

CHAPTER

1

**THE CASE
FOR WORKING
TOGETHER**

1.1. Introduction

More than two years ago, Member States of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which ambitions to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development by 2030. The Agenda emphasizes the importance of the interlinkages and integrated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), stating in the Preamble: *“The interlinkages and integrated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals are of crucial importance in ensuring that the purpose of the new Agenda is realized”*. Acknowledging possible synergies and trade-offs between the sustainable development goals and targets will make it much easier to achieve the SDGs. It will help avoid unwanted side effects of actions aiming to accelerate progress towards one target on the realization of targets in other areas. It will support more balanced development trajectories by ensuring more coherent action on various dimensions of sustainable development.

It is recognized that the national level will be critical for the achievement of the Goals. At the national level, understanding how to adapt institutional frameworks to deliver integrated policies that effectively address existing interlinkages among the SDGs will be critical to achieving progress; it will also have important implications for national public administrations and public service. As implementation of the SDGs has started in earnest, Member States have put in place various types of institutions and mechanisms to foster integration. Yet, more than twenty-five years after the Earth Summit, policy integration and coherence remains a challenge in many countries. Out of the 64 Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) presented at the high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) in 2016 and 2017, many referred to the need to better harness the cross-cutting dimensions of the SDGs towards coherent and effective policy-making.¹

Broadly speaking, promoting integration implies finding ways to foster cooperation and common approaches among institutions at all levels dealing with closely interrelated issues. This may entail putting in place adequate institutional arrangements, public administration practices, mechanisms, capacities, budgetary arrangements and resources. It also encompasses various modalities of engagement of non-state stakeholders in decision-making.

The World Public Sector Report 2018 aims to inform efforts by all countries to foster policy integration, outlining the challenges and opportunities that exist for public institutions and public administration. It highlights areas for consideration going forward for governments to enhance policy and institutional integration towards SDG implementation. It illustrates how different types of interlinkages that exist among the SDGs can be addressed from an institutional perspective, based on examples. Through this, the report aims to sketch: areas where public institutions need to work

closely together; the types of tools that can be used to this effect; and the broader implications for public institutions and public service.

The report aims to assist national policy makers, especially those working in institutions entrusted with SDG implementation as well as in planning, finance and sector ministries and in local governments, to implement the SDGs in an integrated manner. It also aims to speak to government delegations at the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations as well as practitioners, scholars and students in development, governance and public administration. The report takes stock of the rich experience accumulated over two decades at the national level in this regard, also considers recent trends and events that could change the prospects for integration with the objective to inform the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The report is organized around three broad overarching questions. First, what are challenges to and opportunities for policy integration at different stages of policy cycle at the national level, from the institutional perspective? Second, what are examples of institutional and administrative arrangements that can foster integrated approaches to the whole 2030 Agenda? And lastly, what are challenges and opportunities for public institutions and public administration to deliver integrated approaches in different SDG or nexus areas? The remainder of the chapter frames these overarching questions and introduces the rest of the report.

1.2. Sustainable development, integration and institutions: what do we know?

The interdependence among sustainable development issues has been recognized for a long time. For example, development as a discipline has long embraced the linkages that exist between education and a range of economic and social outcomes, including in terms of poverty, labor productivity and health. The existence of interlinkages among social, economic and environmental dimensions is perhaps the most fundamental tenet of the concept of sustainable development.²

Taking these interlinkages among sectors into account in policy-making is critical in order to harness potential co-benefits and synergies across sectors, as well as to manage tensions and potential trade-offs and minimize negative impacts of sectoral policies on other sectors. More generally, it is also a way to enhance efficiency in the allocation of resources.³ Fundamentally, while the consideration of multiple linkages across sectors adds constraints to decision-making, integrated policy-making allows for a broader definition of problems that enlarges the

policy space, potentially yielding socially superior solutions that cannot be found by focusing only on sector-specific policies.⁴ Governments are acutely aware that integrations may offer cost-savings, enhance efficiency of fiscal resources and expand fiscal space, which are needed to finance the complex and inter-related sustainable development agenda. Other potential benefits of integration include the production of shared visions across sectors and actors and the possibility to drive the pursuit of key principles such as “leave no one behind” across the government. In the past few years, work on trade-offs and synergies has been mushrooming and has considered many parts of the SDGs, complementing earlier efforts to better understand and model interlinkages and their policy implications in clusters of issues such as the climate-land-energy-water nexus.⁵

