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## Promoting the Sustainable Development Goals in Germany

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Deutsches Institut für  
Entwicklungspolitik



German Development  
Institute

Discussion Paper

13/2016

# Promoting the Sustainable Development Goals in Germany

*Imme Scholz  
Niels Keijzer  
Carmen Richerzhagen*

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Imme Scholz, Niels Keijzer and Carmen Richerzhagen

## **Abstract**

This paper analyses the past and present efforts by the German government at the federal level and its 16 federal states to contribute towards ongoing academic and policy debates on translating the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into action. The paper applies the concept of “policy coherence for sustainable development” (PCSD) as a means to assess the country’s efforts and performance to date in promoting sustainable development at home and beyond its borders. PCSD features as a separate target in the 2030 Agenda (SDG 17.3) and, through its emphasis on joined-up decision-making, is considered one of the key means to implement the new and transformative agenda. In Germany, federal ministries function relatively independently from one another, with the Chancellery only enjoying a finite amount of power that can be used to bring them together. Even more challenging is the coordination between the federal and state (*Länder*) levels. Germany’s efforts towards translating the 2030 Agenda into action thus need to find the right balance between using the opportunities provided by the transformative nature of the 2030 Agenda and the specific governance advantages and challenges that characterise the country as one of the largest federal republics in the world. Successfully realising the agenda’s goals at home and abroad thus requires Germany to capitalise on institutional processes that have proved their worth over time, but also introduce new reforms and approaches. In particular, the German federal government needs to ensure the “top-down” initiative that lies within its own powers as well as strongly support and encourage “bottom-up” action by the states, cities, local communities as well as different societal actors.

**Key words:** 2030 Agenda; sustainable development; policy coherence; Germany

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## Abbreviations

2030 Agenda	2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN)
AP 2015	Programme of Action 2015
BMUB	Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety / <i>Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz, Bau und Reaktorsicherheit</i>
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development / <i>Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung</i>
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EU	European Union
HLG	High-Level Group
HLP	High-Level Panel
HLPF	High-Level Political Forum
LDC	Least-developed Country
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PBNE	Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development / <i>Parlamentarischer Beirat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung</i>
PCD	Policy Coherence for Development
PCSD	Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
RNE	Council for Sustainable Development / <i>Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung</i>
SDSN	Sustainable Development Solutions Network
SNE	State Secretaries' Committee for Sustainable Development / <i>Staatssekretärsausschuss für nachhaltige Entwicklung</i>
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations

## 1 Introduction

This paper analyses the past and present efforts by the German government at the federal level and its 16 federal states (referred to in German as *Bundesländer* or *Länder*) to contribute towards ongoing academic and policy debates on translating the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), which was adopted in September 2015, into action. In this analysis, emphasis is given to the country's efforts and performance to date in promoting "policy coherence for sustainable development" (PCSD), which is considered one of the key means to implement the new and transformative agenda.

As per Germany's specific approach to governance and policy change in general, and its federal structures specifically, the analysis shows both the scale of the ambition and institutional investments made so far, but also the challenges the country will encounter in moving away from "business as usual". As the Chancellor's remarks at the September 2015 summit testify, the country's overall political commitment to the agenda is strong, yet the country's efforts over the next few months in internalising the strategy and accelerating reform will be key to consolidating its position as a sustainable development frontrunner. A key moment in this regard is the new Sustainable Development Strategy, of which a consultation draft was published on May 31 and is expected to be formally adopted by the end of 2016 (Bundesregierung, 2016a). In view of Germany's level of ambition voiced during negotiations, as well as the content of the 2030 Agenda, expectations for the new strategy are high, regarding its transformative character as expressed in thematic scope, specified quantitative goals, ambition to introduce integrated approaches across policy fields and its ability to reduce negative external effects of domestic policies as well as a better mix between domestic and external action.

The 2013 report of the High-Level Panel (HLP) on the post-2015 agenda, of which former German President Horst Köhler was a member, presented the argument that several "transformative shifts" were needed in order to improve human well-being within the boundaries of the Earth's ecosystems (High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, 2013). This statement resonated strongly with both the environmental and the development communities in Germany and their resolve to transform this large and highly industrialised European country, in which more than 85 per cent of its population is living in cities. More than two decades ago, in 1994, environmental protection was enshrined as a priority in the German constitution, which mandated that the state protect the environment and the well-being of future generations. As early as 2000 (and enacted by law in 2002), Germany decided to phase out nuclear energy and to move into renewable energy. In the context of the Rio+10 Johannesburg Summit in 2002, Germany set up its first Sustainable Development Strategy. After years of lukewarm as well as contested implementation of both landmark decisions, the Fukushima accident in 2011 triggered a ramped-up transformation in Germany, as it motivated Chancellor Angela Merkel to revise German energy policy by phasing out nuclear energy much more rapidly and enhancing the promotion of both renewable energy sources and energy efficiency. This accelerated transformation was very well received at the time by the German public and confirmed that strong societal support for environmental and social reforms is possible.

These particular circumstances may explain why Germany provided broad-based and early support to the call for a universal agenda that requires transformational change, both in the

so-called North and South (Scholz, 2014, p. 159). In 2015, Germany used its Presidency of the G7 group to ensure support for the 2030 Agenda and consolidate the Group's resolve to adopt an ambitious agreement at the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP 21) on climate change. Under the German Presidency, the G7 adopted a "Leaders Declaration" stating that "deep cuts in global greenhouse gas emissions are required with a decarbonisation of the global economy over the course of this century" (Group of 7, 2015, p. 12). If followed by action, this would be one of the transformative shifts requested by the HLP in 2013.

Together with France and Switzerland, Germany formed a troika in the Open Working Group's deliberations that led to the adoption in September 2015 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are incorporated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The troika strongly supported the SDGs' universal and global focus, particularly emphasising environmental goals and also arguing for the need of global monitoring and reporting on progress against the goals. In her address to the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, which adopted the new agenda by consensus, German Chancellor Merkel emphasised the need for a transformative agenda that would give the world a "human face", for which it would need "goals which cover the entire spectrum of global development and which apply to all, industrial and developing countries alike". She further conveyed her conviction that successful implementation of the goals required a strong global partnership through efficient structures at the national, regional and global levels. Concretely, she committed to further developing the German federal government's Sustainable Development Strategy in light of the 2030 Agenda, as well as for Germany to be among the first states to report on implementation during the 2016 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) (Merkel, 2015). Germany also demonstrated its commitment to the 2030 Agenda by joining a High-Level Group (HLG) that was initiated by Sweden and consists of nine leaders from all parts of the world. The Group seeks to ensure that the 17 universal SDGs and the 2030 Agenda are implemented at all levels of society (High-Level Group, 2015).<sup>1</sup>

### *Methodology*

The analysis presented in the paper draws on three methods: (1) a structured analysis of available published research work and documents, and of the expectations formulated by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other societal actors during consultations organised by the German government, (2) observations by the authors based on their exposure to and involvement in relevant processes preparing and implementing the 2030 Agenda, and (3) four expert interviews conducted with German stakeholders in March and April 2016. A key limitation of this paper that needs to be acknowledged upfront is related to its timing: it was finalised when the German federal government's consultative draft Sustainable Development Strategy had just been published. Although the orientation and focus of the strategy may therefore still evolve, the timing of this paper nonetheless allows for the topics raised to influence further discussions on the strategy as well as help in identifying lessons from past sustainable development efforts in Germany.

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1 Please refer to Weitz and Nilsson (2016) for more information about the HLG.

## 2 Germany's strategy and architecture for sustainable development

This section introduces Germany's Sustainable Development Strategy, which has been the main frame of reference for promoting sustainable development domestically since 2002. This is followed by a first tentative "headlines analysis" of the consultative draft strategy, which will reinvigorate and replace the current strategy.

### 2.1 Introducing Germany's Sustainable Development Strategy

The main framework helping the German federal government's efforts to further the 2030 Agenda is its Sustainable Development Strategy and its accompanying sustainability architecture, which were established in 2002 (Bundesregierung, 2002). The concept and institutional framework were prepared in the period from 1992 to 1998 by a Committee of Inquiry of the Bundestag on the protection of human beings and the environment.<sup>2</sup> The committee's final report recommended to adopt a strategy for sustainable development that would define goals and indicators in relevant policy fields, as well as programmes and measures in order to achieve them (Bundestag, 1998). In 1998, the committee's mandate was prolonged for another four years so that it could detail and finalise its proposals. In 2002, these recommendations were put into practice by the "red-green" coalition government in the run-up to the Johannesburg Summit 10 years after the UN Conference on Environment and Development 1992 in Rio de Janeiro. As the highest authority of the executive, the German Chancellery was assigned a leading role in designing the strategy.

One of the committee's principal recommendations concerned the creation of a sustainability council, whose mandate and composition was to emphasise that sustainable development was as much a responsibility of society as of government. This Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) was set up in 2001 and consists of 15 public figures representing business, politics, research and civil society. It advises the government on its sustainable development policy and – by presenting proposals for targets and indicators – seeks to advance the Sustainable Development Strategy as well as propose projects for its realisation. A further task of the RNE concerns fostering societal dialogue and practice on the issue of sustainability.

