

SDG GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Czech Republic

INSTITUTIONAL SCAN

2020



What are OECD SDG Governance Reviews – Institutional Scans?

Delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a formidable governance challenge – one that implies re-engineering how governments work and building public support for implementing reform agendas that are linked to the SDGs.

The OECD responds to specific demands from national governments to strengthen governance mechanisms and capacities that enable coherent policy-making in support of the SDGs. It does so in partnership with the governmental body responsible for coordinating the national implementation of the SDGs.

OECD SDG Governance Reviews – Institutional Scans review how core governance systems are adapted to deliver cross-cutting policy objectives and support an effective and integrated implementation of the SDGs. They are the abridged version of full-fledged Public Governance Reviews. Rooted in the sound methodological approach of the latter, the Scans aim to deliver a diagnostic in a shorter period of time and in the format of a more concise output. The output focuses on:

- key actors and core processes;
- ongoing reform initiatives;
- observed challenges; and
- suggestions for the way forward.

The format of a Scan is particularly appropriate for countries or regions that want:

- a solid, but succinct external assessment of key public governance areas;
- to kick-start an evidence-based debate on public governance reform priorities, as well as reform coherence and sustainability; and
- a 'tour de horizon' of their public governance performance, before strategically selecting areas for a more in-depth analysis.

Introduction

In today's global landscape, governments face increasingly complex economic, social and environmental challenges. These challenges do not lend themselves to simple solutions driven by a single agency or government ministry. In fact, achieving progress on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will require governments to coordinate, consult and work across numerous policy areas.

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 a broad range of non-governmental stakeholders.

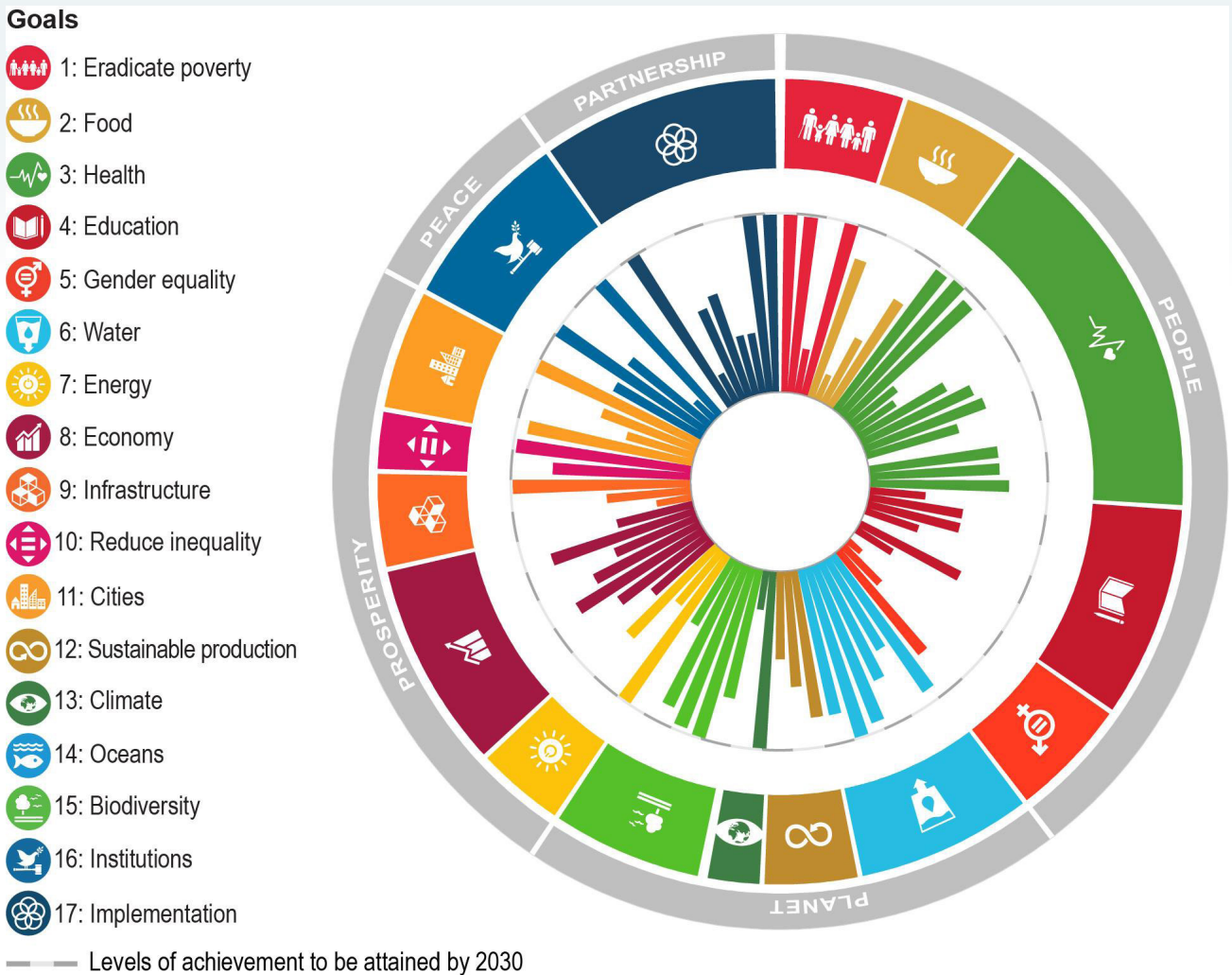
In short, delivering on the SDGs is a formidable governance challenge – irrespective of countries' income levels.

Against this background, and in line with the OECD Action Plan on the SDGs and the new Council Recommendation on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development, the OECD responds to specific demands from national governments to strengthen governance mechanisms and capacities that enable coherent policy-making. It does so in partnership with the governmental body responsible for coordinating the national implementation of the SDGs.