Hence, potential benefits of integrated policy-making are clear. The costs of lack of policy coherence are also apparent – both in national contexts and across boundaries.⁶ The need for integrated decision-making in order to address interlinkages among sustainable development issues was recognized long ago, and firmly put on the intergovernmental agenda at the Rio Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit) in 1992.

In practice, fostering integration has proven difficult, at the international, national and local levels as well as across levels of governance. Many agree that a major cause of the shortcomings is an inability to both mainstream sustainable development principles in the work of existing institutions and achieve the degree of coordination, coherence and integration that sustainable development requires.⁷ Institutional aspects therefore represent one among many classes of factors that can impede integration.⁸

Potential benefits of closer integration among institutions are balanced by costs and risks. Those include: coordination costs in government; the creation of additional bureaucratic layers; the greater difficulty of generating political consensus as the

scope of policy and the range of associated stakeholders expands; and the fact that integrated strategies do not replace detailed sector strategies, planning and policy. Many of these have been well documented over the years.⁹

In turn, common obstacles and challenges to integration include: the siloed nature of the ministerial setup in most countries, without clear venues for integrated policy making; cultural clashes among government agencies; vested interests in society; the fact that integrated planning may challenge the implicit hierarchy of government agencies; diluted ownership; diluted and sometimes conflicting accountability lines; budget processes that are not well adapted for integrated planning; misaligned incentives for cooperation within agencies; and additional complexity due to supra-national factors, including legal commitments and implication of regional actors and donors in national policy formulation.¹⁰ Other systemic issues such as corruption can also pose challenges to horizontal and vertical integration.

But perhaps the main obstacle to integration in the past was the lack of political legitimacy of sustainable development as a paradigm. On the one hand, sustainable development was inscribed in the Constitutions of some countries. It also made inroads into laws and regulations pertaining to specific sectors. On the other hand, sustainable development had to compete on an unequal footing with the traditional development approach and with better resourced sectoral frameworks (for example in recent years, climate change). This marginal position was clear, for example, in the progressive relegation of sustainable development in environment ministries, its lack of political clout in national policy, and the waning popularity of local Agenda 21 after the turn of the 21st century.¹¹ In practice, clear policy priorities (typically, economic objectives trumping social and environmental objectives) were often at odds with integration.¹² On the institutional side, the adoption of sustainable development without renunciation of other paradigms often resulted in the creation of parallel institutions, which coexisted with older, stronger institutions focusing on business as usual. For example, the influence of national sustainable development councils and similar structures rarely reached a level where it could influence the main budgetary and policy choices. As argued below, the adoption of the 2030 Agenda may change this, because it establishes sustainable development as the reference paradigm under which all institutions should operate.

Whereas the issue of synergies, interdependence and interlinkages has received much attention in recent years, and even more since the adoption of the SDGs, institutional implications of integration seem to have received less emphasis, at least from the development community. For example, during the past decade several hundreds of peer-reviewed articles have been published on the so-called “nexus” of climate, land, energy and water (CLEW)

Box 1.1. Institutions in the 2030 Agenda

“Institution” is a broad and multi-faceted term, which encompasses a range of structures, entities, frameworks and norms that organize human life and society. The 2030 Agenda does not prescribe institutional models for the national level, but outlines principles that institutions should strive to achieve, such as being “effective, accountable and transparent”, (as reflected in target 16.6), ensuring “responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels” (target 16.7) and “enhancing policy coherence for sustainable development” (target 17.14).

Source: Authors' elaboration.