The strategy and its accompanying sustainability architecture (see Figure 1) consist of a number of components: (a) its 21 areas of action and 38 indicators, (b) a set of management rules (see Box 1), (c) a list of institutions and their responsibilities in implementation and (d) procedures for monitoring and review. The strategy includes a wide range of topics: for example, conservation of resources, climate protection, education, training, economic growth, mobility, nutrition, air quality, health, crime, employment, equal opportunities, prospects for families and integration. These are clustered into four areas: Intergenerational Justice, Quality of Life, Social Cohesion and International Responsibility. Annex 1 to this paper presents the strategy's areas of action and indicators, together with the most recent monitoring data, as published in 2014 (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2014). As the annex shows,

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2 The full title of the inquiry committee was "Protection of Human Beings and the Environment – Goals and Framework Conditions for a Sustainable Future Development" (authors' translation of the original title in German: Enquete-Kommission "Schutz des Menschen und der Umwelt – Ziele und Rahmenbedingungen einer nachhaltig zukunftsverträglichen Entwicklung").

the areas of action and indicators of the strategy show some convergence with the SDGs. Yet, clear gaps can be identified, too, notably with regard to the reduction of relative poverty and inequalities (SDGs 1 and 10), water management and protection of oceans and seas (SDGs 6 and 14), sustainable cities (SDG 11),<sup>3</sup> sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12),<sup>4</sup> infrastructure (SDG 9) and international cooperation (SDG 17). It is largely due to these gaps, which show the strategy's prioritisation of action "at home" and a relative neglect of its external dimension, that it was decided to thoroughly revise the strategy.

**Box 1: Germany's management rules for sustainability**

The management rules for sustainability were inspired by the same Committee of Inquiry of the Bundestag and refer to a number of principles and policy fields: the use of renewable and non-renewable natural resources in order to avoid their depletion and guarantee their substitution respectively, limiting emissions or waste in accordance with the absorption capacity of ecosystems, decoupling of energy and resource use from economic growth, integrated policymaking in order to allow for economic growth, high employment, social cohesion and environmental protection, balanced public budgets, a productive and environmentally friendly agriculture, social cohesion by the prevention of poverty and social exclusion and by facilitating political and social participation for all, and finally shaping international framework conditions in a way that poverty and hunger are reduced worldwide.

Source: Bundesregierung (2012, p. 28)

There can be little doubt as to the strategy's comprehensiveness, as illustrated by a study comparing sustainable development strategies of 26 countries, which observed that the length of such strategic documents ranges between 7 pages for the United Kingdom to 252 pages for Germany (Pisano, Lepuschitz, & Berger, 2013). Part of its length may be explained by the fact that the strategy has been deliberately conceived of as a "living document" and has, through its lifetime, been updated and revised in 2004, 2008 and 2012. Each revision was accompanied by implementation reports written by government departments and by statements of stakeholders, that is, from Parliament, the RNE, the federal states and the Association of German Cities. The revisions introduced through the 2012 Progress Report were the most detailed so far and were prompted by the German preparations for – and participation in – the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro (German Federal Government, 2012). In 2009 and 2013, the strategy underwent an independent review by a range of international experts. In their reports, they acknowledge Germany's commitment to sustainable development and institutional improvements with regard to the implementation of the strategy. However, they also point to the absence of an overall vision for a more sustainable future and a lack of information and guidance for business and other actors about how to make a contribution. In their view, Germany's role in the global context is not fully understood by the public due to the absence of scientific, social and economic evidence and data. Furthermore, they recommend further institutional changes, such as, for example, the establishment of a commissioner for sustainable development within the Chancellery (Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung [RNE], 2013).

3 This SDG, however, tends to be covered by the sustainable development strategies developed at the *Länder* level.

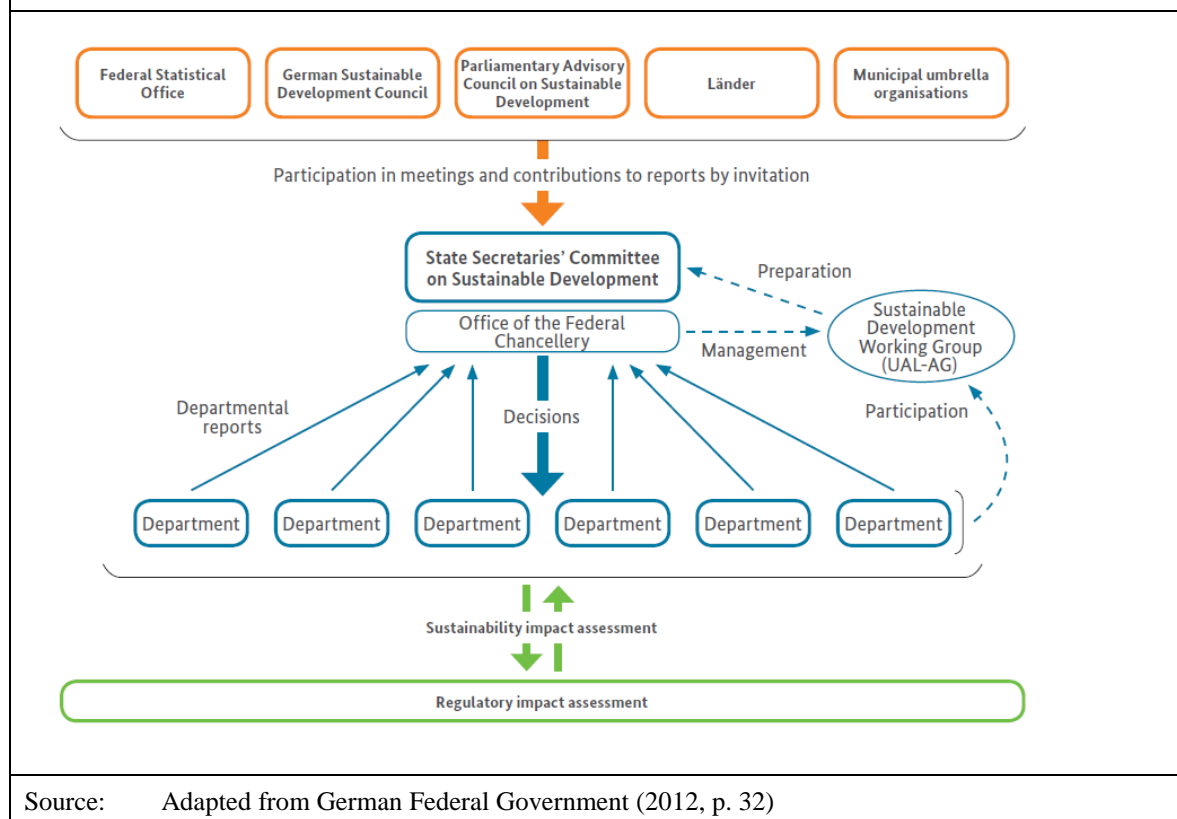
4 Indicator 1b of the strategy, however, does promote sustainable energy consumption.

## 2.2 Germany's sustainable development architecture

The responsibility of the Sustainable Development Strategy lies with the Federal Chancellery. The State Secretaries' Committee on Sustainable Development (SNE) is chaired by the Head of the Federal Chancellery and in charge of advancing and implementing the strategy. All ministries are represented on the committee at the Permanent Undersecretary of State level. The Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development (PBNE) links the strategy to the Parliament. Its overall task is to provide parliamentary support for the Sustainable Development Strategy as well as for the European Union (EU) Sustainable Development Strategy. The RNE advises the government on all matters relating to sustainable development. Its members are appointed for three years by the German Chancellor.

The following figure presents an overview of the various components of the government's institutional architecture for managing sustainable development. The SNE plays a pivotal role. It is presided over by the Chancellery but, in accordance with the *Ressortprinzip*, its capacity to act depends crucially on the determination of the ministries themselves to develop transformative action and to find solutions for the conflicts inherent in such action, which require improved horizontal and vertical policy coordination.<sup>5</sup> The innovative role of the Parliament is limited, as its committees mirror the ministries, and the PBNE has no right to initiate legislative action. Its component parts and their interrelations are discussed in more detail in Section 3 with regard to their contributions to promoting PCSD.

**Figure 1: The German government's institutional architecture for promoting sustainable development**



Source: Adapted from German Federal Government (2012, p. 32)

<sup>5</sup> The *Ressortprinzip* is discussed in more detail in Section 3.3 of this paper.

