EU is, in our view, the most important limitation regarding the indicator selection and scope. This is supported by the results of the online survey designed for this study where more than half of respondents (7 organisations out of 13) considered that spillover effects were not being accurately reflected in the Eurostat report (Annex 5). In the SDSN/Bertelsmann SDG Index and Dashboards, the EU28 as a whole and EU member states individually obtain their worst performances on, SDG12 (Responsible Consumption And Production), SDG13 (Climate Action), SDG14 (Life Below Water) and SDG15 (Life On Land) partly due to the inclusion of spillover indicators (Sachs et al, 2018).
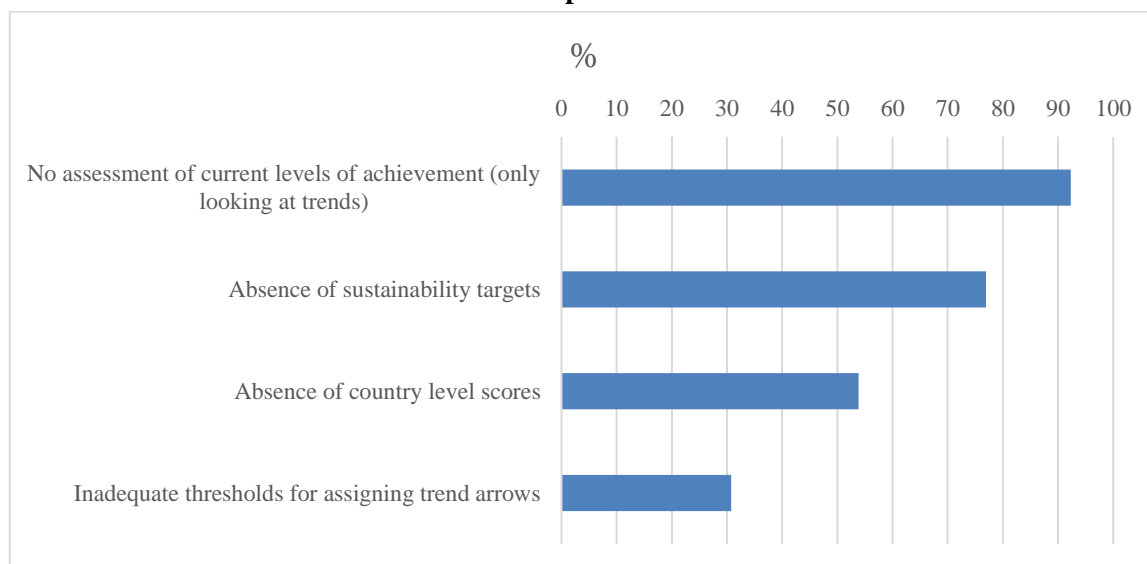
*b) The monitoring of the SDGs in the EU only focuses on trends with no indication of current levels i.e. total distance to achieving the SDGs*

The approach used by Eurostat is to assess whether each indicator and goal have moved in the desired direction or away from sustainable development objectives in the short term (usually 2011 to 2016 or 2012 to 2017) and long term (2001 to 2016 and 2002 to 2017). A system of arrows denotes whether indicators and goals are moving in the right direction and at what speed. When possible, trends are assessed based on a comparison between past growth rates and required growth rates to meet sustainable development objectives by a certain target year. These reference objectives and dates were largely taken from the European Commission Staff Working Document (European Commission, 2016b) which accompanied the European Commission Communication (European Commission, 2016a). In most cases, the target years are not set in 2030 (e.g. EU 2021 target on CO2 emissions per km from new passenger cars), and some objectives differ from the SDGs. The historic rate of change of the indicator is estimated using the compound annual growth rate. This rate is then compared with the rate of change needed to meet the target by the target date.

By contrast to the OECD Report on "Distance to targets" and SDSN/Bertelsmann SDG Index and Dashboards Report, the Eurostat report does not estimate absolute levels of SDG achievement. This is an important limitation of the monitoring of the SDGs in the EU. It is important that SDG monitoring tools evaluate both absolute performance (at one point in time) alongside trajectories towards the goals. The Eurostat Report misses a methodology to capture absolute performance and therefore fails to evaluate the distance to go and relative strengths and weaknesses at one point in time. In our survey of civil society organisations, the lack of absolute performance assessment was identified as the most important methodological limitation (figure 4). Absolute performance is needed to assess where greatest

efforts and investments are needed to achieve the goals. For comparison, the OECD Report only measures absolute performance (with no estimates of trajectories). SDSN's report incorporates since 2018 both absolute levels and trends performance against 2030 thresholds that define SDG achievement.

**Figure 4: What do you perceive as the most important methodological biases of the Eurostat report?**



Source: Authors

*c) The monitoring of the SDGs in the EU does not estimate progress towards pre-defined 2030 targets*

The undeniably greatest limitation of SDG monitoring in the EU is the absence of monitoring against pre-defined 2030 targets. Among the 100 indicators included in the Eurostat report, time-bound targets are available for 16 indicators only – mainly in the areas of climate, energy consumption, education, poverty and employment. These time-bound targets are primarily set for 2020 by the EU 2020 strategy and not for 2030. As a result, the report evaluates for most part whether the EU is moving in the right direction without any evaluation of whether the rate of progress is sufficient to meet time-bound targets in particular in areas such as health, security, sustainable consumption and production or biodiversity protection (among others).

We echo the concerns expressed by civil society organisations regarding the current method that Eurostat uses to evaluate progress (i.e. a 1% annual positive change) in the absence of EU quantified targets (SDG Watch Europe, 2017). This approach is not ambitious enough and may even yield misleading results. For instance, Eurostat concludes that there has been "significant progress" on SDG12 (Responsible Consumption And Production) but, in the absence of sustainability target and absolute scores, this cannot be interpreted as a sign that the EU is moving fast enough and is on track to achieve 2030 sustainability targets described in the SDGs. In fact, evidence collected by the OECD and SDSN/Bertelsmann suggests that this is one of the goals that requires deep transformations and an important acceleration of reforms in the EU.

The absence of a clear EU strategy and priorities for 2030 with measurable targets is an important barrier to robust monitoring and accountability for the SDGs in the EU. We fully support the MSP

recommendations in favour of the adoption of an EU 2030 strategy aligned to the SDGs (SDG Multi-Stakeholder Platform, 2018a). However, this is not a gap that Eurostat can fill (Box 2). The European Commission Decision (2012/504/EU) explicitly states that "Setting policy objectives and determining the information required to achieve these objectives is a matter for policymakers."

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**Box 2: Eurostat and the European Statistical System**

Eurostat is the statistical office of the European Union. Its mission is to provide high quality statistics at a European level that enable comparisons between countries and regions. A number of legal articles and decisions have an impact on how Eurostat can monitor the SDGs:

Article 285(2) of Treaty on EU: The production of Union statistics shall conform to impartiality, reliability, objectivity […]

Article 2 of Regulation 223/2009 on European statistics:

> • Professional independence: statistics must be developed, produced and disseminated in an independent manner [….];
>
> • Impartiality: statistics must be developed, produced and disseminated in a neutral manner, and all users must be given equal treatment;
>
> • Objectivity: statistics must be developed, produced and disseminated in a systematic, reliable and unbiased manner;

European Commission Decision (2012/504/EU) on Eurostat: Setting policy objectives and determining the information required to achieve these objectives is a matter for policymakers.

Source:https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Eurostat_and_the_European_Statistical_System

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Other organisations, including international organisations, have incorporated time-bound targets into their SDG monitoring tools even in the absence of explicit targets in Agenda 2030. SDSN and the OECD use a similar approach based on a decision tree. When a target is available in the Agenda 2030 this is what is retained (zero poverty, universal school completion, full gender equality etc.). When such explicit targets are not available science-based / expert-based targets are applied ideally based on other international agreements (zero greenhouse gas emissions, reduce PM 2.5 pollution to less than 10 micrograms per cubic meter, etc.). Finally, when none of the two previous options are applicable, the time-bound target is based on best observable performances. Table 4 summarizes the decision tree applied by the OECD. The SDSN/Bertelsmann 2018 report also adopted a similar decision tree and adapted its original targets between its 2016 and 2018 SDG Index and Dashboards Report based on stakeholders' comments.

**Table 4: The OECD "decision tree" for setting 2030 end-value**

| Type of indicator | Means of setting 2030 end-value | Number of indicators |
|---|---|---|
| A1. SDG-based, absolute in the future | End-value referred to in SDGs, e.g. infant mortality at 12 per 1000 lives | 46 |
| A2. SDG-based, relative to starting position | End-value referred to in SDGs, e.g. reduce by half the proportion of people living in poverty | 6 |
| B1. Other international agreement or shared aspirations, absolute in the future | End-value set by International Agreements, Good Practices or other Established Frameworks, e.g. reduce PM 2.5 pollution to less than 10 micrograms per cubic meter (WHO) | 40 |
| B2. Other international agreement or shared aspirations, relative to starting position | End-value set by International Agreements, Good Practices or other Established Frameworks, e.g. double the share of renewables in consumption (IRENA) | 3 |
| C. No explicit value; best historical performance considered | End-value set at the 90th Percentile of OECD countries in 2010 | 36 |

Source: (OECD, 2017)

SDSN advocates that monitoring the SDGs requires to estimate the distance to pre-defined quantitative thresholds (SDSN, 2015a). Our experience shows that stakeholder consultations can be extremely valuable to design such targets based on research & science and experts' opinions.

### 3.2    Participative process

This second sub-section focuses on the production process of the Eurostat report and stakeholder engagement. It looks at the internal and external consultation process and whether the report allows to identify priorities for the research community and remains open to regular revisions as new indicators become available.

*a) The Eurostat SDG monitoring report benefited from extensive consultation inside and outside the European Commission, but the timing and transparency of the consultation process could be strengthened*

Overall, Eurostat has made significant efforts to consult widely and leverage knowledge and expertise from a wide range of actors. Internally, the selection of indicators demonstrates a thorough process to identify the best available metrics in the ESS, EEA, JRC and other European Commission's DGs and agencies. The working group on SDG-related reporting within the European Commission, a sub-group of the Inter-service Steering Group (ISSG) on UN Sustainable Development Goals chaired by Eurostat, was assigned the responsibility to coordinate consultations at the European Commission level (European Commission, 2016c).

As described in the "Result of the review in preparation of the 2018 edition of the EU SDG monitoring report" (European Commission, 2018) Eurostat also consulted with organisations outside of its usual constituency. A public consultation was organised for both the 2017 and 2018 Reports. This provided an opportunity for civil society organisations, trade unions, business associations, academics and research centres to provide feedback on draft results. Eurostat engaged with multi-stakeholder platforms

and organisations such as the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the European Statistical Advisory Committee (ESAC) (including the scientific community, social partners and civil society) and the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) (European Statistical Advisory Committee (ESAC), 2017). Eurostat also participated in several expert roundtables involving UNECE, the OECD, and other stakeholders.

Feedback collected from civil society organisations for this study suggest that the consultation process could be improved. Respondents raised concerns regarding the transparency on how Eurostat treated comments, the timing of the consultation which occurred too late and the time allocated to provide feedback perceived as too limited (figure 5). Additional face-to-face and phone interviews confirmed these findings especially regarding the limited amount of time provided during the 2018 production process for comments and feedback from CSOs.