- a cluster of issues that encompasses critical synergies and trade-offs, whose relative importance can vary across locations and scales.¹³ Several international conferences have been organised on this topic. Yet, despite this attention, the institutional dimensions of the problem have been little studied, the majority of studies having focused on modelling and exploration of policy options. While so-called means of implementation such as financial resources, technology and capacity, and other dimensions such as stakeholder engagement are often considered, institutions per se are often left in the background and perceived as neutral conduits for implementing strategies and policies.¹⁴ In other words, whereas awareness of the importance of some of the linkages among the SDGs is now widespread and growing, the institutional dimensions of effectively addressing those linkages at the national level are still under-studied.

To some extent, this should not come as a surprise, as the study of institutions, especially in relation to something as elusive as difficult to measure as integration, is intrinsically difficult. Institutional settings vary tremendously across countries. Each country has a different “starting point” and preference for governance styles, due to constitutional settings, traditions, culture, political practice, geography and resulting environmental, social and economic circumstances. The cultural dimension of institution-building and institutions’ underlying values have to be taken into account (e.g. by striving for a minimum of cultural compatibility during transformations to new and more inclusive institutions), as they can be very resistant to change and not accounting for them can lead to failure in changing institutions.¹⁵ In addition, new institutions are never created in a vacuum, but more often than not come as additional actors in fields already crowded with layers of policies and institutional arrangements that may present high levels of incoherence.¹⁶ These dimensions of institutions mean that “best practices” are elusive at best, and inappropriate as a concept at worst. This is even more striking as one examines specific issues or themes, as exemplified by chapters 5, 6 and 7 in this report.

Nevertheless, the past 25 years since the Earth summit offer a rich body of experiences and lessons in terms of institutional setups and arrangements and public administration management efforts that aimed to foster integration and coherence. For example, National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS), National Sustainable Development Councils (NSDC) were instruments put forward in Agenda 21 in 1992, which aimed to promote integration. At the local level, local Agenda 21 was another tool that promoted integrated approaches to the whole sustainable development agenda, including participation.¹⁷ Many other tools and instruments related to participation were also pioneered following the Earth Summit. At the sectoral level, attempts at integration in many sectors have also resulted in the development of integrative concepts and institutional experiments, the lessons of which could be harnessed for the benefit of SDG implementation. This report aims to take a first step in this direction.

1.3. How does the adoption of the 2030 Agenda change the prospects for integration?

There are many reasons to think that the adoption of the 2030 Agenda may significantly change the prospects for integration, including at the national level. In a nutshell, the Agenda and the SDGs have elevated the status of sustainable development on the international policy agenda, increasing the legitimacy and relevance of integrated perspectives and approaches. In addition, the explicit focus of the Agenda on institutions as an intrinsic component of sustainable development provides an impetus for governments to devote more attention to finding institutional models and public administration approaches that effectively support integrated approaches. These positive changes in legitimacy and relevance of integrated approaches are further supported

Box 1.2. Five reasons why the adoption of Agenda 2030 may be a game-changer for integration

1. With the 2030 Agenda, sustainable development and its integrated perspective become the mainstream approach to development, increasing the political salience of integrated approaches, including in developed countries due to the universality of the SDGs.
2. The SDGs provide a common map of sustainable development, clearly showing the interdependence among goals and targets.
3. Scientific knowledge and evidence on interlinkages among SDG areas have progressed tremendously since 1992.
4. Institutions are an integral part of the SDGs on par with other goals, not an afterthought or a component of an “enabling environment”
5. Methodologies that support integrated approaches in public institutions are being developed, including analytical methods, tools and information systems.

Source: Authors’ elaboration.

by progress in the scientific understanding of interlinkages among sustainable development issues, as well as by the development of analytical methods, tools and information systems that support integration in public institutions in practice.