Although the *Länder* are closely involved, it should be emphasised that the strategy is the strategy of the federal government and does not bind the *Länder* or otherwise enter into their policy competences. The *Länder* have their own “localised” sustainability strategies that refer to the federal strategy and include own monitoring systems to inform their implementation. In order to facilitate cooperation between the *Länder* and federal government, a joint informal committee was established. This committee engages mainly in information exchange, which helps the *Länder* to reflect the priorities of the federal strategy in their own strategies. Its most concrete objective is the elaboration of common and shared indicators. Proposals exist but have not been adopted yet (Pisano et al., 2013; Fischer & Scholz, 2015). In general, cooperation on sustainable development issues between the federal and the state levels is considered weak. At the political level, the *Länder* are also represented in the Federal Council (Bundesrat), which, in view of its function, is often described as Germany’s upper house of Parliament, similar to the US Senate. The Federal Council provides comments on government legislation and in certain areas enjoys veto rights. In case the party-political composition of the Federal Council differs strongly from that of the federal government, the risk of political stalemates on key sustainable development dossiers increases. A reform that entered into force in 2007 reduced the proportion of federal legislation subject to Federal Council approval from 60 per cent to 35–40 per cent (Sénat, 2007). The Federal Council is currently not optimally structured with a view to furthering the 2030 Agenda, given its separate committees, which are linked to individual German federal ministries, such as the committees on environment policy, transport and foreign affairs.<sup>6</sup>

### 2.3 Discussions towards the revision of the strategy and its linkages with the 2030 Agenda

In light of the new 2030 Agenda, the federal government decided to fully revise the strategy in 2016 instead of just updating it. The Chancellery is responsible for managing the drafting process, which is led by the Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) and the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). All federal government departments (*Ressorts*) were asked by the Chancellery to provide inputs. During the post-2015 negotiation process and afterwards, Germany strongly advocated an understanding of the 2030 Agenda that sees the whole package of the SDGs as “integrated and indivisible” and as “universal goals and targets which involve the entire world, developed and developing countries alike” (United Nations, 2015, Outcome document, paragraph 6). Translating this into a new strategy and into new policy measures is ambitious, as it questions conventional understandings of sustainable development (e.g. as a responsibility of international environment policy and of development cooperation) and established routines of sectoral autonomy in policy-making, which are often referred to as “silos” in policy debates. Defining thematic goals that mirror the innovations of the SDGs are one pragmatic way forward, given this background.

As a key priority, it has been argued that the international dimension of the Sustainable Development Strategy in particular needs to be strengthened and overhauled if the revised

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6 An overview can be found at <http://www.bundesrat.de/EN/organisation-en/ausschuesse-en/ausschuesse-en-node.html>

strategy is to serve as an implementation framework for the 2030 Agenda. For this purpose, the strategy should address and prevent negative external effects of domestic policies with regard to global common goods and sustainable development in affected countries in order to enhance engagement in global collective action and cooperation with developing countries (RNE, 2015; Bundesregierung, 2016a, 2016b). Although the current strategy stands among one of the most comprehensive efforts to steer sustainable development “at home”, its external and global dimension remains limited to affirming the well-known UN quantitative target for official development assistance, as well as a commitment to open German markets to developing-country exports (Scholz, 2014, p. 166). This is related to the strategy’s origins as a governmental response to the UN Conferences on Environment and Development in 1992 and 2002, in which sustainable development strategies were identified as instruments for implementing Agenda 21, and in which the main emphasis was on domestic action. Transnational impacts of domestic action or policies and a strengthening of international cooperation across policy fields and beyond development cooperation were not in focus. In this context, it is important to recall that this concern was key to the Programme of Action 2015 (AP 2015), which the German government adopted as a means to implement the UN Millennium Declaration and its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) across all government departments. It was developed under the leadership of the BMZ with the broad involvement of all other relevant ministries and was adopted by the Federal Cabinet. Although its overarching objective was fighting poverty, its 10 priority areas covered a range of topics similar to the SDGs. Enhancing “policy coherence for development” (PCD) was a core intention of the AP 2015 (Bundesregierung, 2001).

In May 2015, the RNE issued a statement with recommendations to the German government on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda (RNE, 2015). The RNE considered the 2030 Agenda to be a major opportunity to harness German sustainability policies as well as review its instruments and goals. It recommended implementing the SDGs at two levels: within Germany by also considering transnational impacts of domestic policies and activities, as well as “outside” Germany by cooperating with other countries. The new strategy should clearly be guided by the SDGs, but its level of ambition should neither be limited by them nor fall behind existing international commitments. With regard to Germany’s sustainability framework introduced above, the RNE recommended updating the management rules, considering the inclusion of the sustainability principles into the Constitution and having annual debates in Parliament on the state of sustainability policy. Finally, the RNE recommended that all government departments should participate in helping to achieve the SDGs; for this purpose, they should prepare and publish sectoral strategies that underpin the overarching sustainability strategy and are related to specific targets.

## 2.4 Goals and indicators of the new consultative draft of Germany’s Sustainable Development Strategy

The consultative draft was adopted by the federal government on 31 May 2016 and first presented to the public by the Chancellor (Bundesregierung, 2016a). The draft is open for comments until 31 July 2016 and the final version is expected to be adopted by the Federal Cabinet in autumn 2016. A prominent feature of the new consultative draft – at 249 pages and by no means a compact document – is that it follows the 2030 Agenda; in



17 chapters, it details how Germany intends to implement each SDG at home and abroad. By focussing on the SDGs, the number of specific areas addressed by the strategy declined from 21 to 17, whereas the indicators addressed by the SDGs expanded from 38 to 61 (Bundesregierung, 2016a, p. 33). The descriptions of goals and indicators and related government actions take the lion's share of the draft strategy. Yet, towards the end of the document, a separate chapter features contributions by the PBNE, the RNE, the *Länder* and the local level. These written contributions are thought to emphasise the ambition of the strategy to unite action – from the federal to the local level – as well as to include all spheres of society, although it should be noted that no specific contributions from business associations, civil society organisations and science associates were included.

Although differing from the current strategy in a fundamental sense, the way in which the SDGs have been applied to the strategy also indicates considerable continuity<sup>7</sup>: similar to the existing strategy, the consultative draft has a strong bias towards domestic action – only a few new indicators include external and global effects more explicitly – leaving the very last goal, SDG 17, to explicitly address international cooperation. The goal encompasses three indicators that respectively cover Germany's official development assistance budget, imports from developing countries and least-developed countries (LDCs) in particular, as well as students in Germany from developing countries and LDCs. There are a few indicators that break this pattern (see Box 2), yet the large majority of targets concern action within Germany's borders. More fundamentally, the targets are proposed, yet they do not include any proposed values that express the level of ambition and the basis for monitoring and review. It is to be expected though that these will be proposed later, once a broad consensus for the various goals and areas of action have been determined.

The proposed new indicators are highly welcome, including those covering areas that are not addressed in the current strategy. Stronger commitments for global and international action, however, are still missing in several areas: there is no mention of the feedstock imports, on which German animal production is highly dependent (SDG 2); under SDG 12, an indicator measuring the number of German companies adopting sustainability reporting would have been welcome, as well as an SDG 16-related one on reducing arms exports to countries in crisis and involved in conflicts. It has to be acknowledged, though, that the chapters describing government action in the draft report to the HLPF and in the draft sustainability strategy provide a more comprehensive picture of the range of activities foreseen – and addressing explicitly – the international responsibility of Germany. Not all policies can be adequately addressed with quantitative indicators.

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7 Please refer to Annex 2 of this paper for a detailed comparison of the indicators proposed in the current strategy with the new consultative draft.

<b>Box 2: New indicators that strengthen the international dimension of the German sustainability strategy</b>		
<b>Goal</b>	<b>What should be achieved</b>	<b>Indicator</b>
SDG 5 Gender	Strengthen global economic participation of women	Vocational training of women and girls through German development cooperation
SDG 6 Water	Improve access to drinking water and sanitation worldwide, improve quality	Number of people with new access to drinking water and sanitation through German support
SDG 8 Economic growth and employment	Use resources sparingly and efficiently	Total raw materials productivity: raw materials input (including imports of raw materials)
	Facilitate decent work worldwide (global value chains)	Share in German sales of textiles and clothing of the members of the Textile Alliance, who apply social and environmental standards in their whole supply chain and report on them
SDG 13 Climate change	German contribution to international climate finance	International climate finance for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and for adaptation to climate change
SDG 14 Oceans	Protect and sustainably use the oceans and their resources	Share of sustainably managed fisheries (defined as maximum sustainable yield) in the total number of fisheries of the North Sea and the Baltic Sea
SDG 15 Terrestrial biodiversity	Avoid deforestation	Payments to developing countries for the conservation of forests and afforestation proven under the REDD+ framework
SDG 16 Governance and peace	Strengthen arms control, particularly small arms	Number of projects worldwide for the securing, registration and destruction of small and light arms supported by Germany
SDG 17 Means of implementation and global partnership	Technical knowledge transfer	Number of students and researchers from developing countries and LDCs active in mathematics, natural sciences and engineering per year
	Improve trade opportunities of developing countries	German imports from developing countries (old) and from LDCs (new)
<b>Proposed new indicators to be elaborated for the final version of the strategy</b>		
SDG 12 Sustainable consumption and production	Reduce food waste in Germany	Adapt FAO Global Food Loss Index to German conditions
	Public procurement	Develop an indicator for public procurement that follows sustainability criteria or labelling
SDG 4 Education	Education for sustainable development	Develop an indicator for measuring initiatives to strengthen the acquisition of competences for developing and applying sustainable solutions, including all stages of education
SDG 2 or SDG 12	Soil protection	Develop a new indicator that allows to survey changes in soil quality
SDG 11 Cities	Use of space	The inter-ministerial working group on sustainability indicators will examine a practice-oriented indicator on the use of space
Source: Bundesregierung (2016a, pp. 52–54, 226–228)		

Other blind spots appear in the new draft strategy when contrasted with the recently published performance gap analysis, as presented in the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Dashboard (Sachs, Schmidt-Traub, Kroll, Durand-Delacre, & Teksoz, 2016, p. 17). This Dashboard shows how countries perform domestically in each SDG by means of a traffic light system: green (attained), yellow (significant challenges) and red (major challenges) (Sachs et al., 2016, p. 45). As per this analysis, Germany has already attained one SDG, namely SDG 1, which is considered to be achieved by most OECD countries. The indicators mentioned here, however, do not reflect Target 1.2: “By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.” Germany moreover faces major challenges (red) in SDGs 3 (health), 9 (infrastructure), 13 (climate change) and 14 (oceans). When comparing Germany to other countries, the Dashboard indicates that Germany’s comparative performance level can be regarded as medium to low. This is especially evident with regard to SDGs 3 (health), 6 (water), 7 (energy), 12 (sustainable consumption and production) and 17 (partnership). There are three SDGs where nearly all countries are classified as red: SDGs 13 (climate change), 14 (oceans) and 15 (terrestrial biodiversity). In the first two cases, Germany is a part of the red majority, whereas it positively distinguishes itself in the yellow category in relation to SDG 15.