RATIONALE

Upon the request of the Czech Republic, the OECD initiated in 2018 a 'mini' review (scan) of the governance mechanisms that are in place to support the implementation of the SDGs. This 'mini' review complements OECD work on measuring progress in reaching the SDGs. The most recent data from 2019 shows that relative to the OECD average, the Czech Republic outperforms on goals such as Poverty Eradication (Goal 1), Reducing Inequality (Goal 11), Clean Water and Sanitation (Goal 6) and Biodiversity (Goal 15), and is either ahead of, or fairly close to, the OECD average distance on several other goals (Figure 1). The main exceptions to this are Education (Goal 4), Infrastructure (Goal 9) and Climate (Goal 13), where performance is below the OECD average (OECD, 2019).

Figure 1. The Czech Republic's distance from achieving 100 SDG targets



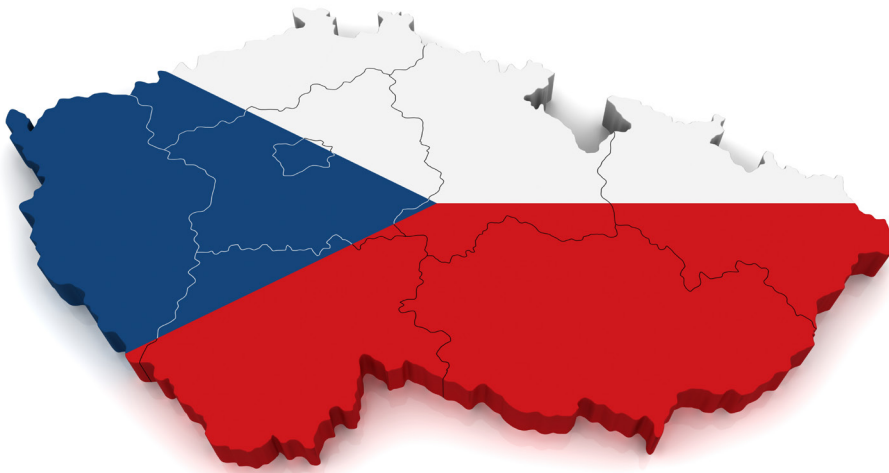
Note: The chart shows current level of achievement on each available target. The longer the bar, the shorter the distance still to be travelled to reach 2030 target (dotted circle). Targets are clustered by goal, and goals are clustered by the "5Ps" of the 2030 Agenda (outer circle).

Source: See www.oecd.org/sdd/OECD-Measuring-Distance-to-SDGs-Targets-Metadata.pdf for detailed metadata.

The analysis undertaken as part of this review is the result of a collaborative effort between the Government of the Czech Republic and the OECD to support evidence-based decisions to ensure institutions are fit to deliver on the SDGs. Four priority areas were agreed upon to be examined:

- The institutional frameworks that have been created to support the implementation of the SDGs, and in particular the role of the Centre of Government;
- The coordination function and the management of trade-offs between the SDGs and their targets;
- Integration of the SDGs into the budget process; and
- Enabling stakeholders to be part of the design and implementation of the SDGs.

The analysis was centred on desk research, as well as a fact-finding mission conducted by the OECD in January 2018. The analysis also benefited from the results of other OECD SDG reviews. It was agreed that the analysis would not support a fully-fledged review, which would necessitate the involvement of peers in the review or in-depth analysis of each of the four priority areas. The analysis nonetheless identified a number of challenges and suggested priorities going forward, as summarised at the end of the report.



1. Institutional mandate, key features and organisation

A review of current institutional mandates in OECD countries on the governance of the SDGs underlines a significant variation between countries. For example, some have set up new committees or mechanisms (such as permanent ministerial and inter-ministerial groups or strategy units), while others are adapting existing institutions, staff and resources to the SDGs. Some countries are still reflecting on how best to organise their support of the SDGs – for example, whether it makes sense to create an overarching framework in addition to existing strategic objectives.

These debates often revolve around whether governments should set up new committees, councils or working groups, as well as questions of how they should be run, whom they report to, and their membership (for example, whether they include only ministries and government agencies or wider participation by relevant stakeholders, such as NGOs, industry, academia, etc.).

The range of thematic areas covered by the SDGs reinforces how the design and management of the institutional framework is far from a technical exercise, and in fact has strategic implications for SDG implementation.

In the case of the Czech Republic, the sustainable development agenda is coordinated at the national level by the Government Council on Sustainable Development (GCSD). The GCSD was chaired by the Prime Minister from 2014 until 2018, including throughout the preparation phase (July 2015 – April 2017) of the *Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030* (Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2017). The Chairmanship was subsequently transferred to the first Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment in April 2018. Members of the Council include representatives of ministries, parliament, the private sector, academia, civil society and regions and municipalities, and it is divided into thematic expert committees.

The Council is expected to support cross-governmental consultation and build partnerships among the various stakeholders in the field of sustainable development (Czech Government Resolution, July 29, 2015, No. 622 and March 14, 2018, No. 167). One of the main tasks of the Council is to follow up and review the implementation of the *Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030*, and to encourage the country's broader commitment to sustainable development (Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2017).

The *Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030* is a strategic document that indicates the national direction for development in the decades to come. It forms a basic framework for other strategic documents on national, regional and local levels and is expected to be used by a broad array of stakeholders, including business, social partners and not-for-profit organisations. The operationalisation of the Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030 is guided by the 2018 Implementation Plan for the Strategic Framework Czech Republic adopted in October 2018 (Czech Government Resolution, October 17, 2018, No. 699). The Implementation Plan sets out 277 measures and more than 300 recommendations for fulfilling 97 specific goals for sustainable development at the national level. It also identifies lead ministries, with the GCSD acting as a consultation mechanism for the plan itself.

The *Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030* is the result of a multi-year inclusive process, which began in July 2015 when the government of the Czech Republic tasked the Prime Minister with revising the 2010 national Strategic Framework for Sustainable Development. The Prime Minister invited all government advisory bodies and major CSO networks to send proposals for the country's long-term development, with inputs collected by the Ministry of Regional Development. As

many as 49 organisations and institutions provided a total of 172 inputs. In an exercise led by the GCSD, six cluster areas were identified and presented at the Sustainable Development Forum in December 2015. Then followed a nearly two-year drafting process, which involved six thematic roundtables (one for each key area), eight regional roundtables, two public hearings, consultations in both chambers of parliament and numerous consultations with experts across different sectors. Overall, around 500 experts and 100 different organisations participated in the development of the *Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030*.