**Figure 5: How satisfied are you with the consultation process for the Eurostat SDG monitoring report?**

*% Dissatisfied or rather dissatisfied*
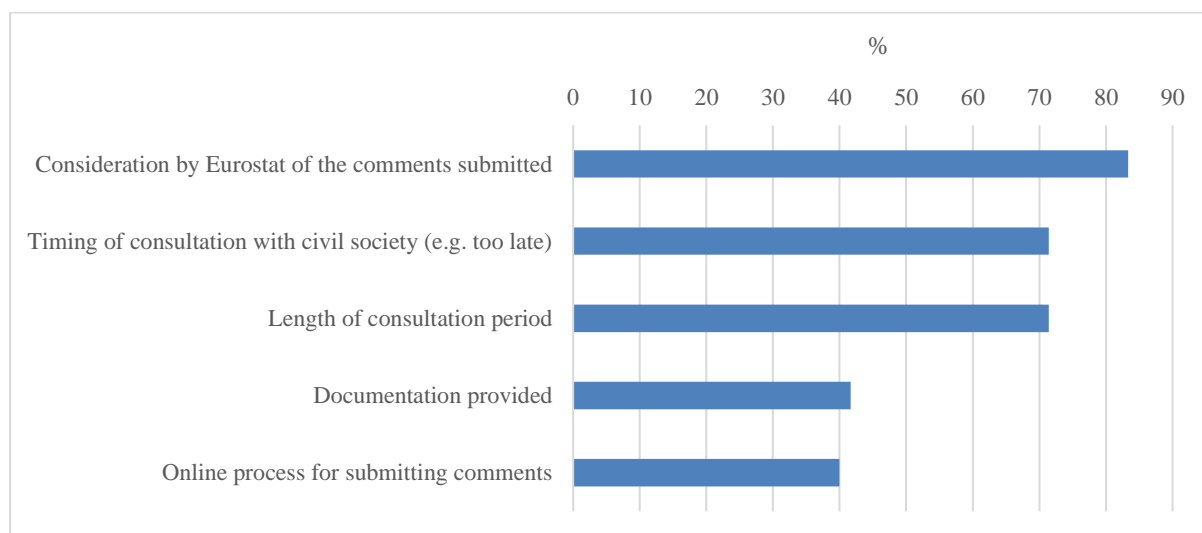


Source: Authors

*b) The Eurostat SDG monitoring report is open to annual revisions, but more regular gap analysis could be provided*

The EU SDG indicator set needs to be open to annual reviews to consider future policy developments and include new indicators as methodologies, technologies and data sources evolve over time. Although this reduces year-on-year comparison of results, the SDGs generate opportunities for new data initiatives and are part of a dynamic agenda including inside the statistical community. New or improved measures should be integrated as they become available.

The "on hold" system – applied to indicators which are under review – goes in the right direction. In the 2018 edition, Eurostat mentions that it is working with other services of the European Commission and the EEA on the use of new data sources, such as the integration of Earth observation data and information from Copernicus, the European Earth Observation and Monitoring Programme, whenever

they contribute to the increased availability, quality, timeliness and disaggregation of data. Yet, despite some information provided in the "Result of the review" document (European Commission, 2018), more clarity and details could be provided to external observers regarding the reason for having certain indicators "on hold" (e.g. comparability issues, irregular reporting, reliability issues etc.) and efforts made by Eurostat in some instances to improve the reporting of some of those "on hold" measures.

The Eurostat report would benefit from a systematic identification of major data gaps across the goals, as this would help guide future research initiatives. The SDSN/Bertelsmann SDG Index and Dashboards Report systematically identifies persistent data gaps in measuring the SDGs. Among the issues that pose important measurement challenges there is for instance access to justice, trade in endangered species, civil society rights' protection and agricultural yields gaps. This provides useful guidance to stakeholders and researchers on areas requiring further efforts and where innovative measurement approaches, using new technologies, may be required

## 3.3     Connection with policymaking processes

This third sub-section focuses on the connection between the monitoring of the SDGs in the EU and the policymaking process. It looks at the frequency and timing of the reporting process, the level of disaggregation of the results to inform accurately policy interventions and at the connection with other EU benchmarks and scoreboards and EU governance processes.

*a) Annual reporting is a major strength of the current monitoring of the SDGs in the EU*

Timeliness of SDG data is crucial if the Goals are to be a management and policy tool (SDSN, 2015). To align with national planning and budgetary processes, SDG monitoring needs to operate on an annual cycle. The fact that Eurostat updates its SDG monitoring on an annual basis is a major strength providing the necessary condition for its integration within broader EU governance, regulatory and budget processes. By releasing the latest updated report in September, the Eurostat report fits well with various EU coordination mechanisms including the European Semester. An initial review of indicators update between the 2017 and 2018 Eurostat Report shows that a majority of indicators have been updated in particular socio-economic indicators building on the annual EU-SILC data collection.

Monitoring the SDGs provides an opportunity to leverage and strengthen the availability and quality of real-time data (SDSN, 2015a). A two-year gap between data collection and global review could undermine the SDGs' role as a real-time report card and management tool. The 2018 EU SDG indicator list reveals that some indicators used to monitor SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 14 (Life Below Water) and SDG 15 (Life On Land) are based on data points "disseminated within two years after the reference year". Real-time remote sensing technologies and other alternative data sources could possibly help monitoring climate and non-climate-related events on an even timelier basis.

*b) More efforts are needed to monitor the implementation of the goals by population groups and across individual member states and subnational entities (regions, cities) to inform actions*

Beyond timeliness in reporting, disaggregated and granular data are needed for effective evidence-based policymaking in the EU. Here the picture is mixed. On one hand, the Eurostat report incorporates a significant number of indicators that apply to specific population groups (e.g. by gender, by age, by poverty status, by locality). Comparative charts by population groups are made available inside the report (e.g. early leavers from education and training by gender) and can be easily downloaded in the Eurostat dedicated portal. However, as argued by various civil society organisations (SDG Watch Europe, 2017), some dimensions of the "Leave-No-One-Behind" commitment of Agenda 2030 have been left out (e.g. disability) or only partially covered (e.g. rural vs urban). In total, 16 indicators are disaggregated by sex (beyond the indicators included within SDG5 (Gender Equality) compared to 1 indicator by age group and 1 indicator by locality. In comparison, the SDSN/Bertelsmann SDG Index and Dashboards incorporates a more balanced number of indicators disaggregated by income level (e.g. self-reported health by income, variation in student performance by socio-economic background, gap in internet access by income), age group (e.g. elderly poverty rate, NEET rate), geographic area (e.g. gap in life expectancy across regions) and sex (e.g. women in science and engineering, female to male years of schooling).

The absence of disaggregated results for each individual EU member states and subnational entities (regions, cities) is, in our view, an important limitation of the current monitoring of the SDGs in the EU since national, regional and local policies and reforms are crucial to achieve the goals by 2030. At the moment, progress is only monitored at aggregated EU28 level which does not allow to gauge gaps in performance across EU member states and inform policy and investment priorities. Evidence collected by the OECD and by SDSN/Bertelsmann suggest that the performance of EU member countries varies greatly. Based on SDSN's methodology the European Union ranks number 17 out of the 157 countries (entities) around the world for which sufficient data is available[13]. Its performance compares favourably to other major powers such as the United States, China and Russia. Yet, high overall performance of EU countries must not hide major shortcomings on specific targets and goals. Moreover, EU member countries' performance is very diverse, ranging from Sweden (#1) to Cyprus (#50). The main areas requiring improvement also vary across EU member countries as highlighted in the Dashboard (figure 6).

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[13] Population weighted score of the EU28.

## Figure 6: *Current* Dashboard: European Countries and EU28 Aggregate (2018)

Bertelsmann and SDSN's "SDG Index and Dashboards"

| | Total Index Rank | SDG 1 | SDG 2 | SDG 3 | SDG 4 | SDG 5 | SDG 6 | SDG 7 | SDG 8 | SDG 9 | SDG 10 | SDG 11 | SDG 12 | SDG 13 | SDG 14 | SDG 15 | SDG 16 | SDG 17 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Austria* | 9 | green | yellow | orange | orange | orange | yellow | yellow | yellow | orange | yellow | yellow | red | red | gray | orange | yellow | red |
| Belgium* | 12 | green | yellow | yellow | orange | yellow | orange | orange | yellow | orange | yellow | yellow | red | red | red | orange | yellow | orange |
| Bulgaria | 34 | yellow | orange | orange | yellow | yellow | gray | yellow | yellow | orange | red | orange | red | yellow | orange | green | orange | yellow |
| Croatia | 21 | green | orange | orange | yellow | orange | yellow | yellow | orange | orange | orange | orange | orange | yellow | orange | yellow | orange | yellow |
| Cyprus | 50 | green | orange | yellow | yellow | orange | orange | yellow | red | orange | orange | orange | red | red | red | yellow | yellow | red |
| Czech Republic* | 13 | green | orange | orange | orange | orange | yellow | orange | yellow | red | yellow | orange | orange | red | gray | orange | orange | red |
| Denmark* | 2 | green | yellow | yellow | yellow | yellow | yellow | yellow | yellow | yellow | green | orange | red | orange | red | orange | yellow | orange |
| Estonia* | 16 | yellow | orange | orange | yellow | orange | yellow | yellow | red | orange | yellow | yellow | red | red | yellow | orange | red | red |
| Finland* | 3 | green | orange | yellow | yellow | yellow | yellow | green | orange | orange | yellow | yellow | red | red | orange | orange | yellow | orange |
| France* | 5 | green | yellow | yellow | orange | yellow | yellow | yellow | orange | yellow | yellow | yellow | orange | red | red | orange | yellow | orange |
| Germany* | 4 | green | orange | yellow | yellow | orange | yellow | yellow | yellow | orange | yellow | yellow | red | red | red | orange | yellow | orange |
| Greece* | 48 | orange | orange | orange | red | orange | yellow | yellow | red | red | red | orange | red | red | red | yellow | orange | red |
| Hungary* | 26 | yellow | orange | orange | red | orange | orange | orange | orange | red | yellow | orange | orange | red | gray | yellow | orange | red |
| Ireland* | 18 | green | orange | yellow | yellow | orange | orange | orange | yellow | orange | yellow | yellow | red | red | red | orange | yellow | red |
| Italy* | 29 | yellow | orange | yellow | orange | yellow | yellow | yellow | orange | orange | red | yellow | red | red | red | orange | orange | red |
| Latvia* | 27 | orange | orange | orange | yellow | red | orange | yellow | yellow | red | red | yellow | red | orange | red | orange | red | red |
| Lithuania | 36 | green | orange | orange | green | yellow | orange | yellow | yellow | orange | red | orange | orange | red | red | orange | red | orange |
| Luxembourg* | 22 | green | orange | green | yellow | yellow | yellow | red | green | red | yellow | orange | red | red | gray | red | yellow | red |
| Malta | 30 | green | red | yellow | yellow | orange | yellow | yellow | green | orange | gray | yellow | red | yellow | red | orange | yellow | orange |
| Netherlands* | 11 | green | orange | yellow | yellow | orange | yellow | orange | yellow | orange | yellow | yellow | red | red | red | yellow | yellow | red |
| Poland* | 32 | yellow | orange | yellow | yellow | orange | yellow | orange | orange | red | orange | orange | orange | red | red | yellow | orange | red |
| Portugal* | 31 | yellow | orange | yellow | orange | orange | orange | green | orange | red | red | orange | red | red | red | orange | orange | red |
| Romania | 44 | yellow | orange | orange | orange | orange | gray | green | yellow | orange | red | yellow | orange | yellow | red | yellow | orange | orange |
| Slovak Republic* | 24 | green | orange | orange | red | orange | yellow | yellow | yellow | red | yellow | orange | orange | red | gray | orange | orange | red |
| Slovenia* | 8 | green | orange | yellow | yellow | yellow | yellow | green | yellow | red | yellow | yellow | red | red | red | yellow | yellow | yellow |
| Spain* | 25 | yellow | orange | yellow | orange | yellow | yellow | yellow | orange | red | orange | orange | red | red | red | orange | orange | orange |
| Sweden* | 1 | green | orange | yellow | orange | green | yellow | green | yellow | yellow | yellow | yellow | red | red | orange | orange | yellow | yellow |
| United Kingdom* | 14 | yellow | orange | yellow | yellow | orange | yellow | orange | yellow | yellow | orange | yellow | red | red | red | red | yellow | orange |
| **European Union** | 17 | green | orange | yellow | yellow | yellow | yellow | yellow | yellow | green | orange | yellow | orange | orange | red | orange | yellow | yellow |