## 2.5 German sustainability architecture in the new draft of Germany’s sustainability strategy

One year before the current draft was adopted, the RNE presented a paper advancing a number of recommendations for the new strategy (RNE, 2015). Although several recommendations influenced the wording of the new strategy, many principal recommendations on reforming the wider sustainability architecture were ignored. These include including the sustainability principle in the Constitution, mandating the Chancellery to prepare annual reports on the strategy’s implementation and presenting these to the Parliament, as well as giving the PBNE a permanent status and the right to initiate legislation. Other such recommendations are still under consideration by government, such as specific measures for improving inter-ministerial cooperation on goal achievement. The RNE also recommended that the participation of the *Länder* and municipalities in implementation and reporting, as well as dialogue with and complementary engagement by non-state actors, is to be increased so as to balance top-down political commitment to the SDGs with bottom-up support and action.

In a first reaction to the new draft, the RNE emphasised the need for further reforms to the sustainability architecture, which it considers necessary in order to achieve the intended results (RNE, 2016). This includes a higher frequency of meetings of the SNE and an annual review of the state of implementation; the appointment of dedicated SDG ambassadors in each ministry supported by a dedicated budget and the responsibility to help prepare the SNE meetings; as well as a dedicated budget of the Chancellery for analysis and studies to support better implementation action in areas where progress is slow. The RNE also recommends introducing ex-ante review processes for new legislation that examine whether it complies with the (updated) management rules, and for reviews of inter-ministerial cooperation as well as analysis of the consequences of omitted action.

In its response to the draft strategy, SDSN Germany underlines the need to include important targets and indicators that have not been incorporated (e.g. Germany's contribution to overcome poverty, domestic production and consumption patterns). It further recommends taking measures to help develop capacities and structures to support the implementation of sustainable development policies (e.g. increase personnel and budget for the implementation) and emphasises the importance of science, innovation and technologies for the implementation process (e.g. increased research funding towards Agenda 2030) (SDSN Germany, 2016).

With regard to the *Länder*, the draft strategy proposes greater and more structured involvement from them through a new Working Group of the Federal Chancellery and the *Länder's* prime ministers' offices, and thus a more dedicated approach to including and furthering their own sustainable development strategies. It also refers to a proposal for strengthening continuous dialogue with non-state actors, in addition to the existing formats (Sustainability Council, dialogue platform established by the ministries of environment, and development) (Bundesregierung, 2016a).

## 2.6 Report of the German government to the High-Level Political Forum in July 2016

The HLPF 2016 is the first to be held since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The session will include voluntary reviews of 22 countries and thematic reviews of progress on the SDGs. Germany is one of these countries and is preparing a report on the initial steps and approaches being taken for implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs as well as the architecture for follow-up and review. A draft version of the report has been published (Bundesregierung, 2016b) and was discussed with the public in June 2016. The report is built around Germany's Sustainable Development Strategy and its development cooperation and reports on the 17 SDGs. Under each goal, Germany reports on i) national activities, ii) global responsibility and iii) the support to partner countries.

## 3 Legal and institutional arrangements to foster integration, coordination and coherence in Germany

### 3.1 From policy coherence for development to policy coherence for sustainable development

A few conceptual remarks should be made at the beginning of this chapter as regards policy coherence. First of all, the specific term "policy coherence for development" can be defined as "the synergic interaction between foreign aid and all other development-related policy areas" (Carbone & Keijzer, 2016, p. 1). The aforementioned AP 2015 served for a couple of years as the primary guiding framework for promoting PCD within the German government. The origins of the specific term can be traced back to the late 1990s and represents a response to situations and cases where such synergetic interaction was not observed, and where other policies contributed to undermining the effectiveness of development cooperation. Four causes for such incoherence were defined by Ashoff

(2005, p. 2): (i) societal and political norms (laws and implicit policy priorities have evolved very differently in specific policy fields over time), (ii) political decision-making (diverging political interests at the national and European levels, increasing complexity in political decision-making due to globalisation and decentralisation, and the relatively low political standing of development and environmental policy), (iii) policy formulation and coordination (deficits in formulation, in the structure and process of coordination, as well as information deficits), (iv) the conceptual area (increasing complexity of the development agenda, knowledge gaps and complexity of the development process per se). In view of these causes of incoherence, full coherence is possible neither in theory nor in practice. In a similar vein, it has been suggested that perfect coherence is impossible in a pluralistic political system and can only be achieved through absolute and competent dictatorships (Picciotto, 2005, p. 323). When promoting PCD – with the “D” being conceptualised as the objective of the 2030 Agenda – these reflections should be kept in mind so as to manage expectations and emphasise that a “business as usual” approach will not be adequate. Instead, the challenge of promoting PCSD involves more than an added letter and – as is argued below for the German case – requires moving more decisively from concentrated towards shared responsibility. This entails a gradual shift from the existing PCD approach – with the BMZ as its undisputed owner – to an approach whereby all federal ministries should seek to share ownership and responsibility for realising the 2030 Agenda.

Under SDG 17, the 2030 Agenda includes a target calling for enhancing PCSD. Earlier discussions on PCD had frequently alluded to the difficulty of an unambiguous definition of “development”, which, in practice, was often equated to the dominant objective of poverty reduction. In turn, this poverty reduction target was equated to economic growth in developing countries.<sup>8</sup> Although PCD has been defined as universal in focus and scope, PCSD further emphasises this goal in relation to the 2030 Agenda and accentuates this through the importance of pursuing the SDGs “domestically”. This means that coherence now also includes the domestic impact of policies in Europe, and not only their external impact on developing countries, as mentioned above. Although it provides a stronger policy direction by identifying “sustainable development” as the synergetic effects to be achieved through policies, it is clear that it increases the level of ambition in relation to the four causes of incoherence listed above. In relation to the second and third causes (respectively, decision-making and formulation / coordination), it can also be argued that the 2030 Agenda does not limit the objective of PCSD to actions of governments. Instead, given the multi-actor focus of the 2030 Agenda, the challenge of PCSD also refers to the organised actions of non-state actors, and thus extends to the activities of the private sector, multi-national companies and, for instance, the investment of pension funds. This all but serves to illustrate that the objective of promoting PCSD is an ambitious one, and a process of constant improvement and negotiation on principles and their translation into practice.

This paper’s aim and ambitions do not allow for a comprehensive discussion on the differences between PCD and PCSD, but it starts from the assumption that, whereas there are normative (or goal-related) differences and a stronger emphasis on domestic action under PCSD, the *process* of furthering the two concepts is comparable. One important

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8 Reasons may include that this was the dominant focus in development policies, but also due to the availability of data.

difference emerges, however: ownership for PCD can be clearly located in the development field, which claimed recognition of the whole-of-government commitment to prosperity for developing countries from other departments in their policies. In the case of PCSD, ownership is more diffuse, as the core objectives of all departments are recognised in the SDGs, whereas at the same time all of them are called to relate to overarching dimensions of well-being or human prosperity (exemplified in the so-called 5 Ps – people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership). For PCSD processes, therefore, the changing constituency requires efforts to promote broad-based ownership, with focal points needing to be identified in all departments.

### 3.2 Germany's efforts to promote PCSD in the post-2015 process and beyond

The government's first initiatives in direct reference to PCD were taken in 1995 to respond to a public debate on the effects on poor countries of public policies inconsistent with German development policy; these effects were reflected upon in the German government's "10th Development Policy Report". Following the publication of this report, the new government coalition of the Social Democratic Party and Green Party took three measures to enhance its capacity for PCD: (1) the BMZ became a member of the National Security Council in 1998, allowing it to influence the government's political guidelines for arms export; (2) responsibility for development policy was further concentrated in the BMZ by adding aspects that were previously the responsibility of other ministries (e.g. EU development policy and technical cooperation with Eastern Europe); (3) in 2000, the Joint Rules of Procedures of the Federal Ministries were amended and gave the BMZ expanded rights to scrutinise other departments' draft legislation (Madrid, 2007, pp. 4–5; Ashoff, 2005, pp. 75–76).

These commitments to PCD were formalised in April 2001 as a whole-of-government obligation in the Programme of Action 2015 (Germany's MDG implementation plan) and documented in the government's "11th Development Policy Report" (Madrid, 2007, p. 5). The Programme of Action prominently stated that poverty reduction is not just an objective for Germany's development cooperation but requires coherent contributions from all other policy areas (Ashoff, 2005, p. 78). Although ambitious, the Programme of Action also was strongly associated with the coalition government of the day. An evaluation detected a waning political commitment by the new government to the Programme of Action (Mackie et al., 2007a, p. 77), and the strategy's influence indeed soon disappeared, even within the development department. A Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Peer Review published in 2010 noted that – although the coalition accord had again prioritised PCD – Germany could still have done more to better embed the concept in other ministries because it had made only very modest investments in the BMZ's capacity and showed deficits in the areas of monitoring, analysing and reporting (DAC, 2010).