The work of the GCSD is supported by its Secretariat, which is currently based in the Sustainable Development Unit in the Ministry of the Environment (as of April 2018). The Secretariat is charged with preparing key strategic documents; overseeing inter-ministerial consultations and coordination; promoting stakeholders engagement and participation; public relations, communication and awareness raising; ensuring policy coherence for sustainable development; and monitoring and reporting (in coordination with the Czech Statistical Office).

Administratively, the Secretariat of the GCSD includes 5 full-time staff consisting of management and policy officers.

Resources to support the Secretariat are an integral part of the state budget. In the past three years, the budget has been stable and no significant change occurred after the transfer of the Council Secretariat under the Ministry of Environment (the Government Council on Sustainable Development has no separate budget). Moreover, from the July 2019 the Ministry of Environment together with the Ministry of Regional Development, the Czech Statistical Office and the Czech Environmental Information Agency (CENIA) realises the four years project supported from European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) funds with total allocation amounting to approximately 1.85 million euros. The purpose of the project is to evaluate and update the strategic documents related to the sustainable development, collect the data for this process, and to align (regulation) impact assessment with sustainable development perspectives.

The *Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030*, adopted by the Government in April 2017, is the main reference document outlining the national vision of the SDGs in the Czech Republic. It guides the work of all ministries and other actors towards the SDGs implementation. Broadly, the strategy defines long-term objectives in the social, environmental and economic pillars of sustainable development, as well as in governance, global development and regions and municipalities.

It sets forth 97 specific goals aimed at improving people's wellbeing, and it serves as an overarching framework for sectoral, regional and local strategies (Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2017)Czech Republic VNR, 2017). Work on the Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030 was partially funded through European Structural and Investment Funds.

Both the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Regional Development (in charge of developing and monitoring government strategy in general) have been given a strong mandate to support the 2030 Agenda [Government Resolutions 622 (2015); 61 (2016); and 292 (2017)]. The mandate includes developing specific tools to monitor and track progress under the strategic framework.

Table 1 lays out the main official documents that form the policy and legal framework of the country's sustainable development agenda.

Table 1. Key legal framework documents supporting SDG implementation

Relevant document	Information and link
Government Resolution n. 622, 29 July 2015	<p>Sustainable development agenda</p> <p>https://apps.odok.cz/attachment/-/down/VPRA9Z9H72GA</p> <p>The resolution sets out the mandate for the Government Council for Sustainable Development including the Chairmanship by the Prime Minister with the Ministers of Environment and Regional Development playing an important role in overseeing the strategic framework and coordination with other ministries.</p>
Government Resolution n. 61, 25 January 2016	<p>Report of UN Summit on Sustainable Development</p> <p>https://apps.odok.cz/attachment/-/down/VPRAA6LG4E4E</p> <p>The resolution calls on the Chair of the Council alongside the Minister of Environment to submit to the Government, the draft implementation of the Agenda 2030 including the relevant indicators. It also calls on the Czech Statistical Office to take the lead in coordinating and setting the national indicators for Agenda 2030. Finally, it calls on other ministries and agencies to contribute and support the Prime Minister and Minister of Environment in preparing the draft implementation plan of Agenda 2030.</p>
Government Resolution n. 292, 19 April 2017	<p>Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030</p> <p>https://apps.odok.cz/attachment/-/down/RCIAALRAJ6O8</p> <p>The resolution approves the Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030, calling on the Office of the Government to prepare a draft Implementation Plan. It calls on the Ministry of Regional Development to support the strategy through its Database of Strategies. The Resolution calls on the Prime Minister to submit the implementation plan by Autumn 2018.</p> <p>It also calls on the Government to report biannually on progress on fulfilling the objectives of the Strategic Framework. It requests the establishment of a monitoring mechanism to ensure the coherence of policies for sustainable development by December 2018 including in co-operation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.</p> <p>It calls on the Prime Minister in co-operation with the Minister for Regional Development and the Minister of the Environment, to develop instruments to promote sustainable development and to fulfil public governance needs including public administration, strategic management and planning.</p> <p>Finally, it calls on the governor of the Czech National Bank, the mayors of cities and municipalities to be fully involved and guided by the strategic framework.</p>
Government Resolution n.169, 14 March 2018	<p>Transfer of the sustainable development agenda</p> <p>https://apps.odok.cz/attachment/-/down/RCIAAWZD2D2T</p>

<https://apps.odok.cz/attachment/-/down/RCIAB5TAMF6O>

Government
Resolution n.669,
17 October 2018

The resolution approves the Implementation plan to the Czech Republic 2030, calling on all ministries to appoint the focal point responsible for internal and interministerial coordination in the sustainable development agenda.

The request of establishing of a monitoring mechanism to ensure the coherence of policies for sustainable development in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from the previous resolution was withdrawn.

The frequency of reporting is changed from two year period to three years period.

Finally, it calls on the regional authorities and the mayors of cities and municipalities to implement the measures and recommendations.

<https://apps.odok.cz/attachment/-/down/RCIAB5TAMHPX>

Government Resolution
n.670,
17 October 2018

The resolution approves the document Implementing 2030 Agenda in the Czech Republic, calling on all ministries to implement SDGs in their scope of authority and fulfil the measures included in the document.

It calls on the Ministry of the Environment to report on progress on fulfilling the objectives of the Implementing the 2030 Agenda in the Czech Republic, together with the reporting to the Czech Republic 2030 (i. e. once in three years).

It calls on the president of the Czech Statistical Office to coordinate the monitoring of the progress and all ministries to co-operate with the Czech Statistical Office.