From a political perspective, perhaps the most important change for the prospects of integration brought forth by the adoption of the 2030 Agenda is the fact that sustainable development, instead of being one among several paradigms of the international community, is now clearly posited as the mainstream approach to development for the next 15 years. This, combined with the universality of the Agenda and its high political visibility at the international level (epitomized by the number of voluntary national reviews at the UN each year) is likely to engender higher national level ownership of the integrated perspectives that are consubstantial with sustainable development, with involvement of key players such as heads of government and ministries of finance. Giving the most powerful ministries and institutions the responsibility for sustainable development is perhaps the best indication of commitment that governments can provide to the public.¹⁸ It may trigger a range of changes in institutions that support an enhanced potential for integration in practice, such as: adoption of integrated budget frameworks; higher salience of national strategies and plans that reflect integrated approaches; allocation of resources more closely reflecting sustainable development priorities; alignment of incentives for cross-sectoral and vertical collaboration among public institutions; new or strengthened arrangements for external oversight and scrutiny of national progress; and many others. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 in this report elaborate on these aspects.

Another key element of change brought by the adoption of the 2030 Agenda is the SDGs themselves, with their two particular features: their all-encompassing scope, which with the exception of a few activities encompasses practically all sectors of human activity; and their interrelated and indivisible nature. As discussed earlier in this chapter, UN Member States were fully conscious of these features as they were designing the SDGs. As a result of these characteristics, the set of goals and targets provides a common map or platform for all actors – in particular but not only at the national level – to interact, whereas before, there were several separate communities discussing separate agendas (including development, human rights, peace and security, and the environment). This can drastically enhance the prospects for integration, both across sectors and across scales, and for engagement. The fact that the SDGs explicitly highlight interlinkages across sectoral issues is also a clear break with previous development frameworks (the Millennium Development Goals), and may by itself encourage integrated approaches¹⁹. As a by-product, mappings of linkages among SDG targets translate quite naturally into stakeholder maps, which can facilitate consultation and engagement in institutions in charge of specific issues.

At the same time, the scientific knowledge and evidence base that can support integrated policy-making have progressed tremendously since 1992. Interestingly, work by the scientific community has been matched by work of national institutions directly involved in policy-making. Recently, governments have conducted work to identify critical interlinkages among SDGs at the national level in order to frame national planning (Colombia),²⁰ and to map the mandates of all public institutions in relation to the SDG targets (Sri Lanka).²¹ Supreme audit institutions (SAIs) have also been active in this field, both individually and through their international organization (INTOSAI), with several SAIs engaged in or having already produced audits of preparedness for the implementation of the SDGs that address policy coherence and integration.²² These efforts seem to indicate greater awareness in national policy circles of the importance of addressing interlinkages among goals in an integrated manner. The work on SDGs as an interlinked system also places emphasis on the compatibility of the whole set of goals and possible pathways to achieving them simultaneously, as opposed to achieving a subset of them.²³ This contrasts with relative ignorance about these aspects in the years after the Earth Summit. Indeed, looking back at national sustainable development strategies done during the 1990s, Swanson et al. (2004) noted: *“In most cases, the sustainable development strategy was a compilation of economic, social and environmental issues, objectives and initiatives. The fundamental notion of how issues, objectives and initiatives influence each other both positively and negatively was not a fundamental part of strategy content.”*²⁴

On the other hand, the complexity inherent to integrated approaches and the difficulties it creates for policy-making will remain. These difficulties are linked to the broadening in scope and number of actors that go with integrated approaches, which often creates a context in which both the policy goals and the means to achieve them become contested. Thus, no agreement exists among relevant actors on the framing of the issue itself – what the policy literature calls “wicked problems”.²⁵ This has been well documented in many sectors, including transport, forestry, agriculture and fisheries. The policy implementation literature has underlined that in such cases, advocates of competing views of the problem at stake struggle to impose their visions and preferred ways to address it, and that is therefore no reason to expect that institutional responses in terms of enhanced integration would automatically emerge.²⁶

Another game-changing feature of the SDGs is that they prominently feature institutions, both as a cross-cutting issue in many of the goals and as standalone goal (SDG 16), not as an afterthought or as part of an “enabling environment” for the goals. The inclusion of a comprehensive Goal 16, “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels” in

the SDGs underlines the awareness of UN Member States of the importance of this dimension for the achievement of all development goals. The strengthening of national institutions to deliver the SDGs is seen as a priority in many Member States, as shown by their voluntary presentations at the UN high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2016 and 2017. The result of this inclusion may be a greater focus from all development actors on the “how”, and the return in the development community to a paradigm where institutions are not perceived as neutral conduits for implementing strategies and policies, but where the institutional setup is a primary enabler and determinant of sustainable development outcomes. It may also help refocus the attention on the importance of dimensions such as accountability, transparency, corruption, for development outcomes.