Note: *The basket of indicators used for the 23 OECD-EU countries differs from the basket of indicators used for the 5 EU non-OECD countries. The European Union aggregate corresponds to a population weighted average of the EU28.
Source: Sachs et al, 2018

It is a pity, that Eurostat does not consistently present country-level results in the report. Since the purpose of the SDGs is to inform national and EU-wide debates on how to achieve sustainable development, such national-level data and comparative assessments would greatly support the implementation of the goals.

The need to expand SDG monitoring to regions and municipalities across the EU also came up strongly in the consultation made by SDSN as part of this study. This was also one of the recommendations made by ESAC during the consultation phase for the 2017 Report: "differences at local and regional level need to be taken into account; the territorial dimension is to be extended to the indicators set." (European Statistical Advisory Committee (ESAC) 2017). The wealth of data available in the European Statistical System at Nuts 2 and Nuts 3 and increasingly also at the level of large metropolitan areas and cities should allow to monitor the implementation of the SDGs in a comparative way at these sub-national levels. SDSN estimates that about two-thirds (65%) of the 169 SDG targets underlying the 17 SDGs will not be reached without proper engagement of, and coordination with, local and regional governments (SDSN, 2015b). Similarly, UN-Habitat estimates that around one third of all SDGs indicators have a local or urban component[14]. As such SDSN, in close collaboration with partners, has been releasing regional level indices for the United States[15] (2018), city level indices for the United

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[14] https://unhabitat.org/un-habitat-for-the-sustainable-development-goals/
[15] https://www.sdgusa.org/uploads/SDGreport2018.pdf

States[16] (Prakash et al. 2017) and Spain[17] (2018), and other regional and city level indices are in preparation for Canada, China, Italy and other countries.

*c) The adoption of an EU 2030 strategy for the SDGs is a prerequisite for mainstreaming the SDGs, and associated monitoring tools, into EU policy and regulatory processes for effective and coherent implementation of the goals*

The overall limited connection between SDG monitoring and EU governance processes can be largely attributed to the absence of an EU 2030 strategy providing a clear direction and specific targets to be achieved within a defined time frame (recognizing that this is beyond what Eurostat can do). Arguably, SDG monitoring needs to be integrated in various governance, budget and regulatory processes. It is beyond the scope of this study to make a comprehensive assessment of EU governance mechanisms for the SDGs. Yet, there is evidence that, in a post 2020 perspective, the SDG monitoring process could be better integrated and mainstreamed into:

      i)        Other EU benchmarks and scoreboards (European Pillar of Social Rights);
      ii)      EU governance processes (European Semester, Better Regulation Agenda).

The MSP and EESC have advocated for more clarity and coherence between the monitoring of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EU Social Scoreboard) and the SDGs in a post 2020 perspective (SDG Multi-Stakeholder Platform, 2018a; EESC, 2018). Currently, of the 12 indicators of the Social Scoreboard; eight are included completely or partially in the EU SDG set (EESC, NAT/737). Full indicator alignment between the EU Social Scoreboard and the SDG monitoring report might bring more consistency across EU benchmarks and monitoring tools (Eurodiaconia, 2018). In general, and as argued by the MSP, considering the high complementarity of the Social Pillar and the SDGs, further efforts should be made to pursue a mutually reinforcing policy agenda towards 2030.

As discussed previously, the Eurostat timeline for updating the SDG monitoring report fits well with the timeline of the European Semester – the cycle of economic and fiscal policy coordination within the EU. It is in November each year that the European Commission prepares the priorities and guidelines for the following year which serve to inform budgetary & structural policies & macroeconomic adjustments. Currently, the European Semester process, including country reports, remains largely disconnected from the Agenda 2030, the SDGs, and the findings from the Eurostat monitoring report (Demailly and Hege, 2018). Considering the importance of the European Semester for policy formulation, implementation and coordination in the EU, we support the EESC recommendations for better alignment with the SDGs (e.g. EESC opinions NAT/693, NAT/700, NAT/737, SC/047, SC/050) and the MSP recommendations for a European Semester which would be aligned with and guided by the new long-term sustainable strategic framework (aligned with the 2030 Agenda and the EU's long-term decarbonisation plans). Similarly, and as argued by many CSOs, connecting the SDGs and related monitoring tool to the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) is key to allocate funds adequately and

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[16] http://unsdsn.org/resources/publications/leaving-no-u-s-city-behind-the-2018-u-s-cities-sdgs-index/
[17] http://reds-sdsn.es/comunicado-lanzamiento-informe-ods-ciudades

support effective implementation of the goals in the EU (Demailly and Hege, 2018; Eurodiaconia, 2018). Some observers suggest that the results-oriented recommendations on the MFF, presented in March 2018 in the advisory report by the MSP on the SDGs in the EU (SDG Multi-Stakeholder Platform, 2018b), went rather unheeded (Kloke-Lesch, 2018).

Similarly, as pointed out in recent public hearings of the EESC, the SDGs monitoring tool could possibly be better integrated into the Better Regulation Agenda – the set of reforms adopted in 2015 to improve the openness, quality and monitoring of EU policymaking. In its recent Regulatory Policy Outlook, the OECD recognized the European Commission as a "world leader" when it comes to stakeholder engagement, ex ante and ex post evaluations of regulations (OECD, 2018). The European Commission performs above OECD standards on all three aspects of regulatory policy. Yet, the SDG principles are currently not referred in the Impact Assessment guidelines (EESC, NAT/737; MSP, 2018), and no explicit process for evaluating long-term objectives and measuring the distance towards achieving the SDGs (EESC, NAT/737).

Overall, the EU possesses the toolbox to mainstream the SDGs and its monitoring tool across policy making procedures. While new dedicated mechanisms or policy tool do not appear to be needed, the adoption of an EU 2030 strategy for the SDGs is an absolute necessity for effective and coherent implementation of the goals.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 Towards a more comprehensive monitoring of the SDGs in the EU

*a) Current limitations in the official SDG monitoring in the EU should encourage civil society organisations to produce their own complementary monitoring report to track the EU performance against pre-defined 2030 targets*

Section 3.1 highlighted the main limitations of the SDG monitoring in the EU. The inability of the current monitoring process to evaluate progress towards 2030 objectives is, in our view, the most important bias of the current monitoring system with major consequences on the interpretation of the results. In many instances, improvements to the current monitoring process likely fall outside the mandate of Eurostat. This includes setting quantitative 2030 thresholds to operationalize SDG targets in the absence of a 2030 EU strategy.

In response, this section describes a process towards producing an alternative or "shadow" SDG monitoring report led by civil society that would complement the official monitoring led by the European Commission. Some may argue that designing a common "shadow report" embraced by a significant share of CSOs may be impossible considering the diversity of opinions, interests and sectors represented. Yet, the recent MSP "Contribution to the EU Reflection Paper on the SDGs" demonstrates the ability of CSOs in the EU to come together for a successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda (SDG Multi-Stakeholder Platform, 2018a).

This "shadow" report would allow to gauge the performance of the EU and its member states on the SDGs against time-bound target defined in partnership with topic experts and researchers. The report could come out on annual basis around the same time as the Eurostat Report in order to fit into key EU governance mechanisms (such as the European Semester). Considering their importance for the implementation of the goals, a similar methodology could be applied to track progress at regional and municipal level in the EU.

We believe a comprehensive range of civil society organisations should be consulted from the start and at every major phases of the project namely:

i)      Indicator selection
ii)     Define quantitative thresholds (when no explicit 2030 targets are included in the SDGs)
iii)    Analysis and communication of the results

Phase 1 (indicator selection), should provide an opportunity to stakeholders to provide a list of proposed metrics based on clear selection criteria. In our 2015 "Launching a data revolution" Report we identified ten core principles for indicator selection to track global implementation of the goals (Box 3). We propose that the Eurostat list of indicators is used as a starting point. From there CSOs would identify metrics perceived as potentially irrelevant or measured inaccurately but also new indicators from alternative data sources (e.g. satellite imagery, censor, big data, experts' assessments etc.) that would help capture the full Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. An indicative list of additional possible metrics is provided in Annex 2. We propose that the shadow indicator set also comprises around 100 indicators (plus/minus 15).

Alternative measures, especially those coming from outside official statistics, should be relevant but also statistically robust. Undeniably, one of the main challenges in using non-official statistics is to ensure that they have the same quality and reliability as official statistics. Data collected by Eurostat and other international organisations undergo a rigorous data validation process to ensure the highest standards in data quality, comparability and timeliness. The same processes do not necessarily exist with non-official statistics calling for prudence in using and interpreting the data.

When several indicators are available, there might be a need as part of the shadow reporting process to justify the selection of one indicator over another. For instance, in the case of SDG16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), a recent study produced by the OECD shows that three measures for "The Rule of Law" produced by three non-governmental organisations, yield very different results (González et al., 2017). The OECD study argues that "The R squared between different expert-based measures of the rule of law varies from 0.54 (VDem and Bertelsmann) to 0.59 (World Justice Project and Bertelsmann), indicating a moderately strong reliability across these measures. However, the picture changes when looking separately at OECD and non-OECD member countries; in this case, the R squared falls to 0.06 for OECD countries and to 0.29 for non-OECD countries, and this across all the measures analysed". This means that these measures that aim to measure, in theory, a related concept (the Rule of Law), yield rather different results depending on their underlying data and methodology they apply. Further analyses are needed, on subjective data from household surveys and expert based assessments in certain areas, to understand what it is exactly that each of these measures are capturing and select the one that has the best "fit for purpose".

For this reason, SDSN recommends that where non-official indicators are to be use, only those from reliable sources, ideally following a scientific peer review, are applied. Use should be limited to areas where official statistics are unavailable. However, considering indicators outside of official statistics coming from new sources is essential for monitoring Agenda 2030. As such, documenting their limitations (for instance compared to other available measures) or reasons for exclusion is important to highlight persisting data gaps and push data providers to improve the quality of their measures. CSOs can play an important role in documenting validity and reliability research of alternative data sources and such research could also be an output of the shadow reporting process (e.g. via thematic Working Papers).