After the Rio+20 conference in 2012, two ministries in Germany were made responsible for the post-2015 process, these being the BMUB and the BMZ. Their first cooperative engagement in preparing the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro – as well as more recently its successor, the Rio+20 conference – made them natural partners for coordinating the government's position towards and during the post-2015 negotiations. It is important though to note upfront that both ministries did not enter the process with the same interests: both ministries have been cooperating

intensively in supporting international processes towards sustainable development, and German development cooperation has been a reliable funding source for developing countries interested in developing capacities and programmes in various areas of environmental policy and resource management. However, the BMUB could not increase its own financial resources for international environmental cooperation as much as it would have liked. This changed in 2008 with the creation of the BMUB's International Climate Initiative (Internationale Klimaschutzinitiative), which supports climate and biodiversity projects in developing and newly industrialising countries, as well as in countries in transition. In the early years of the programme, its financial resources came from the proceeds of auctioning allowances under the emissions trading scheme.<sup>9</sup> To ensure financial continuity, further funds were made available to both ministries through the Special Energy and Climate Fund. Both funding mechanisms are now part of the BMUB's and the BMZ's regular budgets.<sup>10</sup>

In the BMZ, the focus on the post-2015 process was very much influenced by its strong engagement in achieving the MDGs, which translated poverty reduction mainly into social policies and neglected environmental and economic aspects. This conceptual separation between sustainable development and poverty reduction, promoted by the MDGs, required renewing the understanding of the positive linkages between development and environment – within the development sector and between the various organisations and actor groups in the fields of development on the one side, and environment on the other, at least in the beginning of the process. Thus, in the development community, the debate on why environmental engagement is a necessary and legitimate objective in the post-2015 process had to be taken up again, and it had to be actively shown that this would not divert attention and funding for social objectives. Also, it had to be justified why a universal approach and a stronger focus on global action would not be to the detriment of the poorest segments of the population and LDCs. For the BMUB, this was different, as the SDG / post-2015 process was seen as a direct continuation of the Rio Process and as being very close to its core policy field. For both ministries, however, the connection between the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Strategy was not evident at first sight, due to its strong domestic focus and its identification with environmental objectives, although it was embraced wholeheartedly later on.

Experts consulted for this study confirmed that, despite the strong national priority expressed for sustainable development, the interest in and involvement of other ministries still leaves much to be desired. Therefore, the two ministries may also seek to strengthen their cooperation inside Germany so as to raise awareness and sensitise other ministries to ensure their involvement in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. As is described in the next section, they could do so only when facilitated by a clear political priority across the federal government and with a guiding role of the Chancellery.

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9 The BMZ received part of the proceeds to finance its own climate change-related programmes.

10 For more information, see <http://www.international-climate-initiative.com/en/about-the-iki/iki-funding-instrument/>

### 3.3 Promoting policy coherence: Challenges and opportunities in the German context

In its position paper on the post-2015 negotiations and one of its key inputs to the EU's joint engagement in the negotiations, the German government made an important caveat: "Germany's contribution to achieving the goals of the post-2015 agenda will depend to a great extent on a coherent concept pursued by all Ministries" (GoG, 2014, p. 2, cited in Scholz, 2014, p. 163). This quote encapsulates the level of awareness of the importance of ensuring a whole-of-government response to achieve the new agenda, but also the scale of the challenge of doing so in a large and complex federal state.

#### **Box 3: Promoting coherence – why there are no best practices**

An external evaluation of the efforts by the EU and its member states to promote PCD confirmed there is no single best approach to doing so. Instead, doing so successfully requires determining how best to bring about policy change within a specific institutional and administrative context. It can be theorised that the approaches in the EU may be located along two continuums:

1. Approaches to government: ranging from consensus to majoritarian approaches
2. Approaches to policy change: from holistic to particularistic approaches

Under the first distinction, a majoritarian model relies on the majority of people taking decisions and a centralised state. Institutions are conceived to facilitate the emergence of a ruling majority. At the other end of the spectrum, a consensus model considers majority rule a minimum requirement, and instead seeks to maximise the size of that majority. Rules and institutions thus facilitate broad-based participation both inside and outside government.

The second distinction entails a decision on whether or not to go for a whole-of-government approach to achieve policy change, in this case the promotion of PCD. Under a holistic (or mainstreaming) approach, one policy statement is given considerable strength and authority. Such an ideally legally binding statement imposes the obligation to promote PCD on government as a whole. The other extreme, a particularistic approach, makes a dedicated group of officials (and through them often a particular ministry) responsible to promote PCD throughout governance.

At that time, the evaluation study categorised Germany as taking a middle position between a consensus and a majoritarian approach to government, and putting a main emphasis on particularistic approaches for promoting PCD. It should be emphasised, though, that the above categorisation does not assume that governments are rational in adopting a "best-fit" approach to promote PCD, once they gather the political will to ensure they do.

Source: Mackie et al. (2007b, pp. 6–11)

Comparative analysis of OECD members' efforts to promote PCD tends to highlight efforts by north European states, which are typically characterised by relatively "flat" governments that facilitate direct cooperation between ministries. Many countries that have committed to strengthen PCD, however, do not fit this picture very well and are more hierarchically structured – Germany being one of them (see Box 3). Although the Chancellor provides general direction, the Departmental Principle (or *Ressortprinzip*) of the German constitution gives autonomy to cabinet ministers to manage the policy areas they are tasked with. This principle stresses their autonomy and non-hierarchical relationship and results in a practice of "non-interference" that makes it difficult for the BMZ – bearing a horizontal responsibility for development policy – or any other ministry to influence the actions of their peers (Lundsgaarde, 2014, pp. 20–21). The BMZ has introduced some procedural institutional reforms to promote PCD in a manner that



accentuates awareness-raising as opposed to seeking influence over government policies and German positions in European and international negotiations. Until today, no specific commitments have been made with regard to PCSD, hence the specific legal and institutional arrangements for PCD, as presented and discussed below, remain the current “baseline” for government’s subsequent efforts in promoting PCSD.

### 3.4 Assessing institutional approaches<sup>11</sup>

The past and present government coalitions have engaged on specific PCD dossiers, with a key focus being on EU policies, including trade and agriculture. Yet, independent studies have observed that the general political commitment to PCD has faded somewhat in recent years (Galeazzi et al., 2013, p. 7). A dedicated unit for PCD was first put in place in the BMZ under the 2009–2013 government, yet it was removed during a subsequent reorganization, whereas the current government accommodated the responsibility for PCD to a unit that was otherwise involved in the BMZ’s bilateral cooperation mandate. The 2015 DAC Peer Review nonetheless assessed the government’s commitment to PCD as being strong, making reference to the country’s organic integration of PCD into its policy-making, the cabinet seat of the development minister and the strengthened BMZ to support him in this. It highlighted the revision of the Sustainable Development Strategy as a means to further concretise its level of ambition in the field of PCD and to create a basis for accountability (DAC, 2015).

The coalition agreement of the current government (2013–2017) identified the improvement of development-oriented inter-ministerial cooperation as a key priority (Bundestag, 2016, p. 11). As the 2015 Peer Review notes, a key mechanism for the German government to promote PCD concerns the SNE (Bundesregierung – Staatssekretärsausschuss für nachhaltige Entwicklung, 2014). This committee comprises state secretaries from all federal ministries and is responsible for all important decisions concerning the sustainability strategy. The committee is chaired by the Head of the Chancellery, which is also responsible for the Sustainable Development Strategy, which is said to have contributed to reducing conflicts between ministries (Pisano et al., 2013). One interviewee emphasised that this forum brings together the state secretaries, but that it is not operational enough in terms of adequately bringing together the ministries that they represent.

In addition to the State Secretaries’ Committee and its principal mandate on furthering the 2030 Agenda, inter-ministerial committees have been established to address specific issues such as migration, food security and climate change, or international negotiations (DAC, 2015, p. 26). Another key committee from a PCD perspective concerns the State Secretaries Committee for EU Affairs, which meets every month under the chairmanship of the foreign ministry. Its meetings are prepared by the foreign ministry’s EU coordination unit, which is in contact with similar units in other ministries, including the BMZ (Galeazzi et al., 2013, p. 46). Finally, a recent analysis by the scientific service of the German Parliament identifies the introduction of a “foreign and development policy

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11 This section analyses existing reviews of the federal government’s approaches to promote PCD. It should be emphasised that the concept of PCSD requires adaptation of these overall strategies and institutional approaches. Yet, as indicated above, discussions with a view to determine these implications are presently ongoing in relevant fora, including the OECD.

jour fixe” between the Chancellery, the foreign office and the BMZ, as well as the Secretary of State committee on Afghanistan as being relevant for promoting PCD (Bundestag, 2015, p. 12). A key challenge though is how these “softer” coordination-orientated initiatives interact with the legally binding non-interference principle of ministries. Examples of such softer measures include the RNE’s recommendation to “encourage” all ministries to assign themselves the task of implementing the 2030 Agenda and to take into account a series of existing strategies that cover specific SDGs (RNE, 2015, p. 9). Inconsistent policies can reduce overall governance effectiveness and can undermine public trust in government; ministers, therefore, also share an interest in cooperating and will do so to the best of their abilities – with the Chancellery playing a key facilitating role.