1.1. Path Forward:

The creation and evolution of coordination tools and mechanisms to involve all governmental actors in the implementation phase of the SDGs is important, particularly considering the shift of the Secretariat to the Ministry of Environment. The Government also needs to ensure ownership of the implementation at local and regional levels. The Ministry of Regional Development will need to play a key role in developing the coordination mechanisms to deliver on the commitment to localise the SDGs.

2. Managing the coordination function and ensuring a whole-of-government approach to the SDGs

Understanding how to adapt institutional frameworks to deliver integrated policies that address interlinkages between the SDGs will be critical to achieving progress on Agenda 2030 (UN, 2018[4]). The coordination and management of trade-offs between different policy areas within government needs to be carefully managed in order to ensure coherence in the implementation of the *Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030*.

2.1. Moving the coordination function from the Centre of Government to the Ministry of Environment

The institutional location of the Government Council for Sustainable Development Secretariat was located in the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic between June 2014 and March 2018. This allowed for horizontal integration, cross-sectoral coordination and mainstreaming sustainable development priorities into national policy-making during the preparation phase (Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2017[3]). The need for whole-of-government coordination was enshrined in the *Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030* which states that the government should strive for "coherent / interconnected policies for sustainable development that communicate with the whole society

(including all sectors), stemming from the objective division of the decision-making power."

While the Czech government has historically supported and promoted sustainable development objectives, the coordination of the sustainable development agenda was, prior to 2014, housed in the Ministry of Environment. This institutional arrangement reflected the focus from Monterrey onwards on environmental sustainability. With the expansion of the sustainable development focus post-Agenda 2015, changes to the governance of the SDGs sought to reflect the new reality of an expanded thematic mandate.

On a practical level, with only one staff member committed to the coordination efforts, the Ministry of Environment faced significant capacity constraints at the time. Ultimately, this arrangement reflected the fact that sustainability and development policies were not at the top of the political agenda. The Ministry of Environment backed a move to the Government Office in order to better respond to the cross-sectoral nature of the sustainable development agenda in 2014.

Given that the SDG agenda requires a strong political mandate, coordination and analytical capacities, the Government Office was identified as the most appropriate institutional home to manage the coordination. The Government Office also took the lead in several other cross-sectoral areas, including human rights, anti-corruption efforts, and gender equality. With the Prime Minister leading the implementation of these initiatives, there was a clear leadership structure and mandate to coordinate the overall and whole-of-government approach to the SDGs. The benefits of this structure were clearly underlined by the Prime Minister's Office:

"The Prime Minister's office is especially favourable as a leader in the implementation of the SDGs because other ministries respect us as mediators [...] in the PMO, we do not have our own portfolio, we don't have a specific agenda to defend. We act more as negotiators, mediators or people who support the ministries with our own expertise. [...] you have to have your own expertise in all the fields that you're covering and that is quite a demanding task". Ms. Anna Kárníková, Director, Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, High Level Political Forum, New York, July 2017.

Representatives from ministries, business, CSO and parliament similarly saw a number of benefits in having the coordination of the SDGs and

the Secretariat housed in the Prime Minister's Government Office. The most obvious benefit for these stakeholders was the high-level political mandate and leadership that emanated from placing the coordination under the Prime Minister's purview. They also saw the mainstreaming of the SDGs across all policy sectors and the ability to provide a political steer when trade-offs between goals came to light as a major advantage. Vertical coherence (linkages with local and regional strategies through co-operation with the Ministry of Regional Development and associations of regions and municipalities) and ensuring coordination with EU and other international policies through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were also cited by both government and non-government actors as a major benefit to having the Government Office taking the lead on the SDGs. It was also noted that the Government Office was well situated to raise awareness both inside and outside government regarding the importance of the agenda. Situating the SDGs within the Government Office would therefore ensure a broader and cross-sectoral approach to the domestic implementation of the SDGs.

As part of the Government Office, the Secretariat had built strong relationships with other ministries involved in the SDG implementation. For example, internal coordination efforts focused specifically on SDG implementation are managed through the Committee on

Foreign Affairs of the Government Council for Sustainable Development, and this Committee's consistent meeting schedule and relatively informal style has allowed for frank and open discussions between the participants. For its part, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been co-operating with the Government Office and supporting the implementation of the SDGs in the external dimension. It will be important that this co-operation continues under the new coordination structure led by the Ministry of Environment.

The implementation and updating of the Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030 and its implementation plan is expected to be regularly reviewed by the Ministry for Regional Development (MRD). Drawing on the Database of Strategies, the MRD is expected to identify and communicate to the Ministry of Environment (MoE) synergies that can contribute to strengthening vertical coordination between government and other actors operating at national, regional and local level.

The role of the Czech Statistical Office, in turn, is to assist the MoE with monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030, and to coordinate the indicator set and its data collection.

2.2. Implications of housing the coordination of the SDGs in a line ministry

As outlined at the beginning of this report, countries have taken different paths and sometimes changed the coordination mechanisms on the SDGs since 2015. Political cultures also play a part in how centralised or decentralised the coordination mechanisms can become (Table 2). In some countries, the political culture allows for a more decentralised approach (e.g. the Netherlands where each ministry is encouraged to invest its own resources in the implementation of the SDGs with the Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation in charge of overall coordination).

Table 2: Responsibilities for coordination of SDG efforts differ between countries

Decentralised Approach		Centralised Approach
The Netherlands	Sweden	Mexico
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Disaggregated, less formal coordination system in both inter-ministerial and stakeholder relationships ● Implementation responsibilities spread across government ● Monitoring and reporting shared with non-governmental stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ministries responsible for implementing SDGs in order to promote whole-of-government response ● The Minister of Environment and the Minister of Foreign Affairs share the responsibility of coordinating and promoting implementation ● Government appointed a national delegation to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda, both nationally and internationally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● National Council of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, headed by President, established to bring together federal and local governments, civil society, private sector and academia ● Office of the President also heads the Technical Committee on the SDGs, comprising government agencies charged with monitoring SDG indicators

Lessons from countries taking a more decentralised approach such as the Netherlands show the importance of continuing to have a clear political mandate from the highest levels of government coupled with an SDG network of focal points with representatives from each ministry which meets regularly. In the case of the Netherlands the focal points are coordinated by a specially appointed high-level coordinator for national SDG implementation, assisted by a small secretariat. While the Czech Republic has established focal points within its

Implementation Plan, the Netherlands case could serve as a relevant example on how to organise work among these actors. This could allay concerns from ministries regarding both a potential decline in interest from the highest levels and the need to ensure cross-departmental and ministerial coordination including through the ministerial focal points.

