



**Policy
Forum** on
Development

The PFD and the 2030 Agenda

A multi-stakeholder perspective on SDG implementation

Acknowledgements

This analysis, based on the work and meetings of the Policy Forum on Development, was completed by Carlos Buhigas-Schubert (Senior Expert).

More information about the PFD can be found at <http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/policy-forum-development/>

Disclaimer

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. The content of this publication is the sole responsibility of the authors and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.



The 2030 Agenda has been a priority in the work of the PFD since it was agreed in September 2015. That work has been conducted through a varied number of activities, including panel debates, working groups, national studies, policy papers, joint papers and a survey. All of those have collected the views and experiences of participants, from our Global meeting in Brussels every spring to the Regional and Multi-stakeholder meetings in Bangkok (Thailand), Antigua (Guatemala), Dakar (Senegal), Dead Sea (Jordan), Ghent (Belgium) and Gaborone (Botswana).

In total, more than 500 representatives from civil society organisations (CSOs), local authorities (LAs), national governments, international organisations, academia, EU institutions and EU Member States have participated. The resulting collection of views is more than just another theoretical analysis of the 2030 Agenda. Beyond the value of individual views and first-hand experience, the resulting dialogue has become in itself an important tool to better understand the progress of the 2030 Agenda in practice.

This paper summarises the most recurring insights and views of PFD debates about the implementation of 2030 Agenda, what works and what needs to improve. It aims to contribute to the current review of SDG implementation, inspire the debate of the 2019 Global PFD, and encourage new input in our collective work over the next years.

A unique entry point to assess the 2030 Agenda

PFD debates have the valuable asset of the level of knowledge and direct experience of PFD participants, who are able to engage in a dialogue on some of the most complex aspects of the 2030 Agenda. That asset goes beyond the pure presentation of targets or measurement of indicators, and has been able to integrate the context, data, policy and practice in a space of exchange and collective learning. The following are some of the (interrelated) themes that have framed the PFD debate about the 2030 Agenda so far:

1. The evolving differences between real political leadership and nominal support for the 2030 Agenda, as well as the various degrees of an institutional environment in which the Agenda can be realised at national level.
2. The existing constraints in terms of both the availability and quality of the data to measure targets and indicators (as well of the potential necessity to advance more integrated indicators).
3. The limited awareness as well as remaining problems in communicating the content and process of an Agenda that, despite the fact that is not so new anymore, still lacks ownership.
4. The challenges for “installing” the 2030 Agenda at national level and the complex interlinkages across policies and bodies that demand new mechanisms of horizontal and vertical policy integration.
5. The capacity and participation of different development actors (including the adverse dynamics of “shrinking space”) in the design and implementation of the 2030 Agenda as well as the efforts to develop strategic partnerships with big donors (particularly the EU).

6. The importance of the factors at play in the localisation of the SDGs, including the level and experience with decentralisation processes.
7. The variable reach of the SDGs and the need to reconcile the local, national and international dimensions of different policies and regulations to take into account their domestic and external impacts.

Perceived positive and negative factors in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

In summer 2015, even before the 2030 Agenda was formally adopted, the PFD Task Team advanced the need to examine its implementation, noting that the success of the 2030 Agenda would rest in its effective realisation at national level. In virtue of that, the PFD undertook a number of country studies (the Netherlands, Indonesia, Peru and Ghana). The objective was to observe the initial implementation of the 2030 Agenda and, in particular, look more closely at: 1) government policies; 2) existing strategies and/or priorities; 3) the status and role of CSOs and LAs in the process; 4) the role of multi-stakeholder partnerships; and 5) the participation of marginalised or under-represented groups. In parallel to that, the PFD continued to encourage the debate among experts and practitioners. An important part of that was the organisation of question-oriented working groups in each one of the PFD events, where participants from different countries and organisations could contribute. The following collects the most repeated answers to the questions proposed and, even if summarised for the purpose of this paper, gives a sense of key perceived drivers and obstacles to the process.