Whereas at an inter-ministerial level promising actions have been taken – including notably the creation of a State Secretaries’ Committee on Sustainable Development – only tentative steps have been taken to increase the government’s capacities to implement the 2030 Agenda, which, for instance, entails a greater focus on the domestic policies of Germany, as well as actions taken at the level of the *Länder* (Lundsgaarde, 2014; Fischer & Scholz, 2015). Although its dedicated capacity for PCD remains limited and has, in fact, been reduced in recent years, the special units created at the BMZ for the post-2015 and climate change negotiations have been transformed into regular units and provide a strong capacity potential for the BMZ to take an important role in facilitating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The BMZ’s role in co-preparing the government’s presentation for the July 2016 HLPF session, together with the BMUB and the German embassy in New York, may provide a useful means for solidifying the ministry’s profile within government in this regard. As per the earlier analysis of the leading roles of the BMUB and the BMZ in the German government, the decision to put the same ministries in charge of preparing the HLPF is both pragmatic and logical. However, interviewees suggested that – in view of the stronger domestic focus of the 2030 Agenda, much less an “external agenda” compared to the MDGs – government should consider enlarging the team by giving stronger roles to the Chancellery and the Foreign Office in the HLPF. A core group of these ministries, together with another member on a rotational basis, would provide a means of mobilising ownership and commitment among all ministries as well as stimulating learning for collective action within government. A further option is to create a system of focal points<sup>12</sup> in each ministry in order to give responsibility for the 2030 Agenda a higher position in the hierarchy. Each focal point would have the responsibility to enhance coherence of own policies with related policies in other departments, and to facilitate policy learning. In this way, responsibility for PCSD would be shared across departments. All focal points would meet regularly and prepare the sessions of the State Secretaries’ Committee as well as annual or biannual implementation reports to the Parliament by the executive.

The above ideas mainly emphasise governmental reforms and initiatives, yet the German Parliament may play an important role in creating a demand (or a need) for such reform. A large proportion of the work done in the German Parliament goes through its permanent committees – a total of 23 under its current 18th term. Each of these committees is formed by a decision of the Bundestag for the duration of the whole electoral term. A key role is

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12 In German, such a focal point would be referred to as “Beauftragte für die 2030 Agenda”. The BMZ already has such a position at a level of Deputy Head of Department (*Unterabteilungsleiter*).

played by the PBNE, which, as its website explains, plays the role of a watchdog that “‘barks’ as soon as an initiative fails to bear in mind the National Sustainability Strategy”.<sup>13</sup>

A recent position paper by the German NGO the Forum on Environment and Development called on the Parliament to upgrade the current Advisory Council into a regular permanent committee (Forum Umwelt und Entwicklung [Forum UE], 2016). The PBNE did so, too, and others joined the call. Doing so would be an important change to the way Parliament organises itself, with the current permanent committees typically having one main ministry as interlocutor. Jointly organised meetings that bring together two or more committees are a means for Parliament to stimulate joined-up responses from government, yet structural reforms initiated by Parliament would send a stronger signal in this regard. One interviewee considered this approach to go against the logic and mandates of other parliamentary committees, and instead suggested leaving the PBNE’s mandate as is. Instead, similarly to the approach suggested for government, each committee could task itself with relevant 2030 Agenda goals and targets that concern its policy field(s). This approach would emphasise that sustainable development requires changes in core areas of several policy fields.

## **4 Efforts to promoting participation, monitoring and review processes**

### **4.1 Public participation in promoting the 2030 Agenda in Germany**

The preparatory process for the revision of Germany’s Sustainable Development Strategy was opened to the public by the Chancellery in October 2015. It benefitted from two other previous processes: the preparation of the negotiations of the 2030 Agenda, as well as the participatory drafting of a “Charter for the Future” to guide future development policy, which took place in parallel in 2014 and 2015. Both have provided opportunities to the present coalition government to define core policy goals and international cooperation priorities and engage with relevant stakeholders.

In preparation of the 2030 Agenda, the German environment and development ministries regularly used their traditional dialogue forum – which had been established within the Rio 1992 process to inform interested stakeholders (e.g. NGOs, research institutions, interest groups, private-sector associations, trade unions) about the SDG negotiations in New York – to provide a space for exchanges and discussions. For example, in 2013, the two ministries presented the draft position of the German government to the Open Working Group on SDGs. The document was coordinated with other government departments. Beyond government, many German stakeholder groups accepted the invitation to comment on the draft or to provide their own position papers.

The drafting of the “Charter for the Future” in 2014 – an initiative of the new Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development during his first year in office – was an inclusive process (e.g. dialogues and online consultations) in which civil society, business, research institutions and policy-makers discussed ways to address future

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13 See [https://www.bundestag.de/htdocs\\_e/bundestag/bodies/sustainability](https://www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/bundestag/bodies/sustainability)

challenges and opportunities and the role of Germany in this process. The “Charter for the Future” identifies eight priority areas: 1) life of dignity, 2) natural resources, 3) growth, sustainability and decent work, 4) human rights and good governance, 5) peace and human security, 6) cultural and religious diversity, 7) innovation, technologies and digitalisation, 8) global partnership (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung, 2014). Although these areas strongly relate to the SDGs that were being discussed by the Open Working Group at that time, the process was mainly conceived as a domestic debate on policy priorities for global sustainable development, and thus only indirectly linked to the post-2015 process. Nonetheless, the efforts made for drafting this strategy also provided a basis for government to engage with non-state actors in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The RNE also recommended enhancing public participation in the review process of Germany’s Sustainable Development Strategy. Taking up this recommendation in October 2015, Minister Peter Altmaier, Chief of the Chancellery, inaugurated the first of five dialogues in Berlin, discussing the revision of the Sustainable Development Strategy with the public. This event was followed by regional dialogues in Dresden, Stuttgart, Bonn and Hamburg. Here, the *Länder* were involved and played an important role. Discussions at the dialogue events have been documented online and provide input to the process. Furthermore, the Chancellery invited the public to submit ideas, comments and proposals electronically.

An important role in informing the German government’s response to the 2030 Agenda is played by the aforementioned PBNE, which was instituted in March 2004. The PBNE held two hearings on the post-2015 process and the 2030 Agenda, and discussed the relevance and the outcome of the negotiations with government and civil society representatives. In February 2016, the PBNE invited several experts to discuss the implementation of the SDGs in Germany. Earlier this year, on January 26, parliamentarians of the coalition, backed by their factions, presented a motion for a Bundestag decision on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The motion recalled earlier decisions by the Bundestag on the topic, including a decision made in December 2014 that the national implementation of the new agenda should be reflected in the budgetary and financial policy of the federal government. The motion encourages government to continue its active role in the implementation of the new agenda, and particularly focusses on Germany’s global role, while also calling for more ambition in areas that are challenging for Germany, including sustainable consumption and biodiversity (Bundestag, 2016; see also Annex 1).

In September 2015 and February 2016, respectively, two umbrella organisations of civil society published position papers with regard to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The position of the Association of German Development and Humanitarian Aid NGOs emphasised upfront that Germany’s approach to implementing the 2030 Agenda should reflect its transformative approach, and it called for a coherent approach for implementation with a key monitoring role for civil society. Under this heading – and beyond supporting government’s own plans in this regard – the association called for additional investment in ex-ante impact analyses of German policy proposals, as well as calling for government’s awareness of the intergenerational impacts of its measures (Association of German Development and Humanitarian Aid NGOs, 2015). The more recent statement by the Forum on Environment and Development similarly called for “SDG checks” of future German and EU policy proposals, as well as specified that the

revision of the sustainability strategy should be part of a wider German 2030 Agenda implementation plan that should cover action in three spheres: (1) within Germany, (2) effects outside of Germany and (3) supporting countries in the global South with SDG implementation (Forum UE, 2016). The paper proposes specific domestic and international objectives for each SDG.

The draft sustainability strategy proposes new formats for strengthening dialogue between the government and non-state actors: the government intends to give civil society a role in preparing the meetings of the SNE, and to expand the dialogue forum carried out jointly so far by the ministries for environment and development, and to focus more on implementation (Bundesregierung, 2016a).<sup>14</sup> In addition to that, there are initiatives by development NGOs to establish new dialogue formats that cover the whole executive and the non-state actors associated with it, on a representative basis.<sup>15</sup>

## 4.2 Monitoring and review

The 21 goals and 38 indicators associated with Germany's Sustainable Development Strategy have provided the basis for detailed and long-term monitoring by the Federal Statistical Office, which does so continuously and forms the basis of a public report that is published every two years. As a standing feature, the bi-annual reports apply four well-known weather symbols, from sunny weather to thunderstorms, to indicate whether Germany is making progress in meeting its targets or is in fact backtracking on its commitments (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2014). The recent DAC Peer Review encouraged Germany to increase the frequency of this reporting process.

The reporting by the Federal Statistical Office helps to inform subsequent review processes initiated by the various groupings and organisations introduced above, principally the Parliament, the RNE as well as the two peer reviews commissioned by the Chancellery. In addition, Germany reports progress on PCD at the national and European levels. A section on progress in making policies development-friendly is also included in the "white paper", a report that the BMZ presents every four years to the German Parliament (DAC, 2015). In the future, the BMZ would have to report on PCSD, and similar sections on PCSD could be included in the white papers or other regular progress reports by the other departments.