Whilst acknowledging the strengths of the Government Office's coordinating role, Czech government and non-government stakeholders also recognised that there were certain challenges to having the centre of government take the lead in SDG implementation. For example, these include the risk posed by changes in political priorities of the Prime Minister, as well as electoral politics and subsequent unstable ownership of the agenda during the political cycle (as has been the case at the end of 2017 and beginning of 2018).

In April 2018 and following the Government Resolution 167 of 14 March 2018, the institutional home for SDG coordination was moved back to the Ministry of Environment. Motivations for this change included the view that the centre of government had too many cross-sectoral responsibilities and the sustainable development agenda has historically belonged to the Ministry of Environment. In fact, between 2012 and 2016, the Prime Minister's Office budget had increased by 22% due in part to the increasing number of units attached to the office (Department of Policy Coordination, Department of Sustainable Development, the Drug Policy Department, the Section for Science, Research and Innovation and the Section on Human Rights) (OECD, 2017). In addition, it was felt that other ministries in the Czech government have strengths that could benefit the sustainable

development agenda. For example, the Ministry of Regional Development is seen as a neutral party given that it is used to handle the cross-sectoral issues on everyday basis; it also provides a natural ability to link with regional development efforts and is in charge of coordinating the government's strategy units. The Minister of Environment served as the Deputy Prime Minister until the 30th April, 2019, which gave the ministry a clear oversight and coordination role.

Having identified suitable ministries, however is only a first step. OECD research has shown that the cross-cutting nature of the SDGs and the difficulty of coordinating across ministries and areas of responsibility are seen by countries as the most important challenge in SDG implementation (OECD, 2016). As a result, new approaches may need to be trialled - no matter where the SDG coordination unit is housed. For example, systems change approaches systematically bringing together public officials from across different ministries, agencies and non-government organisations can support better policy decisions in complex and cross-cutting areas (see Box 1 for an example of a coordinated systems approach in Iceland). The emerging research suggests that further collaboration between authorities at different levels and across sectors will be required to address barriers to coordination and strengthen institutional coordination and integration mechanisms (UN, 2018).

Box 1. Systems approach to tackle domestic violence - Case Study of the United Against Domestic Violence program (Iceland)

The Icelandic government is implementing a program to address violence against women that introduces a new integrated support system to victims based on a notion of domestic violence as a social (and not private) harm that affects everyone. Stemming from research findings on domestic violence and enabled by new legislation, the program sets out a radical system change from a system organized around providers and authorities (lawyers, police, social services, etc.) to one organized around the victim and focused on stabilizing the family. Today, the police, social and child protective services (and increasingly schools and healthcare providers) are working in a more coordinated fashion to detect and respond effectively to domestic violence across Iceland. Notably, social service providers and the police both felt that collaboration was working and improving with each case, though challenges around workload and burnout suggest that staff resourcing needs to be re-evaluated.

Work continues to combat domestic violence at a systemic level. In 2015, the number of cases of domestic violence dropped dramatically in Reykjavik from 799 in 2014 cases to 607. While it is not clear what the causal factors are in determining this reduction, the effect of systemic changes in approaching domestic violence continues to be monitored with the aim of providing a better assessment of the contribution of system change in preventing domestic violence and providing effective support to victims.

Source: OECD, 2017, Working with Change: Systems approaches to public sector challenges, OECD Observatory of Public Sector Innovation, GOV/PGC(2017)2

2.3. Coordinating the SDGs with other government strategies

Beyond the broader need for cross-government coordination, a necessary ingredient of domestic policy coherence on the SDGs is to ensure that government strategies clarify the link, to the extent possible, between the priorities and vision of the government and the SDG targets. While respective ministries are expected to take the lead in aligning their sectoral strategies with the SDGs, the Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030 emphasises that all the SDGs and most of the targets of the SDGs are applicable at the national level. By stressing this cross-cutting relevance, the strategic framework serves as an

overarching mechanism for sectoral strategies to ensure they implement sustainable development goals at the national and regional level (Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2017).

Given that the SDGs and targets should also be mainstreamed at the regional level through the sectoral and ministerial documents, the Government Office has undertaken an effort to support the process of strategic alignment by creating a gap analysis and identifying links between national and regional strategies. This process of alignment is also supported by regular coordination with relevant ministries and regional and local actors through the Committee on

Sustainable Municipalities. Nevertheless, there remains a significant challenge in ensuring the SDGs are perceived as an overarching strategic framework given the existing 150 government strategies, and that, at least at the sub-national level, coordination is a particular challenge (for example, only 130 of the country's 6,200 municipalities are members of the Association of Healthy Cities of the Czech Republic, which is voluntarily engaged in the SDGs implementation).

This process of strategic alignment points to the potential role of the Ministry of Regional Development, in supporting linkages between strategies. Broadly, the Ministry's goal is to create a bridge between national and regional strategies and data collection efforts, as well as to conduct regional mapping and data publications. Specifically related to the SDGs, the goal is to merge the SDG indicators into existing strategies and data collection efforts, though this will require additional effort in determining what data is available at the regional level.

In addition to directly supporting strategic alignment, the Ministry of Regional Development helps coordinate the implementation of – and provides information on – Strategy Units across various ministries. Broadly, Strategy Units are dedicated offices within ministries that provide in-depth advice and policy analysis on key priorities and can help ensure that the perspective

of civil society, the private sector and other ministries are represented. These units also help link ministry policies and initiatives to transversal priorities such as the SDGs. Therefore, the Strategy Units are well placed to spearhead SDG implementation in a given ministry and to connect with the primary coordination office.