Phase 2 (define quantitative thresholds), should allow stakeholders to propose quantitative thresholds to be achieved by 2030 for each indicator selected. This is a crucial step to ensure that the SDG reporting informs on distance and progress towards pre-defined objectives. The political process that led to the adoption of the SDGs did not identify systematic quantitative targets but CSOs can go beyond what politicians could agree on to make countries accountable on science-based objectives. We propose to apply a similar decision tree as the one being used by the OECD and SDSN. Priority is given to targets explicitly mentioned in the SDGs, followed by expert & scientific judgements when such explicit targets do not exist. Finally, when no agreement could be reached a standardized approach would be defined to set quantitative thresholds based on current world top performers. Once quantitative thresholds are set for each indicator, they should remain largely stable across editions to evaluate progress towards pre-defined objectives.

The wealth of research and science being produced by EU think tanks and research institutions could be leveraged to help define these sustainability targets. For instance, on sustainable consumption and production, the new Think 2030 research platform coordinated by GLOBE EU and the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) has produced numerous analytical pieces for science-policy solutions for a more sustainable Europe[18]. In its 2018 "Synthesis Report", the research consortium advocates in favour of time-bound sustainability targets (Baldock and Charveriat, 2018). The research outputs generated by the consortium on land-use, biodiversity and climate change can inform science-based quantitative thresholds to be achieved by the EU and its member states by 2030.

The SDG "shadow report" should identify targets but also provide users with the reasoning behind each of the quantitative thresholds. Once an advanced list of indicators has been defined, a first draft set of thresholds could be identified (based for instance on existing work from various research consortiums such as GLOBE EU, IEEP, SDSN etc.) and submitted for broader consultation to a wider range of CSOs. To track the SDGs, targets need to be aligned with the 2030 timeline, and if existing 2030 EU targets are not ambitious enough then CSOs could go beyond them. As an example, the SDGs call for reducing child mortality to no more than 25 per 1000 live births, but many countries have already exceeded this threshold (i.e. have mortality rates under 25 per 1000). In the SDSN/Bertelsmann SDG Index and Dashboards, we defined the target as 0 mortality per 1000– not the SDG achievement threshold – to reward improvements across the full distribution. This is particularly important for countries that have already achieved some SDG thresholds, but still lag behind other countries on this metric.

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[18] https://think2030.eu/

Finally, phase 3 (analysis and communication of the results) would provide a space for discussing key findings, identify key messages to policymakers and coordinate the dissemination of the results. This could be complemented by qualitative research conducted by Brussel-based think tanks and researchers in EU member states to contextualise further the results. Findings could be consolidated in country profiles highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the EU as a whole and each EU member states on the SDGs.

Our experience suggests that when communicated effectively, such benchmarking exercises can contribute extensively to informing national reforms in countries. As an example, our SDG Index and Dashboards has been used extensively in Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), to inform overarching national SDG strategies and has even been discussed in a number of Parliaments. Effective media campaign can also support behavioural change especially on issues related to sustainable consumption and production. Coordinated action across CSOs in Europe could help generate high impact.

**Test Case: Streamlining "Leave-No-One-Behind" in the shadow report**

Leave-no-one-behind is an important principle of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. Yet, as discussed in section 3.1, the current monitoring of the SDGs in the EU lacks disaggregation so it cannot shed light on vulnerable groups. A key question therefore is how the shadow report could track "Leave-no-one-behind" across goals and targets.

i)     Indicator selection: At the indicator selection phase stakeholders could identify the various groups that need to be considered to complement total country "averages" and provide more disaggregated results. This could build for instance on the pioneering work of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) that produced extensive research aiming at conceptualizing "Leave-no-one-behind" (German and Randel, 2017). This could help strengthen the Eurostat indicator set for instance by including not only "Self-reported unmet care need" from EU-SILC but also "Gaps in self-reported unmet care needs by income level or geographic area (rural vs urban)". This process could also help identify metrics for population groups currently excluded from the indicator set (e.g. disabled) or potentially covered too lightly (e.g. migrants). We recommend not to include measures for each population groups (e.g. early school leavers for boys and for girls) because this will lead to double or even triple counting some specific indicators but rather to identify for each goal the most prominent policy challenges related to "Leave-No-One-Behind" and calculate "gaps" (in % or percentage points) in outcomes.

ii)    Define quantitative thresholds: Based on policy documents and research, targets would be identified to define 2030 objectives and held governments accountable. Some SDGs have 'zero-targets' which require, for instance, the eradication of extreme poverty (1.1), the end of hunger (2.1) or universal access to electricity (7.1) (ODI, 2017). Yet, other goals are vague for instance under SDG10 (Reduced Inequalities), Target 10.4: "Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality". For an indicator like the Palma Ratio (the ratio of the richest 10% of the population's share of gross national income (GNI) divided by the poorest 40%'s share), Oxfam and Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz recommend a target of just "1"[19]. This is also the target used in the SDSN/Bertelsmann SDG Index and Dashboards. Similar long-term Leave-No-One-Behind targets could be defined following a thorough consultation process.

iii)   Analysis and communication of the results: Finally, once results on distance to and progress towards the goals and indicators are compiled, CSOs could produce more in-depth narratives and qualitative analyses highlighting major challenges for certain population groups. These could be reflected in country profiles and complementary thematic papers. Building on its "Distance to target Report" and list of indicators, the OECD has recently published a Working Paper looking at "How far are OECD countries from reaching the targets for children and young people" (Marguerit et al., 2018). Similar analysis could be produced by income level, gender and possibly migrant and disability status which would help shift the debate from total national average to SDG implementation for all population groups within countries.

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[19] https://inequality.org/great-divide/new-benchmark-measuring-progress-inequality/

*b) Beyond an alternative quantitative tool, civil society organisations can play a greater role in monitoring the alignment of EU and EU member states strategies with the SDGs*

The SDGs provide a tool for informing long term planning. Yet evidence suggest that most governments still operate primarily based on short term preoccupations with limited considerations of long-term objectives. In some cases, the achievement of short-term objectives may conflict with achieving longer term objectives. Informing the implementation of the SDGs requires to take a deep dive into governments targets, plans, pathways and monitoring frameworks to evaluate whether these are in line or not with the SDGs. Our experience suggests that without a proper target and associated long term pathways the SDGs will not be achieved. There is in fact growing evidence that world nations, including the EU, are not on track for achieving the goals by 2030.

Beyond quantitative monitoring of the goals, more research is needed to evaluate the alignment between national strategies and long-term sustainability goals. Some of the quantitative indicators used to monitor countries' performance are rather "sticky" and may not evolve significantly from year to another and even, for some environmental measures, over a five-year year period. Quantitative metrics may also not capture the full picture. At the same time, governments may (or may not) have strengthened strategies, action plans and investments for medium- and long-term results. Given the complexity of SDG implementation, countries need to focus on both strategy setting as well as the policies, practices and tools to implement those strategies. Lessons from the MDGs show that achieving ambitious goals requires the setting of long-term targets, developing long-term pathways and aligning short and medium-term strategies and policy instruments to the long-term vision. These tools can generate impressive changes in a relatively short period of time, so the challenge now is to apply them to the SDGs.

In 2017, SDSN started collecting data on the existence of overarching statements, strategies, coordination mechanisms, websites and indicators dedicated to the SDGs. This was published in our 2018 SDG Index and Dashboards Report. The OECD also collected similar qualitative and descriptive data as part of their survey on "Planning and coordinating the implementation of the SDGs"[20]. These exercises provided a first indication of "government efforts" to institutionalize the SDGs but also highlighted, in our view, the need to go beyond overarching SDG dedicated mechanisms to evaluate efforts on more specific targets and objectives included inside the SDGs.

The scientific community and civil society in the EU can play an important role in making governments accountable for the effective institutionalisation of long-term sustainability goals into government policies, budgets and priorities. In collaboration with a consortium of organisations and energy research teams, the Institut du Développement Durable et des Relations Internationales (IDDRI) and the SDSN have for instance charted practical pathways to deeply reducing greenhouse gas emissions in their own countries by 2050 as part of the Deep Decarbonization Pathways Project (SDSN and IDDRI, 2015). Also, the Climate Action Tracker (CAT) - the consortium of independent scientific analysis produced by three research organisations – evaluates climate change mitigation commitments, and assesses, whether countries are on track to meeting those (Climate Action Tracker, 2017).

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[20] https://www.oecd.org/gov/cob-sdg-survey-overview-of-results.pdf

As an illustration, the latest CAT assessment concludes that most intended national contributions are insufficient to meet the 1.5° c target of the Paris Climate Agreement. This applies particularly to developed countries, including G20 countries (figure 7). In their 2017 report the consortium of researchers note that:

> *"despite some progress over the last year, the EU's climate policy has not yet effectively responded to the 1.5°C limit enshrined in the Paris Agreement, which goes beyond the former 2°C goal agreed in Copenhagen. Neither the targets, nor their implementation, are compatible with the new circumstances after the adoption of the Paris Agreement".*

**Figure 7: NDC rating and current climate mitigation policy rating, Climate Action Tracker, 2017**



Note: For EU countries, only EU level data are presented.
Source: Climate Action Tracker (2017)
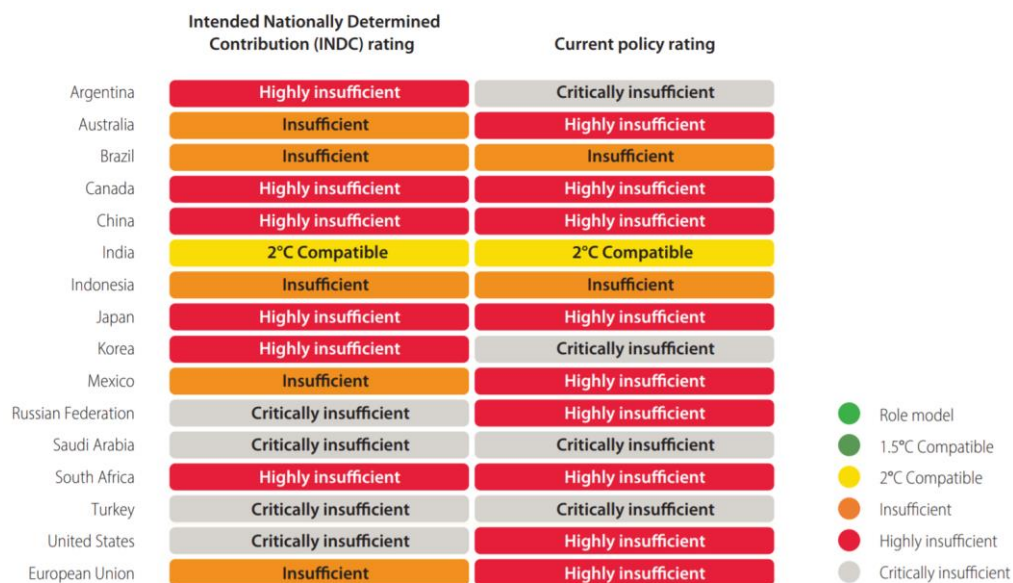
The assessment also notes that:

> *"The EU's climate leadership is threatened further by the fact that neither the historical, nor the projected, rate of emissions reduction will allow the EU to meet its 2030 goal, at least not with currently implemented measures."*

This type of research and findings are complementary to the quantitative monitoring conducted by Eurostat, the OECD and SDSN. They hold government accountable not only for outcomes (which may be due to previous government actions) but also for current strategies, processes and efforts conducted to move in the right direction. Civil society organisations in Europe can play a pivotal role in providing independent assessments of the EU and EU member states commitments towards the SDGs. Building on some of the existing work in this area, assessments could be broadened to cover not only sustainable consumption and production issues but also socio-economic commitments, such as zero poverty, to be achieved by 2030.