Hence, the existence of SDG 16 may translate into higher awareness of the importance of institutions, and presumably into increased attention and resources devoted to this dimension at all levels. This is particularly important, as recent efforts to better understand interlinkages among SDGs have tended not to systematically explore the institutional dimensions of addressing those linkages in an integrated manner.

Since 1992, progress has also been made in the development of analytical methods, tools and information systems that can support integration in public institutions in practice. Integrated budget frameworks are an example. For example, thanks to the experience of the MDGs, attempts have been made at mapping development goals with budget nomenclatures, in order to enable all actors to link expenditures made under various budget lines by different institutions to development objectives. Efforts to develop so-called “SDG budgeting” started immediately after the adoption of the SDGs, with the government of Mexico being a forerunner (see chapter 2). The 2030 Agenda has carried with it a renewed focus on the importance of data, which could also be an enabling factor for integration.

Overall, the adoption of the 2030 Agenda has created positive momentum for policy integration. Eventually though, whether this will result in concrete improvements in terms of policy integration is an empirical question that remains to be answered.

1.4. Conceptual framework for the report

1.4.1. Defining policy integration

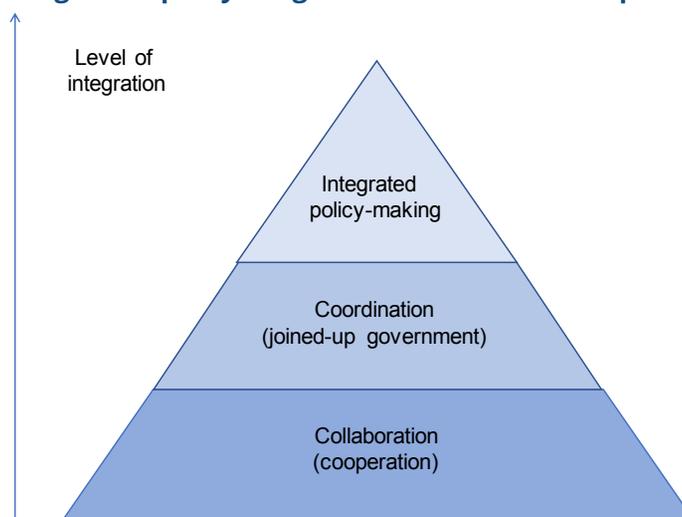
Broadly speaking, policy integration concerns “the management of cross-cutting issues in policy-making that transcend the boundaries of established policy fields and do not correspond to the institutional responsibilities of individual departments”.²⁷

The term “integration” itself is used in at least three slightly different meanings in the literature, that all relate to coherence. The most common usage refers to integration as a *variable* or dimension, with policies in specific issue areas being more or less integrated or coherent. In this respect, integration is a continuum, which goes from least coherent to fully coherent. By extension, integration can also refer to the ideal of policies that achieve a high or the highest degree of coherence. Alternatively, integration can refer to the *process* of making policy around a specific issue more coherent.²⁸

A variety of related concepts and terms are often used in the literature that addresses policy integration. These include terms such as policy coherence, coordination or joined-up policies. The distinction between these is not always clear, and they are frequently used indistinctly or as synonymous. This chapter will not present an exhaustive review of the conceptual debate.²⁹ Stead and Meijers (2009) have proposed that the various concepts can be characterized as reflecting different degrees of integration, and distinguish three broad cases, from the least demanding to the most demanding:

- (i) collaboration (or cooperation), referring to the presence of relations between otherwise autonomous organizations for the accomplishment of individual goals;³⁰
- (ii) coordination (or joined-up government), referring to efforts made to ensure that policies and programmes coming from different parts of government are coherent and do not contradict one another. This closely relates to the frequently used concept of policy coherence;³¹

Figure 1.1.
Degrees in policy integration and related concepts



Source: Stead and Meijers (see footnote 29).