These units can serve a coordinating role for integrating relevant strategies and, as noted above, provide a good opportunity to serve as a link between the SDGs and other strategies, as well as to strengthen SDG coherence within ministries. Nevertheless, given that the uptake, design and relative power of Strategy Units is not consistent across the government these units cannot take the place of more central coordination efforts. In addition, the heads of the strategy units are not political appointees giving them the advantage of staying in power following a change of government. At the same time, this highlights the need for high-level political buy-in to ensure these strategy units are adequately resourced and have the capacity to deliver.

Another challenge in ensuring coherence between strategies is that the implementation of national and regional strategies stops when a government leaves office, with each government promoting its own plans and undoing previous government actions. Ultimately, the expectation that future governments

will change course reduces the incentive for ministries to identify long-term solutions to trade-offs. Parliament and Senate committees in particular could play a stronger role in this area.

A mechanism should also be devised to find solutions when there are particular trade-offs between policies emanating from broader SDG targets. For example, in a situation where the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Environment were both supporting a drought mitigation program, the debate over the trade-offs that needed to be made were informed by their focus areas: while the Ministry of Agriculture promoted building dams, the Ministry of Environment promoted better water retention efforts. Managing the trade-offs in similar cases will be difficult without an agreed upon arbiter or coordination mechanism.

Finally, monitoring and identifying the impact and relevance of strategies as they relate to the SDGs will be important. A current challenge is that the IT systems between offices (such as, importantly, the Statistical Office) are not compatible, thereby reducing the likelihood of an effective monitoring system. Furthermore, many of the strategies are too general to have meaningful indicators attached to them, and few strategies have implementation plans. Finally, there is a lack of capacity at the regional level to track the SDGs.

In order to reduce these challenges, the Government Office GCSO Secretariat finalised the 2030 Agenda Implementation document, which will help establish the process by which the SDGs are managed and implemented. As part of the Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030, an internet platform was launched to allow businesses and organisations outside of the government to voluntarily commit to implement the SDGs and targets in an effort to bring government and non-government stakeholders into the process. The creation of such an overarching implementation plan will help clarify the actors, processes and mechanisms to balance the trade-offs of SDG coordination and, ultimately, support their successful implementation.

2.4. Integrating the SDGs into day-to-day management government processes

Beyond the alignment of the country's strategies, coordination of such a comprehensive cross-sectoral agenda such as the SDGs, which includes horizontal and vertical dimensions, requires significant human resource capacities within ministries, no matter where the institutional coordination lies. These capacity requirements put increased pressure on ministries, as they are expected to provide regular input and to create internal communication mechanisms that allow the coordinating institution to serve its function.

There is as yet little evidence to suggest that the SDGs have been integrated into the day-to-day management processes across government. For example, the civil service competency law has not been updated to reflect the kind of cross-sector coordination effective SDG implementation will require, which makes it difficult to expand staff responsibilities or to add new competencies. On the other hand, most of the relevant issues are covered by the new public administration strategy, which will be approved in 2020. There are systemic issues of citizens-oriented services, public sector innovations (cross-sectoral policy lab included), assessments and evaluations improvement, emphasis on public participation, staff training or might-be changes of the law, which divides authority among ministries (so called Competence Law).

In coordinating SDG implementation and managing trade-offs, countries have opted for different models to ensure the SDGs are part of day-to-day business and building civil servant skills to deliver on such a cross-cutting agenda (see Box 2).



Box 2. Coordination and integration of the SDGs into core government business: Examples from OECD countries

In **Mexico**, co-ordination for implementation is led by the Office of the President. The National Council for the 2030 Agenda, chaired by the president, is composed of heads of all Ministries. It acts as a bonding mechanism between the federal and local governments, civil society, the private sector and academia. The National Council will be responsible for implementation of the new National Strategy. The Senate has set up a Working Group for the Legislative Follow-up of the SDGs composed of 34 committees to accompany government's efforts in SDG implementation. The Specialized Technical Committee for the SDGs (CTEODS), established in 2015, is tasked with co-ordinating joint inter-institutional actions for collection, integration, production, processing, systematisation and dissemination of information that can be useful for designing and evaluating public policies aimed at compliance with the SDGs. The CTEODS is led by the Office of the President, the National Institute on Statistics and Geography (INEGI) and the National Population Council of Mexico. It involves 25 government agencies.

In **The Netherlands**, SDG implementation by ministries is overseen by the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation and supported by a special SDG coordinator. The coordinator chairs regular meetings of the interministerial working group of ministerial SDG focal points including a representative of municipalities to discuss progress on SDG implementation. Arbitration, if necessary, takes place at a higher policy level (Director General level) and ultimately within the Council of Ministers. In addition, since 2015 a project group of thematic experts led by the PCD focal point for the Bureau for International Cooperation at the Directorate General for International Cooperation co-ordinates international policy coherence work. This group sets the agenda, proposes objectives and guides discussions with respective ministries. The mandate of the SDG coordinator includes stakeholders, who also report to parliament in a joint and differentiated manner.

In **Slovenia**, the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy takes the overall implementation, coordination and monitoring responsibility for the 2030 Agenda. It is supported by the permanent Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Development Policies, which meets on a monthly basis and promotes policy coherence by sharing information and solving policy conflicts. The Group is composed of two representatives from each ministry working as focal points for development policies and the 2030 Agenda, and also includes representatives of the National Statistical Office and the Institution for Macroeconomic Analysis and Development. The Government Office advises the government and manages the implementation of EU documents. This coordination mechanism aims to consider both domestic and international objectives related to SDG-implementation in close collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Source: www.oecd.org/governance/pcsd/toolkit/goodpractices/

2.5. Path Forward

The identification of suitable ministries to continue with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is key. However, it is important to strengthen and further support the role of ministries on ensuring the implementation of the SDG's through a cross-cutting approach. Similar to the case of the Netherlands, the Czech Republic is working on improving intra-departmental coordination and communication through focal points for its implementation phase. It will be key to further develop the focal points activities and the establishment of concrete responsibilities within specific timeframes.

