BACKGROUND

In today’s global landscape, governments face increasingly complex economic, social and environmental challenges. How can governments get organised to reach the ambition embodied in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals? Achieving progress on the Goals will require governments to work across policy areas. This is no easy task. The obstacles to joined-up government are well known. For example, immediate economic and social pressures often crowd out longer term strategic policy initiatives. Public budgets and accountability systems are usually aligned with departmental structures and have difficulty tracking outcomes that occur in multiple policy areas and across multiple levels of government. An unprecedented range of public and private actors will need to be consulted and participate in both policy formulation and implementation of the SDGs.

Multiplying this complex equation of complementarities and trade-offs across the whole spectrum of policy areas covered by the SDGs implies a need for prioritisation and negotiation involving all parts of government as well as the private sector and civil society. In addition, given the global remit of the SDGs they are also a ‘foreign policy’ issue, requiring significant involvement from the diplomatic and development communities. In short: delivering on the SDGs is a formidable governance challenge, irrespective of countries’ income levels. The SDGs are a universal agenda and as such all governments are considering how best to implement them.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of the side event on the Governance of the SDGs is to provide a focused discussion on the governance challenges and opportunities of implementing the SDGs as well as to explore partnerships to support countries in addressing the governance issues.

The presentation of country experiences will enable a peer-to-peer exchange on how institutions such as the centre of government (Prime Ministers’ and President’s offices) are dealing with the governance challenge and opportunity that is presented by the SDGs. The High Level Political Forum (HLPF) side event will also launch the publication ‘Governance as an SDG Accelerator: Country experiences and tools’. It sets out evidence and areas of potential support such as:

- Developing whole of government coordination and policy coherence to ensure an integrated approach to SDG implementation;
- Fostering public governance dimensions of gender equality in support of the SDGs;
- Increasing stakeholder participation and open government to strengthen the legitimacy of policy making decisions for implementing the SDGs;
- Ensuring budgeting for the SDGs to promote policy integration and ensure continuity of policy objectives beyond electoral cycles;
- Enabling integrity in public policies to reduce the risk of policy capture in SDG implementation; and
- Providing equal access to justice

The session will provide a backdrop to the launch in September of the Global Hub for the Governance of the SDGs: an initiative that will draw on insights from country experiences and help develop fit-for-purpose public policies to deliver the SDGs. It will also include a focused discussion on advancing the gender equality pillar of the Global Hub for the Governance of the SDGs.

Contact: Luminita Balalau (luminita.balalau@gov.ro), Romania
Contact: Sara Fyson (sara.fyson@oecd.org), OECD
CONTRIBUTION TO THE HLPF 2019

The side event will contribute to the 2019 theme on "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality" in a number of ways.

- It will foster a debate on the domestic governance challenges and opportunities in developing policies for "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality", including on reducing not only income inequality, but also using broader definitions of well-being.

- It will support ongoing discussions on the ‘means of implementation’ (SDG 17), in particular peer-to-peer learning on the development of national plans to implement the SDGs.

- It will examine the coordination function of the institution of the centre of government in the management of trade-offs and implementation of the SDGs.

- It will focus the attention on how to build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (SDG16) which is one of the target SDGs for 2019.

- It will focus on how the government can help to bring stakeholders on board including local governments, civil society, parliaments and the private sector.

- It will enable a gender mainstreaming lens in the governance and implementation mechanisms for SDGs.

The session will provide an opportunity to highlight the conclusions from the National Voluntary Reviews in so far as they reflect the governance challenges of implementing the SDGs. The session summary will feed into ongoing evidence gathering on the role of institutions such as centers of government in facilitating the implementation of the SDGs. It will also provide crucial evidence in support of a future Hub on the Governance for the SDGs.

Contact: Luminita Balalau (luminita.balalau@gov.ro), Romania

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DRAFT AGENDA

Romania, in collaboration, with Iceland and the OECD will host the high level side event. Member States, representatives of non-governmental and youth organizations, the private sector and members of the media attending the HLPF are invited to attend.

Keynote Address
Katrín Jakobsdóttir, Prime Minister, Iceland

Introduction on the Governance of the SDGs: experience from Romania: László Borbély, State Counsellor

Responding to the SDG Governance Challenge

Panel Moderated by: Marcos Bonturi, Director, Public Governance Directorate, OECD

Institution and capacity building to accelerate SDG implementation: Evelyn Wever-Croes Prime Minister, Aruba

Leadership for the SDGs: Helen Clark, Former Prime Minister of New Zealand and Administrator for UNDP

Klára Dostálová, Minister of Regional Development of Czech Republic

Whole of government approach to the SDGs: Hala El Said, Minister of Planning, Monitoring and Administrative Reform, Egypt

Annika Lindblom, Secretary General of the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development.

Stakeholder Engagement and localising the SDGs: Gabriela Agosto, Executive Secretary of the National Council for Social Policy Coordination, Argentina

Institutional coordination in the face of a multi-dimensional and complex agenda: Cristina Gallach, High Commissioner for 2030 Agenda, Spain

Concluding remarks

The role of partnerships in supporting better governance for the implementation of the SDGs:

Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, Assistant Seceretary General, Africa Region, UNDP

Jeffrey Schlagenhauf, Deputy Secretary-General, OECD