One challenge in this regard is that the future Sustainable Development Strategy does not fully cover the content of the 2030 Agenda, which Germany, like all UN members, has committed to implement in its entirety. The nature of this gap in coverage becomes apparent when comparing the indicators proposed in the draft strategy with those used in the SDSN Dashboard (Sachs et al., 2016, pp. 46–48). Significant omissions regarding domestic improvements include subjective well-being (SDG 3), share of women in parliaments (SDG 5), freshwater withdrawal (SDG 6), quality of infrastructure and number of broadband connections (SDG 9), Palma ratio and the social inequality index included in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (SDG 10),

<sup>14</sup> See Bundesregierung (2016a, p. 38).

<sup>15</sup> This new format builds on a concept developed by Marianne Beisheim (2016) and is proposed as complementing the RNE.

waste recycling (SDG 12), climate change vulnerability (SDG 13), ocean health index and protected marine sites (SDG 14), and corruption perception index (SDG 16). This indicates that the monitoring of the future sustainability strategy will not suffice to address Germany's performance in furthering the 2030 Agenda, for which additional efforts should be undertaken. In its proposals and recommendations for the new Sustainable Development Strategy, the RNE put forward several recommendations regarding independent monitoring through the Federal Statistical Office. It also suggested that this reporting should go beyond government and also cover activities by civil society, cities and the private sector. All departments are encouraged to engage in dialogues on their sectoral strategies and reports with their stakeholders, including civil society organisations (RNE, 2015).

Beyond organising and institutionalising review processes, the federal government may also consider how to enable independent monitoring and evidence-based discussions in society at large. One example is a recently launched online platform that draws on various open data sources to promote comparative analysis within and between countries on various indicators associated with the 17 SDGs.<sup>16</sup> As per the official reporting and independent initiatives, Box 4 highlights some aspects of Germany's PCSD performance. It also indicates that the German government could still go a bit further in making its ambition explicit in relation to translating the SDGs into national and international results, so as to strengthen accountability relations within German society and beyond.

**Box 4: Germany's PCSD performance: assessing a half-full / half-empty glass?**

Germany has been more ambitious than many EU member states in promoting sustainable development, as it, for instance, takes a leading role in the promotion of green energy and the phasing out of nuclear energy. Yet, there are also clear "red lines" where national interests have prevented policy coherence, both at the national and European levels – a clear example being Germany's opposition to functional tests of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of cars following the Volkswagen scandal in 2015.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, there are other areas in which Germany is more ambitious than other EU member states, including illicit financial flows and the reduction of agricultural export subsidies (DAC, 2015).

Germany ranks 10th on the independent Commitment to Development Index, as prepared by the Centre for Global Development. The rating for 2015 shows that, compared to other countries, Germany's performance lags in the areas of financial transparency and the relatively unrestricted export of arms to poor and undemocratic countries. On the positive side, Germany performs above average in the environmental sphere, through its very good reporting and monitoring of biodiversity conventions and its efforts to limit tropical timber imports and consumption of ozone-depleting substances.<sup>18</sup>

The above considerations are mainly focussed on initiatives emphasising centralised reporting and aggregated performance of Germany "as a whole". Beisheim (2016) suggests that the new Sustainable Development Strategy could also make another step-change in terms of promoting accountability and results by clarifying the responsibilities of both the federal government and the *Länder*. Doing so would make the new strategy binding for all levels of government, which is needed all the more as some of Germany's major urban areas have been instrumental in Germany's initial response to the 2030

16 This website is available at <https://2030-watch.de/>

17 As reported here: <http://www.euractiv.com/section/transport/news/dieselgate-exposes-member-state-opposition-to-emissions-curbs/>

18 Details on Germany's performance can be found here: <http://www.cgdev.org/cdi-2015/country/DEU>

Agenda and could seek to further drive the country's performance overall (Fischer & Scholz, 2015). A more direct involvement of the *Länder* may also help to stimulate discussions among them and promote the exchange of good practice, as opposed to current discussions that are mainly focussed on what an individual state can do to promote sustainable development. One example is the southern state of Baden-Württemberg, which in January 2011 introduced a sustainability impact assessment as a formal requirement for regulations adopted by the regional government, ministries and subordinate regional authorities (German Federal Government, 2012, p. 38).

Furthermore, active involvement of civil society organisations – including trade unions and private-sector associations – should be promoted, both with regard to implementation as well as monitoring and review. The draft sustainability strategy proposes new formats for strengthening dialogue between the government and non-state actors: it is intended to give civil society a role in preparing the meetings of the State Secretaries' Committee, and to expand the dialogue forum carried out jointly so far by the ministries for environment and development, and to focus more on implementation.<sup>19</sup> In this vein, several umbrella organisations proposed to the Chancellery to establish a permanent dialogue platform for the 2030 Agenda, in addition to the RNE, for representatives chosen by sectoral civil society organisations, including from the business sector.<sup>20</sup> Such a platform could also be helpful for strengthening PCSD. Further suggestions include setting up SDG-related structures and processes in the academic and think tank fields that could, for example, contribute towards German reporting to the HLPF and come up with regular science-based assessments on the progress of sustainable development in Germany, comparable to decades-old structures in place in the field of economics. All this together would make clear that the government attaches great importance to sustainability reforms, and thus would help to attract the public and political attention that sustainable development deserves.

## 5 Conclusion

In Germany, ministries function relatively independently from one another, with the Chancellery only enjoying a finite amount of power that can be used to bring them together. Germany's efforts towards translating the 2030 Agenda into action thus need to find the right balance between using the opportunities provided by the transformative nature of the 2030 Agenda and the specific governance advantages and challenges that characterise the country as one of the largest federal states in the world. Successfully realising the agenda's goals at home and abroad thus requires Germany to capitalise on institutional processes that have proved their worth over time, but also to introduce new reforms and approaches. The choice was made to let the BMUB and the BMZ – under the leadership of the Chancellery – continue their coordinating role for the 2030 Agenda, a role they played not only in the post-2015 negotiations but one they have also played, in fact, since the first Rio conference of 1992. These ministries have done a commendable job in negotiations, and now the foundation has to be broadened; other departments have to be included and made proactive partners of the SDGs (Scholz, 2014, p. 165). Germany has always maintained support for the, at present, largely dormant EU Sustainable Development Strategy, which it would

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<sup>19</sup> See Bundesregierung (2016a, p. 38).

<sup>20</sup> This proposal builds on a concept developed by Beisheim (2016).

prefer to be transformed into a strategic document guiding the EU's approach towards implementing the 2030 Agenda. This position has been orchestrated by the BMUB and the BMZ. On the other hand, it has to be ensured that upcoming, overarching EU policy documents such as the Global Strategy and the "Approach beyond 2020" embrace the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs (Hackenesch et al., 2016).

Despite its high-level commitment towards pursuing sustainable development, Germany still faces the challenge of translating this into a genuine whole-of-government approach that covers the full spectrum of policy-making across departments as well as from the federal to the local level. At this stage, significant progress made on particular policy dossiers – in particular green energy – has placed the country in a leading role vis-à-vis other EU member states. Yet, in other areas where departmental as well as business interests are strong – and still in the process of adapting themselves to sustainable development challenges – Germany has pushed the brakes and limited more ambitious European action. Following the adoption of the new Sustainable Development Strategy, consideration should also be given as to whether the current institutional architecture for sustainable development in Germany is fit for purpose. This paper's analysis suggests that Germany has many key components for an effective 2030 Agenda implementation in place, yet it needs to further invest in reinforcing responsibilities for PCSD across all departments as well as parliamentary committees.

In conclusion, Germany represents a case of a government with a strong commitment to furthering the 2030 Agenda, both at home and abroad, but it also testifies to the case that realising this commitment requires going beyond "business as usual" in government. As per the ongoing revision of Germany's Sustainable Development Strategy – and general elections, which are planned for 2017 – it will be imperative for the government to keep the topic of sustainable development high on the political agenda. To do so, it needs both top-down initiative, which lies within its own powers, but also to strongly support and encourage bottom-up action by the *Länder*, cities, local communities as well as different societal actors. As per its membership in the HLG for furthering the 2030 Agenda, nothing less than a strong performance is expected from Germany.