Another challenge - not only for the Czech Republic - relates to public sector innovation and assessment systems (ex ante assessments and ex-post evaluations). This calls for consideration of the best way to interconnect sustainable development with day-to-day policy-making processes (especially with regard to impact assessments and evaluations) as well as of systemic incentives to cross-sectoral approaches and innovations (e.g. policy labs).

The non-approval of the Competence Law by the Ministry of Interior poses a challenge. Nonetheless, the Czech Republic is working on specific initiatives that should be highlighted for their potential to promote a whole-government approach to the achievement

of the SDGs. These initiatives include the implementation of an experience exchange system between lower and upper levels of government through short internships, as well as study visits for civil servants at international organisations.

In terms of knowledge and skills of civil servants, the Czech Republic is working on developing a stronger link between policy making and researchers through a State-Oriented and Applied Research Support System. This would lead to the consolidation of a network of "knowledge brokers".

Finally, in order to strengthen coordination at the subnational level, the Czech Republic is considering to further develop Local Agenda 21. Moreover, the Implementation Plan emphasises the relevance of increasing regions and municipalities through the development of participatory methods and by encouraging emerging and local initiatives. Lastly, a system of collecting and sharing data transversally to public administration is being considered.

3. Incorporating the SDGs into the budget process

There is to date no formal process to ensure that the SDGs and targets are specifically incorporated into the Czech budget process, but line ministries are encouraged to make strategic considerations that support the aims of many of the SDGs. This is reflected in the Implementation Plan, which recommends that strategic documents be linked with budgeting. The medium-term budget outlook is set for three years on a rolling basis and is spread across 12 cross-cutting subjects, including environment, transportation, social issues, etc. The budget classification system could, in theory, therefore be aligned with the SDGs and relevant issues budgeted for at the sectoral level.

The most pressing challenge noted by ministry officials in more clearly incorporating the SDGs into the budget process was that the SDGs are perceived as too broad to link them effectively to budgetary goals and to specify the resources needed to respond to each goal or target. Increasing the budget's application of performance indicators related to the SDGs – and subsequently improving the government's ability to judge outcomes across sectors – was suggested as one way in which the budget process could more effectively integrate the SDGs.

Given that there is no formal link to the SDGs in the budget process, Ministry of Finance officials argued that for the budget to reflect the SDGs more effectively will require strong political support for SDG implementation. Ministry of Finance officials were particularly cautious of any increase in budget envelopes as a result of the SDGs.

For its part, the Department of Development Cooperation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is using the SDGs to influence its own budget allocations. The challenge they face is in delivering results and showing the impact of their activities. While the budget presented to parliament does not include SDG-related proposals and their development strategy is not based explicitly on the SDGs, there are links between specific projects and the SDGs. Their office is therefore in the process of working with Parliament to raise awareness on the connection of their work to the broader goals of the SDGs to help ensure support for official development assistance funding (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, 2017).

The Supreme Audit Institution is also not currently involved in monitoring performance or financial information relating to SDG implementation.

3.1. Path Forward

Specific budgeting measures have been developed for the implementation phase, particularly related to environmental protection and the development of innovation. However, all ministries may need to take greater ownership to ensure that financial commitments are allocated to appropriate targets. The Ministry of Regional Development is also considering a Strategic Impact Assessment (including assessing the financial coverage of strategic documents and their linking with the state budget). This has the objective of incentivising the ministries to adjust their budgets to strategic priorities in line with the SDG's. The Czech Republic will guarantee financial resources for the implementation phase through public budgets, direct and indirect tax instruments, economic intervention system, ESIF mechanism and national support, etc.



4. Enabling stakeholders to be part of the design and implementation of the SDGs

CSOs have been involved closely throughout the planning and design of the SDG process. Notably, the drafting of the Strategic Framework Czech Republic has been carried out in close co-operation with ministries, local and regional authorities, parliamentary representatives and a wide range of other stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, academia and the labour unions (Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2017). Such an integrated approach, in which all relevant sectors are included, is crucial to addressing such a complex agenda successfully. Stakeholder engagement has been prioritised by the Government Office and its GCSO Secretariat. As outlined in the Czech Voluntary National Review, 'finding synergies and trade-offs between policies requires strong cross-sectoral coordination, policy coherence and the involvement of all the relevant stakeholders, including the direct participation of citizens' (Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2017, p. 13). Even though the coordination function has been moved out of the Government Office, it will still be important that such engagement activities continue.

For its part, the Ministry of Interior coordinates the open government agenda and shares responsibility with

the Government Office on open data issues. As in other countries, there are opportunities to strengthen national implementation when the Ministry of Interior is involved as a main counterpart to implementation. There is also an opportunity to link the SDGs and open government initiatives in the country to ensure coherence across both government-wide agendas.

In terms of outreach and communication, the Department for Sustainable Development had an internal communication strategy focused on raising awareness on sustainable development issues and the SDGs in particular, including the Czech Republic 2030 (stakeholder engagement and participation mechanisms are described in the "Role of actors in the implementation of the CR 2030" section of the CR 2030 Implementation Plan). Stakeholder engagement has to-date been promoted by membership in the Government Council for Sustainable Development and its nine committees and also by the activities (such as regional consultations and regional round tables) of the Department on Sustainable Development. Moving forward, it will be a political decision on how the government will preserve these institutional mechanisms and, if so, in what form.

4.1. Communications and outreach

Broadly, communication and outreach work is directed towards two main audiences: government ministries (to provide information regarding timelines, reporting requirements, etc.); and non-governmental organisations (including business) and the general public.

For communications and outreach to be effective for the SDGs, stakeholders within these different audiences could be better targeted. For example, where ministers are business-oriented, language should be tailored to suit that message and highlight the importance of the sustainable development agenda on making Czech businesses competitive in an international market. Communications with parliament are also not as developed as they could be and in particular within the committee structures (for example, in the Senate, the Committee on Public Governance and Environment would be most relevant) to ensure the sustainable development agenda receives appropriate focus and attention.

