

Background document for meeting organised by European Commission in partnership with the European Economic and Social Committee: 'Implementing the SDGs through EU development policy: the Joint Synthesis Report', Brussels, 28 January 2019

Background to the Joint Synthesis Report (JSR)

The JSR is a summary report of progress made by the EU and Member States in promoting implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in partnership with developing countries and within the framework of the European Consensus on Development.

The Consensus committed the EU and Member States to produce this joint report every four years, starting in 2019. The report under preparation is the first of its type.

The JSR will show the collective work of the EU and Member States in implementing the Agenda. It is as an opportunity for the EU and Member States to recommit to supporting implementation of the Agenda.

The JSR will mainly be a synthesis of existing reporting, based on already published reports from the EU and Member States and on other reporting from e.g. the OECD-DAC and the World Bank.

The JSR will be succinct (perhaps 40 pages in total approximately). It will not be able to cover all EU and Member States actions across the Agenda but it will try to give a balanced, representative summary.

We will try to show:

How the work of the EU and Member States has changed as a result of the Agenda and Consensus and how we have improved our support for the SDGs.

The breadth of the work underway across the Agenda by all Member States: across all sectors; with developing countries at all stages of development; and through stronger partnerships with other relevant development actors.

The report will underline the importance we place on engagement with stakeholders and we expect it to include examples of effective partnership with stakeholders and of stakeholders' own views.

Content

Our current thinking on the contents and structure of the report is that it will include:

- a reiteration of key EU values and principles,
- a summary of progress, possibly in relation to the 4Ps (People, Planet, Prosperity and Peace),
- a section on the 5th P – Partnerships (which will include the EU and Member States working better together, tailored cooperation with the range of developing countries, plus partnerships with other relevant development actors
- a section on data and monitoring
- progress with EU and Member States' implementation SDG by SDG (possibly as annex)

The report will be mainly stocktaking but we expect it to include some key conclusions for the future. Those need to be discussed with Member States, but any views from stakeholders would also be really useful.

The JSR's main messages and ideas for the future are still not settled. But some points are emerging.

The EU and Member States have revised their approaches, structures and procedures to better achieve and report on the SDGs. Many thematic policies and guidelines have also been updated to better reflect the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, for example on gender equality, urban development, the link between humanitarian and development action, climate finance, ICT, energy and development, and food and nutrition security.

To work better together towards the implementation of the SDGs, we have put a much greater emphasis on joint work between the EU and Member States in country, whether this means joint assessments of country needs, joint programming or using joint results frameworks. We will push more for this in the next programming period.

We are adapting our approaches more to different partner country needs and the changing development landscape. The External Investment Plan is one example where we have responded to the growing importance of the private sector in the financing of the SDGs by crowding in private sector investment.

In terms of results, it is too soon to identify our impact. We are working to align our results framework more closely to the 2030 Agenda and

the SDGs and improve the way that the EU and Member States report on 2030 implementation in developing countries.

Some challenges that will probably be highlighted

Clearly we need to keep working to meet our commitments on ODA, including to Least Developed Countries and human development, as well as the commitment on climate finance. (The latest 2017 DAC figures suggest that overall EU ODA is slightly down but that the share going to LDCs has risen.) While we are still better than the global average on many of these issues, we should not ease up on our efforts across all areas.

We do not have the reporting tools at the moment to assess exactly how successfully the EU and Member States are implementing the 2030 Agenda across the board. One of the difficult issues is to measure our share in the progress our partner countries are making towards SDGs. In those cases, we expect the report will show evidence of our impact where we can see it – for instance in terms of poverty reduction in countries receiving budget support.

So, at the moment, the JSR will be more a collection of EU and Member States' policies and programmes than a detailed assessment of performance. However, we are working towards better collective measurement of our impact and performance in coming years.

The future

The Council Presidency plans to adopt Council Conclusions on the JSR in June 2019. We see this as a good chance for the Council to set a direction for development cooperation over the next four years and beyond.

Our objective is to present the JSR at the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July. The details of exactly how we would present the Report have not been settled. We will coordinate our approach with the Commission's plans for overall reporting on EU internal and external implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

As this JSR is the first in its kind, we want to draw lessons from it, including through reactions from stakeholders, in order to improve the next versions of the report.