## 4.2     The role of the European Economic and Social Committee

The EESC is well positioned to play a lead role in the monitoring of the SDGs in the post 2020 perspective. First, because of its expertise in facilitating dialogue and partnerships between civil society and EU institutions since 1958, including the European Commission and the Council, on European Community issues. The EESC currently has 350 members from all EU member states which represent very diverse opinions and sectors including NGOs, trade unions, business associations and consumer groups. Second, because of the active role it has been playing since 2015 in mainstreaming the SDGs in its debates and workshops and in particular as part of activities organised by the Sustainable Development Observatory (SDO). As explained on the SDO website: "It is the only body within the European institutions that is dedicated exclusively to advancing sustainable policies across all sectors". The EESC notably plays an important role at the high-level Multi-Stakeholder Platform on the implementation of the SDGs.

The EESC, in close collaboration with the high-level Multi-Stakeholder Platform, can coordinate CSO inputs into the "shadow report" at all three stages (indicator selection, define quantitative thresholds and analysis and communication of the results). As such, a public debate could be organized to collect feedback from EESC members on major indicator gaps. The Eurostat EU SDG indicator list could for instance be compared to the SDSN/Bertelsmann indicator list and each member would get a chance to exchange on best suited indicators and provide suggestions for additional metrics. The EESC surely possesses the capacity to convene a diverse range of participants and summarize major comments received at each stages of the process. It also possesses the capacity to communicate the results widely including at events involving the European Commission and the EU Parliament.

From an operational perspective, there needs to be a clear process for ensuring technical rigor and effective decision-making on metrics and thresholds that is reasonably shielded from political considerations. The EESC secretariat may not have the internal capacities to produce technical statistical outputs. To fill this gap, the EESC could either build these capacities in-house or involve a third-party that possesses such technical expertise. This third-party would need to attend each public debate organized around the "shadow report" and provide suggestions and justifications for each methodological choice. It will need to make some technical decisions regarding data and methodology following extensive consultations with civil society organisations.

Preparing a shadow SDG report, requires that a broad range of stakeholders be involved, possibly going beyond the current constituency of the EESC. Further efforts may need to be made to involve CSOs in individual EU member states. These can share their experience and provide needed contextual background for supporting national implementation of the goals. In addition, greater involvement from regions and cities is necessary to localize the SDGs and map innovative approaches for the implementation of the goals. Documenting successful coordination mechanisms across levels (national, regional and local) is key for success. The "Toolbox for multi-stakeholder climate partnerships" (EESC, 2018b) launched in June 2018 and coordinated by the EESC goes in this direction and could be broadened to a wider range of SDGs.

Finally, the EESC website could be used for consulting with CSOs but also to display the results from this work. We welcome the new EU Country Profiles mapping stakeholder engagement in the 28 EU member states for SDG policymaking. These could be complemented by summary results from the

quantitative reporting and by contextual qualitative assessment looking at implementation efforts and mechanisms. These would help providing a narrative to explain strengths and weaknesses of the EU and EU member states on the SDGs. The EESC website could become the central repository for communicating the research and data produced by CSOs and research centres in Brussels and in EU member states as a whole. Data visualisation tools could be generated to disseminate the results.

In summary, in a post 2020 perspective, the EESC could play a major role in supporting the following outputs:

- Coordinate stakeholder engagement for the EU quantitative "shadow report" on the SDGs
- Build in-house statistical expertise or contract a third-party to conduct the technical work related to the production of the "shadow report"
- Communicate results to policymakers in public events and debates and via dedicated country profiles looking at 1) Distance and progress towards pre-defined long-term sustainability goals; 2) Qualitative implementation mechanisms and efforts for the SDGs; 3) Role of civil society organisations in implementing the SDG Agenda across Europe
- Collect best practice examples of effective SDG policies and implementation mechanisms across administrative levels (national, regional and local)
- Act as a central repository for research and data work on the SDGs in the EU

## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

In summary, the EU has been a key player in the design and adoption of the Agenda 2030 and has started monitoring their implementation for the Union as a whole. The Eurostat reports have gone far into identifying key metrics and a robust methodology to measure trends towards sustainable development objectives in the EU. Yet, the absence of quantitative thresholds for SDG achievement at the EU or member states levels makes it impossible to assess distance to target for the EU and its member states.

Effective monitoring to inform reforms in the EU requires disaggregated results for each member state. At the moment, the EU only monitors progress at the level of the Union, which does not allow to gauge gaps in performance across EU member states and therefore provides little information to inform policy and investment priorities at the country level. Over time, such SDG monitoring could be downscaled to regions and cities across to track subnational implementation and gaps.

This study shows that Eurostat has made substantial efforts to identify the best available official data for tracking the SDGs. Compared to other institutional SDG monitoring reports, Eurostat uses a wider range of data and metrics building on the long-term and well-recognized expertise of the European Commission in producing comparable data across EU member states. Yet, the breadth and ambition of Agenda 2030 require governments and international institutions to also measure issues that they have historically not measured through official statistical agencies (e.g. spillover effects) or for which data is only now becoming available (e.g. through remote sensing). Of particular importance will be to capture the Leave-No-One Behind dimension of Agenda 2030. Considering that these types of data do not necessarily undergo a rigorous data validation assessment, it is important to document and evaluate the validity, comparability and reliability of these data prior to their integration into lead monitoring tools for the SDGs.

For these reasons, we conclude that CSOs in the EU can play a crucial role in strengthening the monitoring of the SDGs in the EU in the coming years. Beyond identifying and producing metrics for the SDGs, civil society organisations can contribute to more qualitative reporting on implementation mechanisms and strategies introduced for the SDGs. One aspect is to monitor distance to achieving the SDGs and whether the EU and EU member states are making progress. Another is to evaluate whether the EU strategies and EU member states' strategies are sufficient to meet the goals by 2030. This should cover assessment of implementation tools such as budget, regulations and policies. The Reports produced by the Climate Action Tracker Consortium are good examples of how civil society and scientific experts can help evaluate whether the content of strategies, in this case Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), are sufficient for achieving the goals.

Based on the findings presented in this study SDSN makes four recommendations to the EESC Secretariat and EESC members:

**RECOMMENDATION 1: Coordinate the production of an SDG "shadow report" to monitor the performance of the EU and its member states.**

This report will integrate the results from quantitative and qualitative work to evaluate countries distance to and progress towards the SDGs and gauge government efforts to implement the goals.

**1.a. Provide a complementary quantitative assessment on the SDGs against time-bound quantitative thresholds to measure "distance to targets".**

The quantitative assessment would go beyond official statistics and use alternative data sources from research centres, think tanks, universities and other civil society organisations. This quantitative shadow reporting should build on a participative process at all phases (indicator selection, target setting and analysis & communication of the results) and ensure high standards in terms of relevance and quality of the data. It will allow to gauge the distance and progress of the EU and each member states individually to pre-defined 2030 targets. The EESC is well positioned for coordinating inputs from civil society but a clear and robust process for ensuring technical rigor and effective decision-making on competing indicators should be defined by the EESC for dealing with diverging opinions among its members.

**1.b. Complement the shadow quantitative assessment with a qualitative narrative on government efforts to achieve the SDGs.**

Building on the few existing initiatives, the EESC Secretariat and its members, can play a major role in documenting the existence of long-term pathways for the goals, intermediate action plans and reporting processes and alignment with governance mechanisms such as budget, procurement and regulatory processes. This could be used as complementary information in the interpretation for the quantitative shadow reporting. This could cover issues related to sustainable consumption and production (e.g. full decarbonization, biodiversity protection) and other issues such as the eradication of extreme poverty in the EU by 2030.

**RECOMMENDATION 2: Invite civil society organisations working in EU member countries and organisations working at subnational levels (regions, cities) to collect and compare innovative approaches to SDG monitoring and implementation.**

Bolster the dialogue between Brussel-based CSOs and CSOs located in EU member states to increase the knowledge base and engagement within the EU on the SDGs. In addition, involve to a greater extent regions and cities in EESC activities considering their key role in the implementation and localization of the SDGs. Exemplary case studies could be collected, especially on successful interactions across levels of government, to document innovative and inclusive policymaking practices for the SDGs in the EU and in EU member states. This would help stimulate peer to peer learning and interactions among local, regional and national actors of sustainable development.

**RECOMMENDATION 3: Use the EESC platform and website to communicate results of the monitoring work to a wide audience.**

The EESC Sustainable Development Observatory could become the central repository for research on alterative data and statistics for the SDGs. The website could be used to collect feedback from stakeholders in the design of the first iteration of the shadow report. Similarly, the website could document research conducted in the preparation of the report for instance to identify best suited metrics when several data sources exist to measure a similar issue. Finally, country profiles could be displayed

on the website summarizing the key findings of the alternative SDG report and data visualisation tools could be developed.


**RECOMMENDATION 4: Advocate for better integration of the SDGs into existing EU policymaking and regulatory instruments.**

Finally, the EESC may continue and expand its efforts in streamlining the SDGs across all EU monitoring and governance mechanisms including the European Pillar for Social Rights, the European Semester and Better Regulation Agenda. The production of a unique CSO shadow report would help make a stronger point for science-based targets and integration of those targets into governance assessments. The EESC secretariat and members should communicate those results as broadly as possible across EU institutions and platforms. This includes presenting results to the European Commission, the EU Parliament, organise national launches but also to stimulate large media uptake.