- (iii) integrated policy-making (or policy integration), referring to coordinated responses from a variety of organisations to jointly elaborate policies that span across boundaries.

The resulting hierarchy is represented on [figure 1.1](#). It should be noted, however, that these definitions are not universal, and that different meanings are attributed to the same terms by different experts.³²

In this report, the term “integration” is considered in a broad sense. Integrated policy-making is used to refer to policy processes that:

- (i) systematically identify relevant and important linkages of particular issues across the SDGs and consider those linkages in design of policies;
- (ii) are consistent across scales of implementation (and in particular, given the focus of this report on the national level, from the local to the national);
- (iii) involve the relevant stakeholders in design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation; and
- (iv) provide adequate resources for implementation at all relevant levels.

In addition to these criteria, discussions on policy integration and policy coherence frequently refer to other dimensions, including: the time dimension, and specifically the coherence between short-term policies and longer-term strategies. This

is an important dimension of the discussions on the science-policy interface,³³ and the coherence between domestic and foreign policies – this is reflected in the concept of policy coherence for development, which was developed in the context of official development assistance.³⁴ These two dimensions are not the main focus of this report. In studying integration at a sector level in a practical way, approaches such as the ones developed by supreme audit institutions that focus on duplication, fragmentation and gaps (see chapter 2) conceptually belong to the “coordination” level of the Meijers-Stead hierarchy.

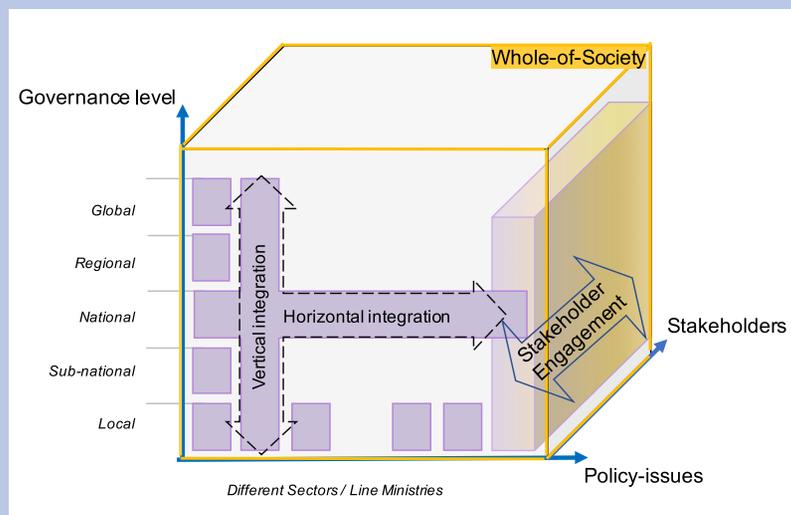
To analyse integration efforts from the institutional perspective, it is standard in the literature to distinguish three dimensions:

- (i) Horizontal integration, i.e. integration across sectors or institutions;
- (ii) Vertical integration, i.e. how the actions of national and sub-national levels of government can be aligned to result in coherent outcomes;
- (iii) Engagement of all stakeholders in the realisation of shared objectives.

Taken together, these three dimensions of integration cover all the relevant categories put forward by the literature such as, among many others, participation, partnerships, and coherence, as well as the two commonly used notions of whole-of-government approaches and whole-of-society approaches (see [Box 1.3](#)).

Box 1.3. Whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches and their relations with the categories used in this report

The concepts of whole-of-government approaches and whole-of-society approaches have also been increasingly used. The former refers to the joint activities performed by diverse ministries, public administrations and public agencies at different government levels in order to provide a common solution to a particular problem or issue. The approach and content of the initiatives can be formal or informal. The latter refers to joint activities that involve non-state actors, in addition to the whole of government, with the state generally playing a coordinating role.



Source: Authors' elaboration.