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## **Annexes**



<b>Annex 1: The German sustainability strategy: State of play in 2013 and 2015</b>				
<b>Indicator areas</b>		<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Goals</b>	<b>Status 2015 (areas I and II)<sup>21</sup> and 2013 (areas III and IV)</b> A = indicator achieved or less than 5% remaining from baseline to goal; B = between 5 and 20%; C = more than 20% remains; D = worsening
<b>I Intergenerational justice</b>				
1a	Resource conservation: use resources sparingly and efficiently	Energy productivity	Double between 1990 and 2020	C
1b		Primary energy consumption	Reduce by 20% by 2020 and by 50% by 2050 (base year 2008)	C
1c		Resource productivity	Double between 1994 and 2020	C
2	Climate protection: reduce greenhouse gas emissions	Greenhouse gas emissions	Reduce by 21% by 2008/2012, by 40% by 2020 and by 80–95% by 2050 (base year 1990)	C
3a	Renewable energies: expand future-oriented energy supply	Share of renewable energies in final energy consumption	Increase to 18% by 2020 and 60% by 2050	A
3b		Share of electricity from renewable sources in electricity consumption	Increase to 12.5% by 2010, to minimum of 35% by 2020 and a minimum of 80% by 2050	A
4	Land use	Increase of land occupied by settlements and transport infrastructure	Reduce the daily increase to 30 ha by 2020	B
5	Biodiversity: protect species and habitats	Biodiversity and quality of landscapes	Increase to an index value of 100 by 2015	D
6a	Public debt: consolidate budgets, create intergenerational justice	Deficit of the national public budget	Annual deficit below 3%	A
6b		Structural deficit	Structurally balanced public budget, total public structural deficit max. 0.5% of GDP	A
6c		Public debt	Debt-GDP ratio of max. 60% of GDP	D
7	Economic investment into the future: secure good investment conditions and maintain prosperity	Gross fixed capital formation in relation to GDP	Increase the share	A

<sup>21</sup> Indicators 8, 9, 14 and 15 were taken from the 2014 publication.



**Annex 1 (cont.): The German sustainability strategy: State of play in 2013 and 2015**

8	Innovation: new solutions for the future	Private and public expenditure on research and development	Increase to 3% of GDP by 2020	A
9a	Education: continuously improve education and qualification	18- to 24-year-olds without degree	Reduce the share below 10% by 2020	A
9b		30- to 34-year-olds with tertiary degree or formal vocational qualification	Increase the share to 42% by 2020	A
9c		Quota of first-year students in university	Increase to 40% by 2010, then continue to increase and stabilise at a high level	A
<b>II Quality of life</b>				
10	Economic performance: grow in an environmentally and socially balanced way	GDP per capita	Economic growth	A
11a	Mobility: secure mobility, preserve the environment	Intensity of transportation of goods	Reduce to 98% between 1999 and 2010 and to 95% by 2020	C
11b		Intensity of transportation of persons	Reduce to 90% between 1999 and 2010 and to 80% by 2020	C
11c		Share of rail transport in transportation of goods	Increase to 25% by 2015	D
11d		Share of inland water transport in transportation of goods	Increase to 14% by 2015	D
12a	Agriculture: produce in an environmentally friendly way in our cultural landscapes	Nitrogen surplus	Reduce to 80 kg/ha on agricultural land by 2010, further decreases by 2020	C
		Organic agriculture	Increase the share of organic agriculture in agricultural land to 20% in the next years	C
13	Air quality: preserve a healthy environment	Air pollution	Reduce to 30% between 1990 and 2010	B
14a	Health and nutrition: longer healthy lives	Premature mortality (deaths per 100,000 inhabitants below 65 years) men	Reduce to 190 cases per 100,000 by 2015	B

14b		Premature mortality (deaths per 100,000 inhabitants below 65 years) women	Reduce to 115 cases per 100,000 by 2015	B
14c		Quota of smokers among youth (12 to 17 years old)	Reduce to below 12% by 2015	A
14d		Quota of adult smokers (15 years onwards)	Reduce to below 22% by 2015	C
14e		Share of persons with adipositas (adults from 18 years onwards)	Reduce by 2020	D
15	Delinquency: increase individual security	Criminal acts	Reduce number of registered cases per 100,000 inhabitants below 7,000 by 2020	A
<b>III Social cohesion</b>				
16a	Employment: increase level of employment	Total employment rate (15- to 64-year-olds)	Increase to 73% by 2010 and 75% by 2020	A
16b		Employment rate of the elderly (55- to 64-year-olds)	Increase to 55% by 2010 and 60% by 2020	A
17a	Perspectives for families: improve compatibility between work and family life	Childcare facilities for children between 0 and 2 years old	Increase to 30% by 2010 and 35% by 2020	B
17b		Childcare facilities for children between 3 and 5 years old	Increase to 30% by 2010 and 60% by 2020	A
18	Gender equality: promote equality in society	Gender pay gap	Reduce the gap to 15% by 2010 and to 10% by 2020	C
19	Integration: integrate instead of excluding	Foreign pupils with a degree	Increase the share of foreign school leavers with a degree to the level reached by German school leavers in 2020	B
<b>IV International responsibility</b>				
20	Development cooperation: support sustainable development	Share of official development assistance in GDP	Increase to 0.51% by 2010 and 0.7% by 2015	C
21	Open markets: improve trade opportunities of developing countries	German imports from developing countries	Further increase	A
Source: Bundesregierung (2012, pp. 29–31); Statistisches Bundesamt (2014, 2016). Translation by the authors				

<b>Annex 2: Indicators proposed for Germany's new Sustainable Development Strategy</b>	
<p>Notes:</p> <p>New proposed indicators not included in the existing strategy (Bundesregierung, 2002), or cases where existing indicator targets were adjusted, are marked in bold.</p> <p>Noteworthy is that four mobility-related indicators of the current strategy under the heading “Mobility: secure mobility, preserve the environment” are not included in the list of indicators under the proposed new strategy.</p> <p>Indicators translated from German by the authors.</p>	
<b>Nr</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere</b>	
1a-c	<b>Preferential social protection (to be defined)</b>
<b>SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture</b>	
2a	Nitrogen surplus
2b	Organic agriculture
<b>SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages</b>	
3a	Premature mortality (deaths per 100,000 inhabitants below 70 years) men ( <b>change from 65</b> )
3b	Premature mortality (deaths per 100,000 inhabitants below 70 years) women ( <b>change from 65</b> )
3c	Quota of smokers among youth (12 to 17 years old)
3d	Quota of adult smokers (15 years onwards)
3e	Share of persons with adipositas (adults from 18 years onwards)
3f	<b>Share of persons with adipositas among youth (11–17 years old)</b>
4a	<b>Emission of air pollutants (index of national emissions of air pollutants SO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub>, NH<sub>3</sub>, NMVOC and PM<sub>2.5</sub>)</b>
4b	<b>Exposure to particulate matter weighted by population</b>
<b>SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all</b>	
5a	School dropouts (18- to 24-year-olds without degree)
5b	30- to 34-year-olds with tertiary degree or <b>post secondary/non-tertiary degree</b>
6a	Childcare facilities for children between 0 and 2 years old
6b	Childcare facilities for children between 3 and 5 years old
<b>SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls</b>	
7a	Gender pay gap
7b	<b>Women in leading positions in companies</b>
7c	<b>Professional qualification of women and girls supported by German development cooperation</b>
<b>SDG 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all</b>	
8a	<b>Phosphorus / phosphate input</b>
8b	<b>Nitrate in groundwater – share of measuring sites in Germany where threshold of 50 mg/l is surpassed</b>
9	<b>Number of persons that receive new access to fresh water and sanitation with German support</b>
<b>SDG 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all</b>	
10a	Energy productivity
10b	Primary energy consumption

11a	Share of renewable energies in final energy consumption
11b	Share of electricity from renewable sources in electricity consumption
SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all	
12	Resource productivity: (GDP + imports) / raw material Input (RMI)
13a	Deficit of the national public budget
13b	Structural deficit
13c	Public debt
14	Gross fixed capital formation in relation to GDP
15	GDP per capita
16a	Total employment rate (20- to 64-year-olds) ( <b>change from 15 to 20</b> )
16b	Employment rate of the elderly (60- to 64-year-olds) ( <b>change from 55 to 60</b> )
17	<b>Share of total turnover in textile industry by companies that are part of the textile alliance incorporating social and ecological standards across the entire value chain and publishing regular reports</b>
SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation	
18	Private and public expenditure on research and development
SDG 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries	
19	Foreign pupils with a degree
20a	<b>Gini-coefficient of income distribution</b>
20b	<b>Gini-coefficient of wealth distribution</b>
SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable	
21	Increase of land occupied by settlements and transport infrastructure
22a	<b>Final energy consumption of transportation of goods</b>
22b	<b>Final energy consumption of transportation of persons</b>
22c	<b>Average travelling time from every public transport stop to the nearest medium / higher order regional centre weighted by population</b>
23	<b>Disproportionate burden of housing costs</b>
SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns	
24a	<b>Market share of products and services that feature reliable and demanding environmental and social labels (for the time being: market share of products with federal environmental labels)</b>
24b	<b>Energy consumption and CO2 emission of consumption</b>
25	<b>Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS)</b>
SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts	
26a	Greenhouse gas emissions
26b	<b>International Climate Financing for GHG reduction and climate change adaptation</b>
SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development	
27a	<b>Input of nutrients in coastal and marine waters</b>

<b>Annex 2 (cont.): Indicators proposed for Germany's new Sustainable Development Strategy</b>	
27b	<b>Share of total fish stocks in North and Baltic seas being exploited sustainably (defined by MSY – maximum sustainable yield)</b>
SDG 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss	
28	Biodiversity and quality of landscapes
29	<b>Eutrophication of ecosystems</b>
30	<b>Payments to development countries for documented forest preservation and reforestation within the REDD+ framework</b>
SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels	
31	Criminal acts
32	Number of German projects for security, registration and destruction of small arms and light weapons
SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development	
33	Share of official development assistance in GDP
34	Number of students and researchers from developing countries and LDCs in STEM disciplines per year (semester)
35	German imports from developing countries and LDCs ( <b>LDCs added</b> )

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