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**Annexes**

**Annex 1 : Key findings from the Eurostat Report 2018 "Sustainable Development in the European Union"**



Source: Eurostat, Sustainable development in the European Union (2018)

## Annex 2: Indicative list of additional SDG indicators

This list is indicative and should be discussed extensively with various stakeholders prior to inclusion in a possible complementary shadow EU report on the SDGs. It is based primarily on indicators used in the SDSN and Bertelsmann SDG Index and Dashboards Report (2018 edition).

| SDG | Indicator | Description | Source |
|-----|-----------|-------------|--------|
| 1 | Elderly poverty rate | The ratio of the number of people of 66 years of age or more whose income falls below the poverty line; taken as half the median household income of the total population. | EU-SILC |
| 3 | Gap in self-reported health by income level | Difference between self-reported health status by income level between first and fifth quintile | EU-SILC |
| 3 | Gap in life expectancy by regions (Nuts 2/3) | Difference between maximum and minimum life expectancy at birth among different regions of the country. | Eurostat, Regions and cities databases |
| 6 | Imported groundwater depletion (m3/year/capita) [Spillover] | Imports of groundwater depletion embedded in international crop trade. Estimates are based on a combination of global, crop-specific estimates of non-renewable groundwater abstraction and international food trade data. This indicator was calculated by aggregating bilateral import data into an overall country score, and expressed per capita. | University College London, Dalin et al. (2017) |
| 9 | Gap in internet access by income level | The difference in the percentage of household internet access between top and bottom income quartiles. | EU Survey on ICT usage in households and by individuals |
| 10 | Adjusted GINI | The Gini coefficient adjusted for top revenues unaccounted for in household budget surveys. | Chandy, L., Seidel B., 2017 |
| 12 | Nitrogen production footprint (kg/capita) | Reactive nitrogen emitted during the production of commodities, which are then either exported or consumed domestically. Reactive nitrogen corresponds to emissions of ammonia, nitrogen oxides and nitrous oxide to the atmosphere, and of reactive nitrogen potentially exportable to water bodies, all of which can be harmful to human health and the environment. | University of Sydney, Oita and al. |

| 12 | Net imported emissions of reactive nitrogen (kg/capita) [Spillover] | Net imports of reactive nitrogen emitted during the production of commodities. Reactive nitrogen corresponds here to emissions of ammonia, nitrogen oxides and nitrous oxide to the atmosphere, and of reactive nitrogen potentially exportable to water bodies, all of which can be harmful to human health and the environment. | University of Sydney, Oita et al. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 12 | Production-based SO2 emissions (kg/capita) | SO2 emissions associated with the production of goods and services, which are then either exported or consumed domestically. The health impacts of outdoor air pollution are felt locally as well as in neighbouring regions, due to transboundary atmospheric transport of the pollutants. | Zhang et al, 2017 |
| 12 | Net imported SO2 emissions (kg/capita) [Spillover] | Net imports of SO2 emissions associated with the trade in goods and services. These have severe health impacts and are a significant cause of premature mortality worldwide. Trade in goods mean that health impacts of air pollution occur far away from the point of consumption. | Zhang et al, 2017 |
| 13 | Climate Change Vulnerability Monitor | The index assesses global variations in vulnerability to climate change by gauging each country's vulnerability to three main potential impacts of global warming: increase in weather-related disasters, sea levels rise and loss of agricultural productivity | The Hague Center for Strategic Studies (HCSS) |
| 13 | Imported CO2 emissions, technology-adjusted (tCO2/capita) [Spillover] | Imports of CO2 emissions embodied in goods, measured as technology adjusted, consumption-based (TCBA) emissions minus production-based emissions. Technology-adjusted emissions data reflects the carbon efficiency of exporting sectors. If a country uses relatively CO2-intensive technologies in its export sector then it will have a higher TCBA than suggested by a simple carbon footprint. | Lund University, Kander et al. |
| 14 | Percentage of fish caught via trawling | The percentage of a country's total fish catch, in tonnes, caught by trawling, a method of fishing in which industrial fishing vessels drag large nets (trawls) along the seabed. | Institute for the Oceans and Fisheries, University of British Columbia |

| 15 | Change in forest area (%) | Total area of tree loss from 2000 to 2016, in areas with a minimum of 30% canopy cover, benchmarked against the country's tree cover baseline extent in 2000. | Global Forest Watch & EPI |
|---|---|---|---|
| 15 | Imported biodiversity impacts (species lost per million people) [Spillover] | The number of species threatened as a result of international trade expressed per 100,000 people. | Lenzen and al |
| 16 | Transfers of major conventional weapons (exports) (constant 1990 US$ million per 100,000 people) [Spillover] | The volume of major conventional weapons exported, expressed in constant 1990 US$ millions per 100 000 people. It is calculated based on the trend-indicator value, which is based on the known unit production cost of a core set of weapons and does not reflect the financial value of the exports. Small arms, light weapons, ammunition and other support material are not included. | Stockholm Peace Research Institute |
| 17 | Financial Secrecy Score (best 0-100 worst) [Spillover] | The Index measures the contribution of each jurisdiction to financial secrecy, on a scale from 0 (best) to 100 (worst). It is calculated using qualitative data to prepare a secrecy score for each jurisdiction and quantitative data to create a global scale weighting for each jurisdiction according to its share of offshore financial services activity in the global total. | Tax Justice Network |
| 17 | Tax Haven Score (best 0-5 worst) [Spillover] | Ranking of countries' contribution to global corporate tax avoidance and evasion, on a scale from 0 (best) to 5 (worst). Calculated by first identifying a set of tax havens from various credible bodies, and then assessing three key elements for corporate tax dodging; corporate tax rates, the tax incentives offered, and lack of cooperation with international efforts against tax avoidance. The scale and global significance of the tax avoidance structures were taken into account. | Oxfam |

## Annex 3: Respondents to the 2018 SDSN survey on monitoring the SDGs in the EU

| |
|---|
| Business Europe |
| EUROCITIES |
| European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless |
| European Trade Union Confederation |
| Green Budget Europe |
| International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) |
| Institut du Développement Durable et des Relations Internationales (IDDRI) |
| Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) |
| Platforma |
| SDG Watch Europe |
| Social Platform |
| Statistics Austria |
| World Wide Fund for Nature Europe (WWF EU) |

# 018 SDSN SURVEY TO INFORM THE EESC STUDY ON "EXPOSING POLICY GAPS TO ADDRESS THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS"

**A process and methodology to better integrate civil society views
in the choice of indicators for the 2030 Agenda**

**Objective:**

The Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) is conducting a data collection to gauge stakeholders' perception on the process for measuring the European Union (EU) performance on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This data collection will be used as part of a study commissioned by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in the fall 2018.

The survey instrument aims in particular to understand stakeholders opinion on the results, limitations and production process of the Eurostat monitoring report on the SDGs in the EU. The objective is to collect observations and recommendations from various stakeholders (NGOs, academics, trade unions, business associations, other) on the current state of the monitoring of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda in the EU. Ultimately, this study should provide insights on how the civil society can be better involved in reviewing the performance of the EU on the SDGs at various stages - from indicator selection, methodological choices and presentation of the results.

**Structure:**

The survey instrument **comprises 11 questions**. It includes a mix of open and closed questions. Each response to closed questions can be complemented with more detailed explanations. We encourage participants to provide as much explanation as possible to complement their responses.

It is divided into 3 sections:

1. General feedback on Eurostat's monitoring report
2. The role of qualitative assessments
3. SDG Monitoring process in the EU and civil society involvement

Section 1 aims to gauge respondents' views on the 2017 Eurostat report "Sustainable Development in the European Union — Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context" http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-statistical-books/-/KS-04-17-780. The questions aim to capture respondents' perceptions on the selection of indicator, methodology and key findings.

Section 2 aims to understand how additional, non-quantitative data, can be used to inform the monitoring of the SDGs in the EU.

Section 3 aims to gauge how the process for involving civil society organisations can be improved to better reflect their views and expertise in the monitoring of the SDGs in the EU.

**Data collection process:**

The data are collected via an online questionnaire combined with phone interviews. Respondents were identified by SDSN and the EESC based on their knowledge and involvement in the EU process for monitoring the SDGs.

The deadline to submit your responses is set to **Friday, 3rd August 2018.**

**Contacts:**

Guillaume Lafortune, Project Manager, SDSN, guillaume.lafortune@unsdsn.org.

**RESPONDENT INFORMATION**

| * First name: | |
|---------------|---|

| | |
|---|---|
| * Name: | |
| * Organisation: | |
| * Status/title: | |
| * Country: | |
| * E-mail address: | |
| * Phone: | |

**Note: Please inform the SDSN via e-mail should you want your survey responses to remain anonymous.**

E-mail: guillaume.lafortune@unsdsn.org

1: GENERAL FEEDBACK ON EUROSTAT'S MONITORING REPORT

This section aims to gauge respondents' views on the 2017 Eurostat report "Sustainable Development in the European Union — Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context" http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-statistical-books/-/KS-04-17-780. The questions aim to capture respondents' perceptions on the selection of indicator, methodology and key findings.

**q.1 Are you aware of the 2017 Eurostat report "Sustainable Development in the European Union — Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context"?**

Yes

No

**q.2 What do you think about the following elements of the Eurostat report?**

|  | Very poor | Poor | Good | Very good | *No opinion / Don't want to answer* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Indicator selection |  |  |  |  |  |
| Methodology |  |  |  |  |  |
| Key findings |  |  |  |  |  |

Please explain:

|  |
|---|
|  |

**q.3 In your view, how far is the selection of indicators in the Eurostat report aligned to pre-established EU policy objectives?**

Such as the New European Consensus on Development - 'Our world, our dignity, our future', Commission Communication on Next steps for a sustainable European future and European Pillar of Social Rights.

|  | Not at all aligned | Rather not aligned | Rather aligned | Fully aligned | No opinion / Don't want to answer |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Select one |  |  |  |  |  |

Please explain and provide specific example to complement your answer:

|  |
|---|
|  |

**q.4 On which of the 17 SDGs do you think the selection of the indicators included in the Eurostat report is particularly inadequate?**

Please select up to 5 goals

| SDG1: No poverty |  | SDG7: Affordable and clean energy |  | SDG13: Climate action |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SDG2: Zero hunger |  | SDG8: Decent work and economic growth |  | SDG14: Life below water |  |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| SDG3: Good health and well-being | SDG9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure | SDG15: Life on land |
| SDG4: Quality education | SDG10: Reduced inequalities | SDG16: Peace, justice and strong institutions |
| SDG5: Gender equality | SDG11: Sustainable cities and communities | SDG17: Partnerships for the goals |
| SDG6: Clean water and sanitation | SDG12: Responsible consumption and production | |

Please explain why the indicators of these SDGs are particularly inadequate:

| |
|---|
| |

**q.5 Do you perceive the following elements of the Agenda 2030 as being accurately reflected in the Eurostat report?**

| | Yes | No | No opinion / Don't want to answer |
|---|---|---|---|
| Spillover effects[21] | | | |
| Leave no one behind[22] | | | |
| Planetary boundaries[23] | | | |
| Other(s): please specify | | | |

Please explain:

| |
|---|
| |

**q.6 What do you perceive as the most important methodological biases of the Eurostat report?**

*Please select all that apply*

| | Major bias | Moderate bias | Insignificant bias | Not at all a bias | No opinion / Don't want to answer |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Absence of sustainability targets | | | | | |

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[21] International spillover effects are said to occur when one country's actions generate benefits or impose costs on another country that are not reflected in market prices, and therefore are not "internalized" by the actions of consumers and producers (Sachs et al, 2017). These include environmental spillovers (such as CO2 emissions or groundwater depletion embodied into trade), security spillovers (such as weapons exports) or spillovers related to the economy, finance, and governance (such as international tax evasion).

[22] Inclusion is at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Inclusiveness speaks to the notion of empowerment and the principle of non-discrimination. It is reflected in the pledge to leave no one behind and in the vision of a "just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met" and "a world in which every country enjoys sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and decent work for all" (paragraphs 8 and 9). https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=20000&nr=291&menu=2993

[23] The planetary boundary (PB) concept, introduced in 2009, aimed to define the environmental limits within which humanity can safely operate. http://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/planetary-boundaries/planetary-boundaries/about-the-research/the-nine-planetary-boundaries.html

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Absence of country level scores | | | | | |
| No assessment of current levels of achievement (only looking at trends) | | | | | |
| Inadequate thresholds for assigning trend arrows | | | | | |
| Other(s), please specify: | | | | | |

Please explain:

| |
|---|
| |

2: THE ROLE OF QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENTS

This section aims to understand how additional, non-quantitative data, can be used to inform the monitoring of the SDGs in the EU.