Regarding external communication, the CGSD Secretariat recognises the importance of building contacts between CSOs and the government over the SDGs to build a bridge between the sustainable development concepts and the general public. The Department for Sustainable Development has therefore developed tools to provide information on how

to get more people involved, including organising an annual conference “Forum on Sustainable Development” with more than 200 participants, as well as developing activities with artists and celebrities to promote the sustainable development message. They have also maintained an online presence focused on awareness raising through the publication of original articles, sharing outputs and information related to Czech Republic 2030 and through the official website of the Government Council on Sustainable Development, which include its meetings minutes (www.cr2030.cz), through a website dedicated to the annual European Sustainable Development Week in the Czech Republic (www.tyden-udrzitelnosti.cz) and through social media, including Facebook and YouTube.

The Department also co-operates closely with the UN Information Centre in Prague. In 2017, the Government Office and the UN Information Centre took part in a consortium (which also included the Government Office, Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Czech Development Agency, Association of Corporate Responsibility and Ministry of Foreign Affairs) that sponsored the first Czech SDGs Awards. Similar consortiums in partnership with the business sector sponsored the SDGs Awards in 2018 and 2019. Czech celebrities were assigned as official SDGs Ambassadors during the campaign (<http://www.globalnicile.cz/>; <https://www.youtube.com/>

[com/watch?v=-p3_nljTrl](#)) to help raise awareness, and participants noted that this activity was the most effective communication tool they had developed to date. As outlined by a number of CSO representatives, better linkages with media personalities and journalists could support better communication on the SDGs across society. CSO representatives consulted with for this report stressed that they have broadly developed a good relationship with the government and in particular thanks to the GCSO secretariat. The government is encouraging NGOs and other actors to accept voluntary commitments to promote and help achieve the SDGs during the process of their implementation. CSOs had already developed mechanisms to engage when developing environmental and development targets in 2014. Building on this experience, CSOs have been involved in designing Strategy 2030. A CSO consortium *Měj se k světu* has been created which is actively involved in the 2030 Agenda. The goal of the CSO network is to speak with a coherent voice by pursuing a bottom-up approach based on the members' own agendas. Ultimately, their goal is to move beyond a siloed approach and focus on cross-sectoral issues. At the same time, a number of CSOs have recognised active participation does not come without challenges, in particular the pooling of

resources (both financial and human) between different CSO organisations.

4.2. Path Forward

The Implementation Plan proposes to make public administration data and information accessible in a way that is most useful for citizens. To achieve this, the Strategic Framework for Public Administration Development (SRRVS) will be further developed to take into account accessibility of content, transparency and open data. At the same time, the Government will need to ensure continued engagement and feedback from civil society and other stakeholders throughout the implementation phase. The Government's promotion of voluntary commitments through the online platform outlined in the Implementation Plan is a step in the right direction.

5. Conclusion: Potential challenges and ways forward

The Czech Republic has set out a clear institutional mandate for the implementation of the SDGs – even though the institutional home has changed over time from the Government Office to the Ministry of Environment. A number of other ministries, such as the Regional Development Ministry, are also well placed to support the coherence of domestic strategies as they relate to the SDGs. The SDG coordination unit has undertaken significant efforts to engage a broad set of stakeholders across government as well as outside, including CSOs and business. As a result, the 2030 Strategic Framework has been adopted and is accepted as a legitimate whole-of-government and whole-of-society exercise and approach to the SDGs.

There are a number of potential challenges however, that may weaken the transition from strategy to implementation that have been outlined in the above analysis. The first is that the transition from the SDG coordination within the centre of government to a line ministry could undermine the necessary high-level political commitment to a whole-of-government approach to the SDGs. The Prime Minister's continued engagement in domestic as well as international fora could help in addressing this issue.

Competing and overlapping domestic strategies could be confusing for

government and non-governmental officials in terms of prioritisation of the SDG agenda. Focal points in each ministry could assist in clarifying the ministry's positions on specific SDG targets and help with communication with other ministries and with the coordination unit. Strategy units themselves could be given additional mandates to link activities and strategies to the SDGs and targets as well as provide advice and policy analysis that incorporates the perspective of civil society, the private sector and other ministries. Data monitoring and evaluation of strategies would also help to track and promote SDG implementation efforts.

The integration of the SDGs into day-to-day management processes has also been identified as a challenge. Efforts could be undertaken to strengthen systemic incentives to cross-sectoral co-operation and innovation capacity, including renewing the competency law with the support of the Ministry of Interior to ensure civil servants are measured against their capacity for cross-sectoral collaboration. In addition, the Ministry of Finance could begin to put in place mechanisms to integrate the SDGs into the budget process, including linkages to the performance based management systems. Finally, using existing initiatives such as the Open Government platforms coordinated by

the Ministry of Interior could support better coherence across government.

In terms of outreach and communication to a broader set of stakeholders, the government and coordination unit could continue to build on existing engagement activities such as online platforms (as mentioned in the Implementation Plan) and the SDGs Awards. Irrespective of where the coordination unit for the SDGs is sitting, it will be important to ensure that a broad set of CSOs and businesses are engaged. To build stronger accountability mechanisms, committee structures in parliament could be used to review progress on the Implementation Plan and the Supreme Audit Institution could be encouraged to help monitor performance on progress in implementing the SDGs. Both of these institutions could ensure a stronger accountability mechanism for results. The Implementation Plan will now be a key instrument to achieving progress domestically and it is important that mechanisms be put in place to ensure it is properly monitored.

Finally, the Czech Republic should continue to engage with its international peers through international and global fora to share experiences with other countries that have or are in the process of setting up their own national implementation strategies for Agenda 2030. The implementation of the SDGs is not solely a technical exercise but instead one that touches upon cultural, social and especially political priorities and agendas. Understanding how other countries, no matter how diverse, have tackled similar challenges and found innovative ways to pursue the goals will enable the Czech Republic to take evidence-based decisions on the best ways to achieve the SDGs.



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