What are the key factors that encourage (positive) or prevent (negative) the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at country level?	
Positive	Negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gradual recognition of the different actors of development and increased dialogue through the existence of a common agenda• Increased potential of multi-actor articulation in the implementation at national level• Construction and consolidation of cooperation through networks• More participation (visibility and advocacy possibilities) in the context of increasing national and regional forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of information/awareness/ dissemination• Inadequate financial, material and human resources for implementation• Lack of clarity about how civil society can participate more actively• Poor articulation between government and local institutions• Remaining obstacles to good governance, openness and transparency (corruption, threats to activists and CSOs, etc.)
Has the group identified common trends?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The 2030 Agenda has become a point of reference to discuss national development agendas in many countries, including objectives, targets and means to achieve them.• There is an increasing recognition that compliance with the SDGs is unattainable without a more active participation of multiple actors.• Considerable doubts remain in regard to the quality of governance and democratic institutions and processes to contribute to such an ambitious agenda.• Even if nominally, there seems to be a willingness to increase the level of dialogue with different stakeholders and develop common strategies involving different relevant actors.
What are the priorities to speed up the implementation of the SDGs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To increase the level and quality of the political dialogue, including processes of increased transparency and accountability.• To strengthen decentralisation so that the localisation of the SDGs becomes a reality.• To openly discuss how to finance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including domestic resource mobilisation and other sources of finance.• To reflect on the factors that determine the current increase of inequality and develop channels that can improve the redistribution of wealth.• To link the SDGs to agreements signed at the regional level.

How could the EU step up its efforts to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda?

The PFD encourages debate about both the global development agenda and European development policies. In this regard, it is only natural that both the global and the regional PFD events have provided good opportunities to gather opinions of development partners concerning the role of the EU and aspects that could be improved to step up its efforts to promote both the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the work of CSOs and LAs. That has become even more relevant since the new European Consensus on Development was agreed, as it emphasises the need to strengthen partnerships with all development actors to achieve development outcomes.

While criticism towards the EU has been part and parcel of the debates, those have generally been encapsulated in the exchanges about policy, particularly Policy Coherence for Development, trade and investment and migration. Beyond that, there is general support for the role the EU plays in the development sphere as well as an interesting convergence of views regarding the best ways in which the EU could support implementation efforts at country level. The following are the most shared answers to the question: how should the EU strengthen its partnerships with CSOs and LAs to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda?

How should the EU strengthen its partnerships with CSOs and LAs to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda?

Support **policy dialogue** between LAs, CSOs and governments at country level to institutionalise (with adequate funds) the participation of CSOs and LAs in awareness raising and dialogue with governments.

Increase the **capacity** of local actors to enable them to promote the implementation of the SDGs. Proposed measures include: increase funding for CSOs & LAs, simplification of proposal instruments, more training to understand EU rules and regulations and support sub-regional networks (not only national or continental) with funding, capacity building and technical support.

Support a more active **role of EU Delegations** to promote multi-stakeholder platforms and dialogue both at national and regional level.

Increase the focus on Coherence for Development, particularly in regards to the linkages between development policies and trade. The SDGs should be at the centre of Policy Coherence for Development.

Support **decentralisation** policies and processes to ensure that implementation of the SDGs takes place at all levels.

Uphold the **Busan principles** of effective development cooperation.

Embrace **a rights based** approach to development.

Improve the conditions **for job creation and economic activity** with measures such as better access to finance, support to the value chain of products through investments in infrastructure and technology and the development of the private sector.

Checklist going forward: The PFD will continue to work on the 2030 Agenda, taking advantage of its remarkable pool of collective know-how, across geography and practice. In this regard, we propose a 2030 Agenda implementation checklist, to encourage both stock-taking and forward-thinking dialogue:

The 2030 implementation checklist:

1. Has political support for the 2030 Agenda remained strong?
2. Has the 2030 Agenda been institutionalised (with a strategy, timeline and body to lead its implementation)?
3. Are national development strategies consistent with the SDGs?
4. Is progress being measured in a consistent and transparent manner?
5. Are CSOs' advocacy efforts taken into consideration?
6. Are inclusive partnerships installed so no one is left behind?
7. Are LAs adequately resourced and coordinated to implement the SDGs?
8. Are steps being taken to increase the levels of information and capacity to implement the SDGs?
9. Do multi-stakeholder platforms to support the SDGs exist and do they have any impact on policy or implementation?
10. Are marginalised/vulnerable groups participating in or benefiting from the 2030 Agenda?



**Policy
Forum on
Development**