**q.7 In your view, should the Eurostat report be complemented by qualitative research or assessment?**

Yes

No

**q.8 In your view, what would be the main benefits of including additional qualitative metrics to measure the performance of the EU on the SDGs?**

| |
|---|
| |

**q.9 Please provide examples of qualitative measures in your field of expertise that could help complement the quantitative monitoring of the SDGs in the EU:**

| |
|---|
| |

3. SDG MONITORING PROCESS IN THE EU AND CIVIL SOCIETY INVOLVEMENT

This section aims to gauge how the process for involving civil society organisations can be approved to better reflect their views and expertise in the monitoring of the SDGs in the EU.

**q.10. How satisfied are you with the consultation process for the Eurostat SDG monitoring report?**

| | Dissatisfied | Rather dissatisfied | Rather satisfied | Very satisfied | No opinion/Don't want to answer |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| Timing of consultation with civil society (e.g. too late) | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Length of consultation period | | | | | |
| Online process for submitting comments | | | | | |
| Consideration by Eurostat of the comments submitted by civil society | | | | | |
| Documentation provided | | | | | |
| Other(s), please specify: | | | | | |

Please explain and provide any **recommendations** to improve the consultation process:



**q.11 Do you see a need for a complementary SDG report using a mix of official and non-official data sources to monitor the implementation of the SDGs in the EU?**

Yes

No


Please explain your answer and provide suggestions on what such a report should contain:



**Please add any additional comments:**

## Annex 5: Detailed survey responses

The figures below provide a summary of the responses provided by the 13 organisations on the closed questions included in the electronic survey. All organisations responded that they were aware of the Eurostat monitoring report for the SDGs in the EU (q.1).

**q.2 What do you think about the following elements of the Eurostat report?**
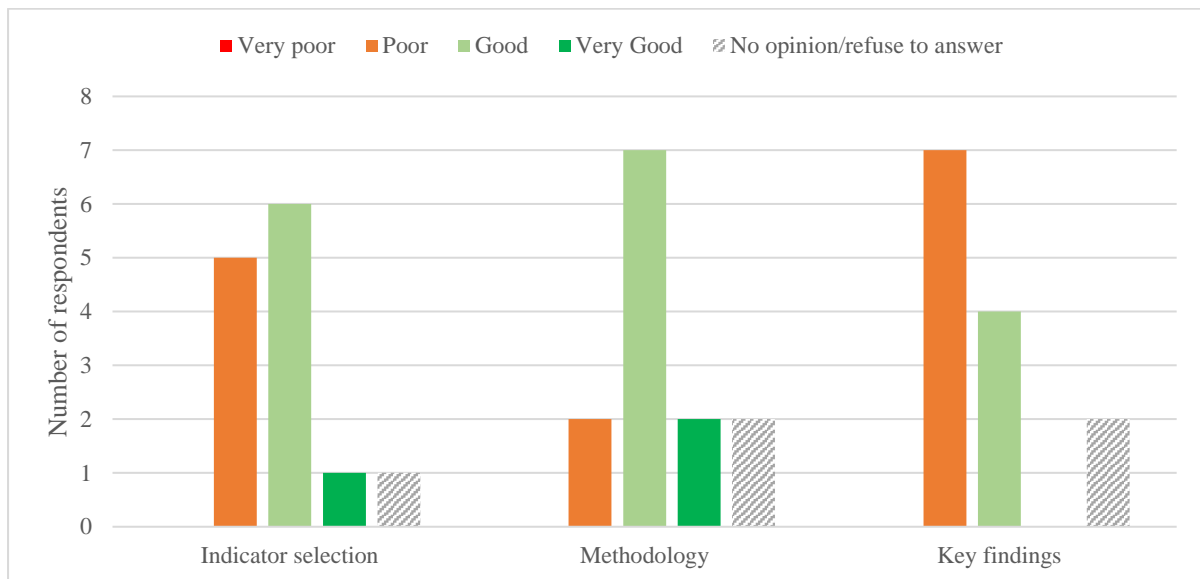


Source: Authors

**q.3 In your view, how far is the selection of indicators in the Eurostat report aligned to pre-established EU policy objectives?**



Source: Authors

54
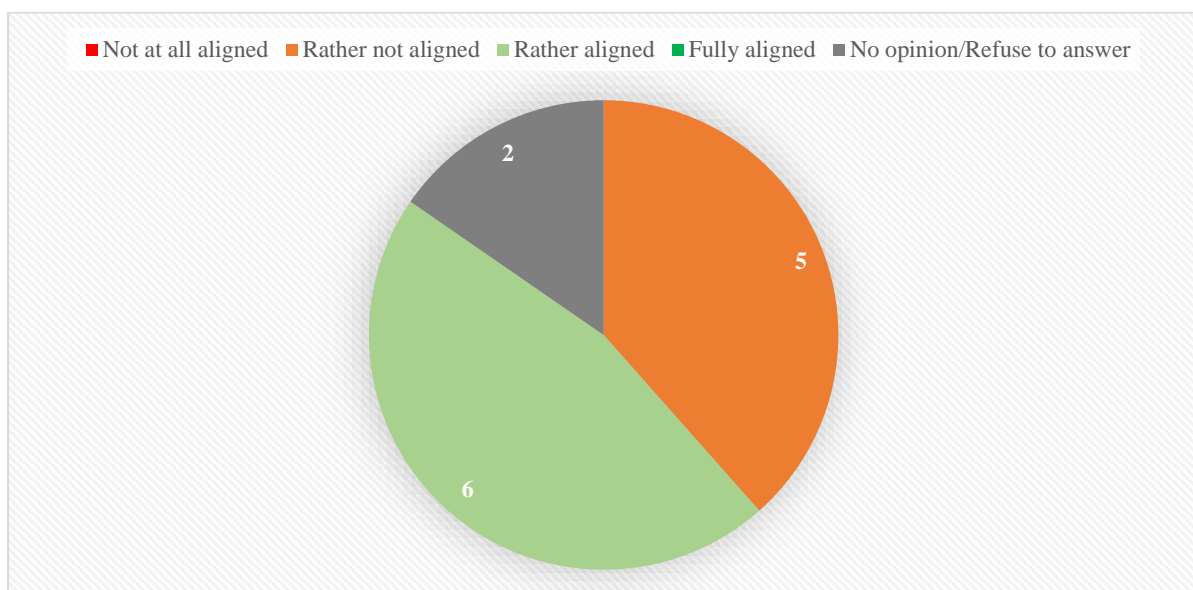
**q.4 On which of the 17 SDGs do you think the selection of the indicators included in the Eurostat report is particularly inadequate?**

*Please select up to 5 goals*
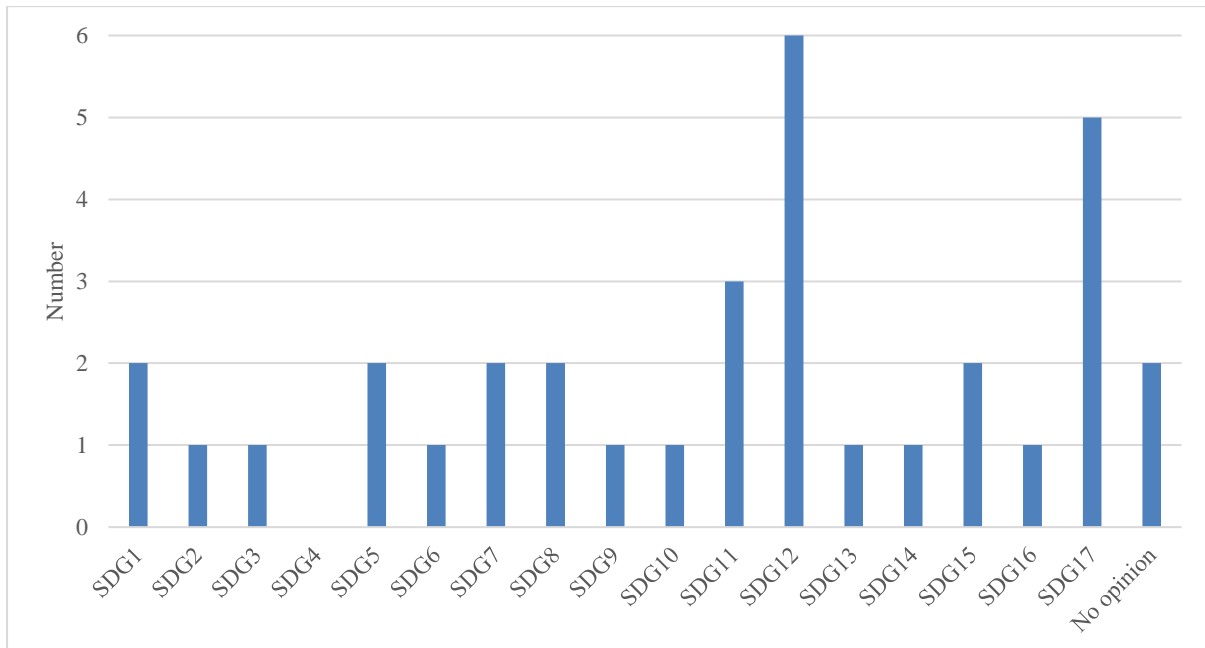


Note: The number in the graph represents the number of times a goal was cited by respondents in their answers. Respondents could each choose up to 5 goals where they perceived the indicator selection as inadequate.

