

**Contribution by the Committee of Experts on Public Administration to the 2016 ECOSOC Integration Segment with the theme of “*Implementing the 2030 Agenda through policy innovation and integration*”**

**Chairperson’s summary, Ms. Margaret Saner, 29 March 2016**

Governments need to rise to challenges of SDGs and to transform the way they operate to attain greater integration among social, economic and environmental policies.

*Policy integration*

The 2030 Agenda calls for an unprecedented level of policy integration, which presents major challenges for institutions at all levels. Governmental processes often do not reflect the inter-linkages between the complex economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development or even linkages within dimensions. Instead, government administration is often organized along sectoral lines with fragmented agenda setting. Policy integration is made even more challenging by the growing role of actors such as civil society and the private sector in public policy implementation.

Institutional constraints to policy integration typically include overly hierarchical structures, lack of a common strategic policy direction and sectoral self-interest. These structural challenges can be compounded by inadequate mechanisms for allocating resources for crosscutting issues and ensuring shared accountability for shared responsibilities. There are also often tensions between the (usually) national policy developers and local policy implementers.

Policy integration for sustainable development requires governmental organizations to adapt strategies that address integration across government and at all levels. Important elements for realizing integrated policies are:

- A commitment to the SDGs at the highest level and a vision of how to get there. Policy integration requires a strong ‘centre of government’ or a strong institution able to keep the focus on the overarching vision from the top and to mobilize coherent efforts of various actors.
- A whole-of-government approach, meaning that each ministry or agency needs to work with other ministries and actors in designing strategies and in reviewing progress to achieve a coherent mobilization of public institutions;
- A focus on implementation; sustainable development goals will not be achieved through good intentions but through real change ‘on the ground’; and,
- Renewed efforts to achieve social equity and inclusiveness.

For policy integration, it is important to have an effective policy development process in place, mechanisms allowing the sharing of information among government agencies and to achieve sufficient consistency of approach nationally and at subnational levels. The starting point is then a robust appraisal of attitudes, policy development skills and current work practices to establish whether they support or hinder efforts to implement coherent policies across government.

A shared vision, strategy or understanding of the issue has been found to be one of the key elements for successful integration. In particular, as a foundation for future integration, encouraging policy developers across sectors to share approaches and to agree on processes it is essential. In addition,

available and reliable information for effective policy development and tracking progress, transparent, accountable and 'outcome-related' funding, and full understanding of policy levers are among the key requirements of effective policy integration, as is a keen understanding of the relationships between sectors and impact of policies in one area on other areas. This requires new ways of working, skills and drawing on techniques such as macroeconomic modelling, strategic foresight and scenario planning.

Governments also need to establish a menu of support and incentive mechanisms for collaborative working, knowledge sharing and joint responsibility (e.g., joint reporting) and ensure that there is funding tied to stated objectives or outcomes.

Policy integration involving coordination across government can be supported by an enabling institutional environment (including particularly, lead agencies tasked with reducing fragmentation through a process of programme review) and behaviours that promote sharing of and access to public data (especially, in open formats), information and resources.

Some countries have already begun to establish institutions to coordinate SDG implementation, among them creating entities to spur implementation within the office of the Head of State or Government. Others are using influential ministries such as planning or finance, while still others are using the foreign affairs ministry. What is important is that the entity chosen has sufficient influence to shape a collaborative cross government approach. Inter-ministerial commissions are also being established in some cases with a number of countries creating or revamping national sustainable development councils.

Some countries are working to engage local authorities in the implementation of Agenda 2030. It is recognized that local authorities have a critical role in reaching the SDGs. They are also more prone to take integrated approaches than central administrations. However, some countries have emphasized that mobilizing local authorities around the SDGs is a challenge because of gaps in capacities and awareness. To be consistent with all elements of Agenda 2030, approaches need to be inclusive and to encourage joint problem solving.

### *Policy innovation*

Policy innovation, i.e. "innovation in terms of how, where, when and with whom policy is developed and implemented" (OECD concept note), can drive the transformation process towards more integrated approaches to development and the SDGs.

Policy innovation is multi-dimensional. It can occur both in terms of policy goals (e.g., better informed decision-making and identification/prioritization of policy objectives, including through stakeholder engagement) and means (e.g., new partnership platforms to implement policies).

Managing complexity calls for policy innovation within a collaborative setting; with a shift away from purely hierarchical views of the exercise of public power to a framework of relations among public authorities at various levels and between government and civil society, the private sector and other stakeholder groups. Governance is no longer about administering citizens but about collaborating, so as to find joint solutions to people's needs and achieve common objectives. Stakeholder engagement is thus particularly important for generating new ideas, solutions and understanding, and mapping risks, when innovations are implemented.

National registers, fiscal monitoring, regulation, strategy maps, social media and open government are some of the enablers of policy innovation. In particular, new information and communication technology and tools suitable for specific country circumstances, such as 'big data', should also be explored, as they can provide new insights that can lead to policy innovation. They can also provide solutions for the challenges faced by countries and help improve efficiency, enable partnerships, reach wider audiences and increase citizen participation.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) increasingly underpin the work of government, including policy development, regulation and enforcement and service delivery and of other agencies responsible for facilitating sustainable development. Arguable capability in this field is vital to both to understanding the challenges and to resolving them it is therefore likely that greater attention will need to be paid to the integration of relevant technologies in overall sustainable development policy planning and innovation. A further implication is a need to bring together policies concerned with the ICT sector and those concerned with overall national development.

Outcomes to be achieved through policy innovation include improvement in performance, and more transparent, accountable, effective and efficient government. What matters most is the positive impact that innovations have on sustainable development and improving people's lives. To achieve these outcomes, requires effective government institutions with a capacity to adopt SDG related outcomes as primary performance indicators in conjunction with efficiency and output measures. In this connection, more work on data and strengthening national statistical capacity (with disaggregation by sex, age, vulnerability status, etc.) is essential. This area is one where international collaboration may be both the means as well as the outcome of integration. Individual countries will set their own agendas for strengthening their capability with regard to policy integration. There are circumstances, however, where connecting with other countries may facilitate and/or enhance that process.

#### Sources

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