Source: Authors

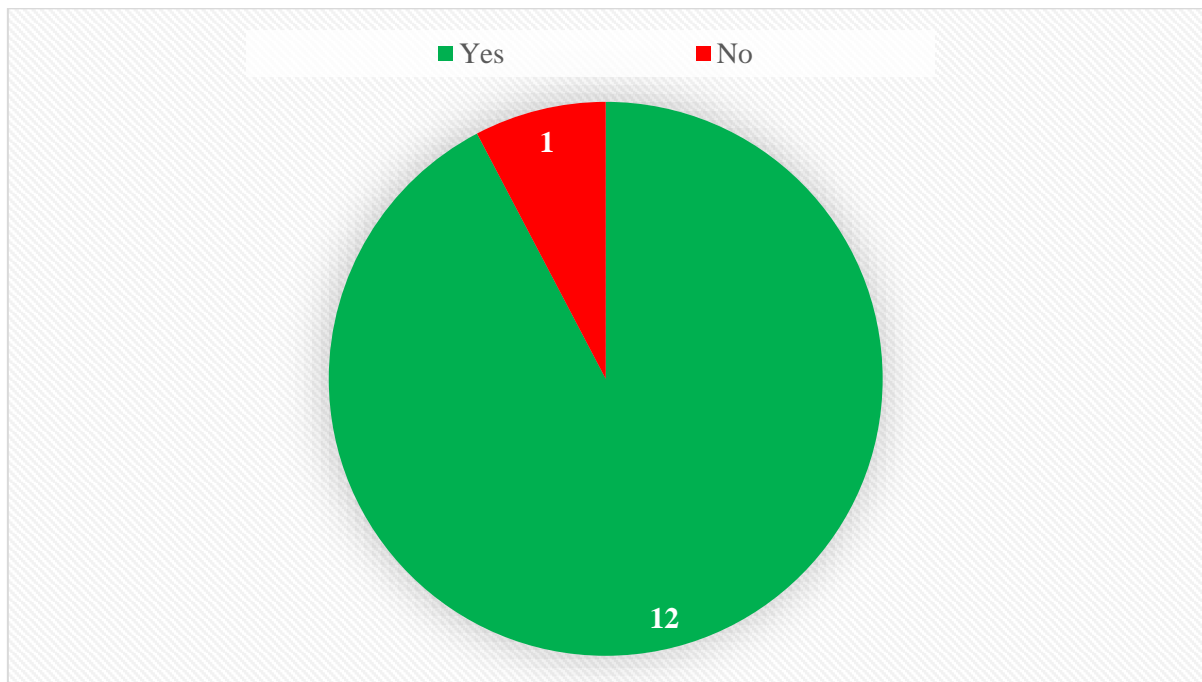**q.5 Do you perceive the following elements of the Agenda 2030 as being accurately reflected in the Eurostat report?**
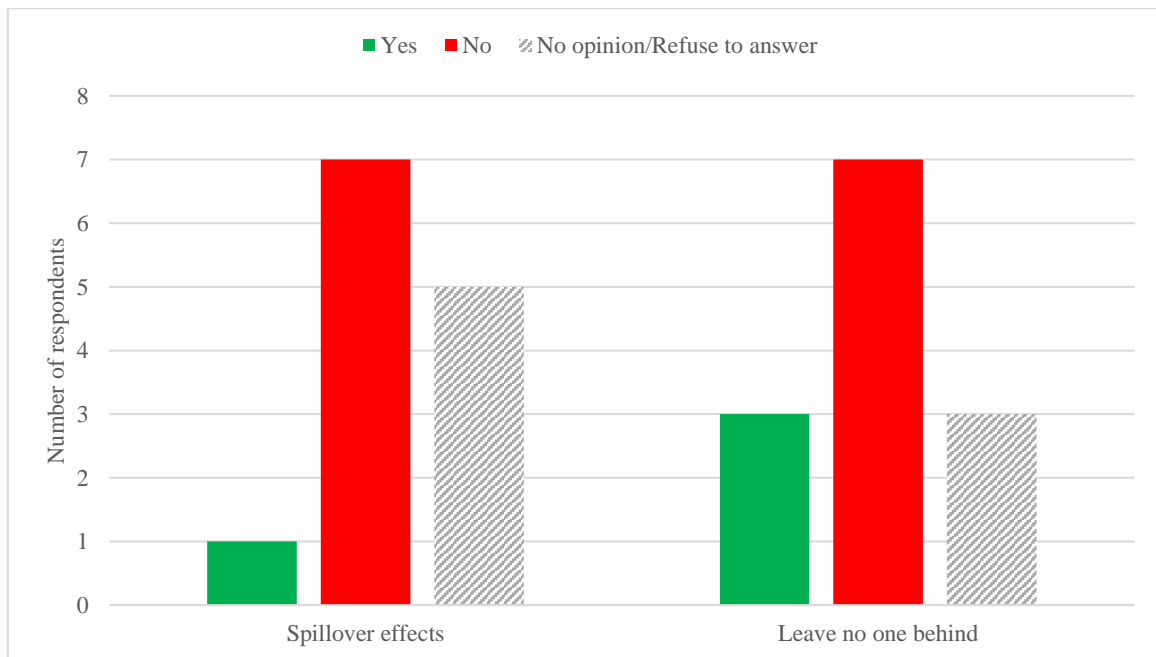


Source: Authors

**q.6 What do you perceive as the most important methodological biases of the Eurostat report?**
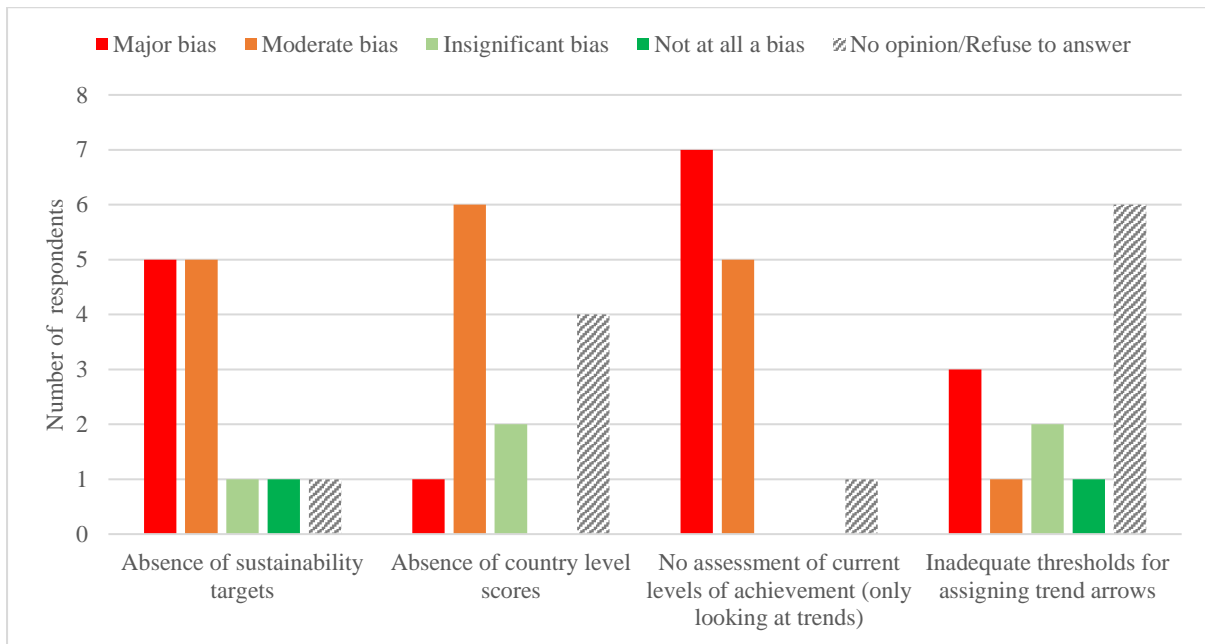


Source: Authors

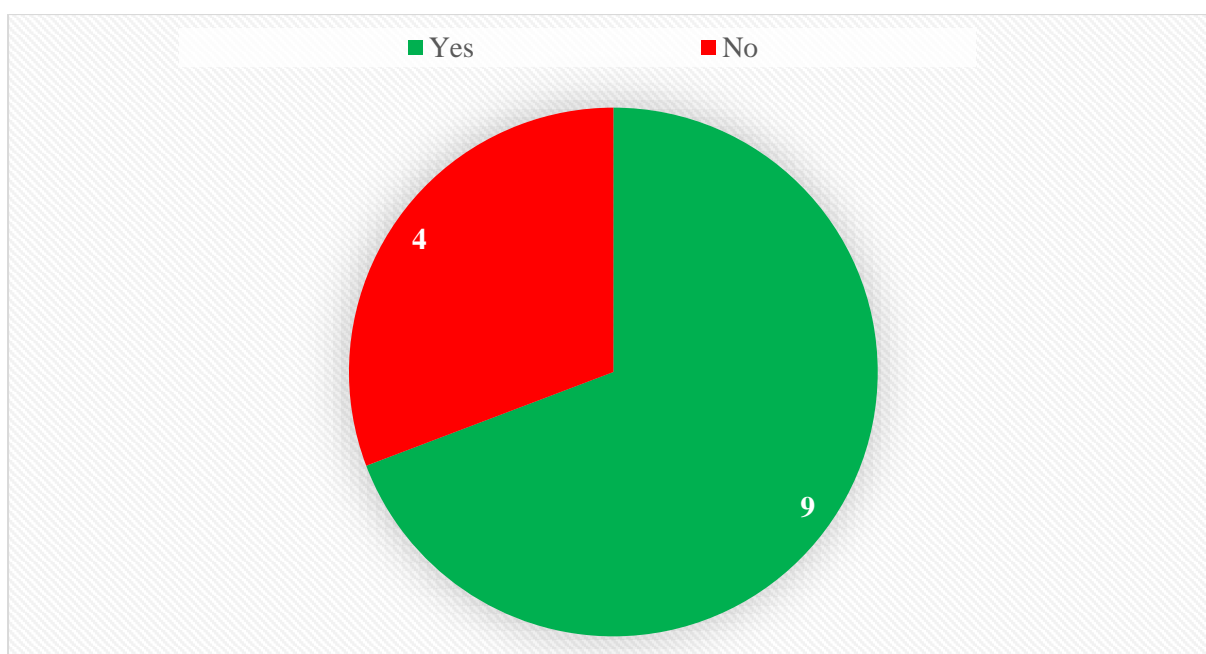**q.7 In your view, should the Eurostat report be complemented by qualitative research or assessment?**



Source: Authors

**q.10. How satisfied are you with the consultation process for the Eurostat SDG monitoring report?**
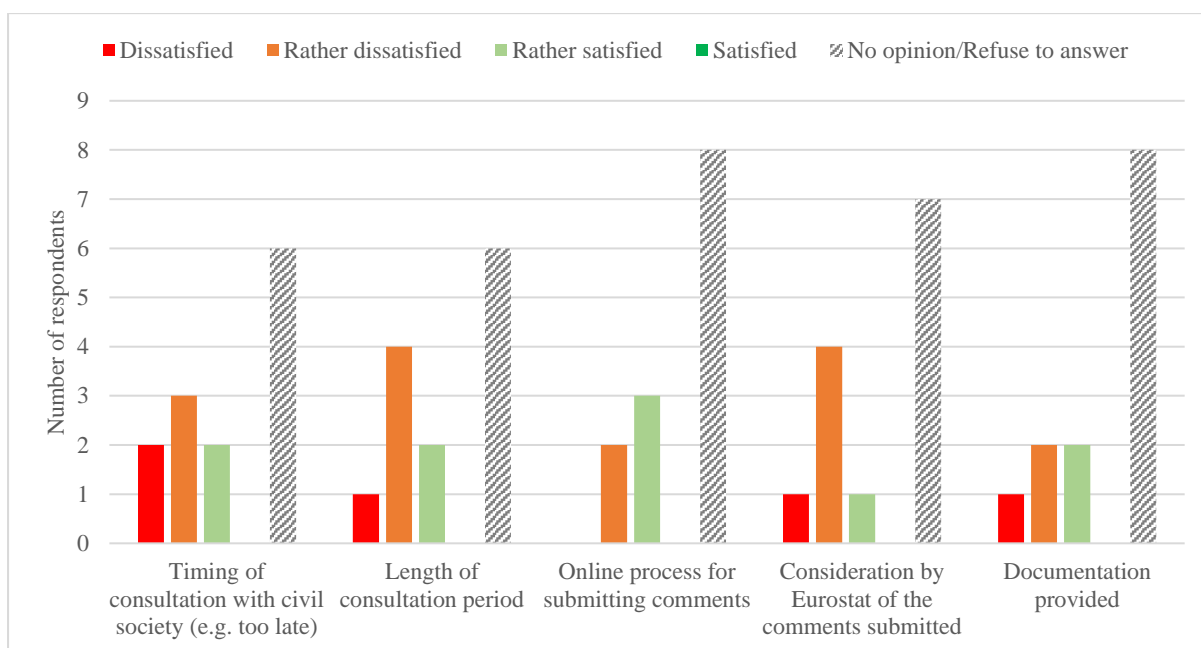


Source: Authors

**q.11 Do you see a need for a complementary SDG report using a mix of official and non-official data sources to monitor the implementation of the SDGs in the EU?**



Source: Authors

ISO14001
CERTIFIED
VINÇOTTE

EMAS
Verified
environmental
management
REG.NO. BE - BXL - 27

EN