Box 1.4. Unpacking the relations between vertical and horizontal integration

Relations and possible interactions (either synergies or trade-offs) between vertical and horizontal integration can be complex. In particular, the literature reviewed for this report outlines the following interactions:

Improving vertical integration may lead to enhanced horizontal integration at the national level: the experiences of vertically integrated climate change mitigation actions in South Africa and Indonesia show that institutional mechanisms (e.g., technical committee) set for coordination across levels of government can also be used for cross-sectoral purposes.

Improving vertical integration may enhance horizontal integration at sub-national and local levels: One study on Uganda asserts that lack of national support to the local level created difficulties to work inter-sectorally on nutrition issues at the local level, since local governments had to rely mostly on implementation partners.

Better horizontal integration at the national level may lead to improved vertical integration: in the case of Peru, it has been said that limited horizontal integration and narrow sectoral policy perspectives at the national level undermined vertical integration, since national ministries had more power than regional governments over sectoral offices working at the regional level.

Source: See endnote 35.

Importantly and as illustrated in chapters 5, 6 and 7 of this report, the three dimensions of integration considered here are not fully independent. For example, when SDG implementation responsibilities are with sectoral ministries, a key challenge would be to ensure that implementation within sectors is vertically integrated and synergistic with other interrelated sectors. In other words, horizontal and vertical integration should ideally be mutually supportive and reinforce each other (see Box 1.4).³⁵

1.4.2. Measuring policy integration

Assessing how public institutions can foster integration is fraught with conceptual and practical difficulties. A first difficulty comes from the complexity of the institutional and policy setting that applies to any issue that is broad enough in scope, e.g. at the level of some of the SDG targets. For example, ending all forms of malnutrition (target 2.2) will require a range of actions at many levels, including legal and regulatory components, actions of multiple institutions with different mandates and purposes, and potentially broader societal changes. In other words, no target can generally be achieved through a single institution. In this context, the performance of a given institution in terms of enabling integrated policy-making is hard to isolate. Conversely, individual institutions, especially those with broad mandates, can play a role in many different policy areas as well as society-wide. For such institutions, it is important to assess whether their own internal functioning promotes integration, and how they foster integration through their actions.³⁶

When looking at the attempts at policy integration as a whole, it is clear that different aspects could be considered, including:

(i) *institutional efforts* made by governments to promote

integrated policy-making and policy coherence, for example through the creation of new institutions or coordination mechanisms for SDG implementation, or allocation of resources for such mechanisms. While reasonable and presumably indicative of the level of commitment of a government, this type of measure does not necessarily translate into actual performance in terms of integration - institutions can be ineffective.

(ii) related to this, one could measure *activities* that take place in relation to collaboration and coordination (e.g., the numbers of coordination meetings, joint policy documents, consultations with stakeholders, etc.). This type of indicators suffers from similar problems - activities that take place may not result in concrete changes in terms of integration.

(iii) measures of performance in terms of integration and policy coherence should ideally be in terms of *outcomes*, such as: the degree to which the various legal and regulatory instruments covering specific sectors/areas are consistent; and the degree to which the interests of all relevant stakeholders are considered and balanced; the adequacy of the provision of resources to all relevant actors and levels of governments for acting on the issue in question; and the (in)efficiency of public spending in specific areas.

This distinction mirrors the input-output-outcome classification that is commonly used in performance evaluation. Some authors make the distinction between intermediate outcomes of integrated policies or strategies, i.e. measuring the extent to which their stated objectives have been achieved; and ultimate outcomes, which refer to the broader, society-wide impacts of strategies and policies.³⁷ In practice, assessments

of performance in terms of integration likely have to consider all of these dimensions to some extent.

Beyond this, the literature has underlined the fact that performance of policies or institutions is not only measured objectively. Success is often socially constructed through narratives that may or may not make full use of available data. For political purposes, *“perceived success is at least as important as measurable achievements, and the latter is no guarantee for the former”*.³⁸ Yet, for development practitioners concerned with the success of integrated approaches, it is ultimately the political salience of approaches that matters.

Reflecting these difficulties, the empirical evidence base on the performance of integrated policy strategies is limited. Nonetheless, many studies have documented challenges to and enablers of integration in relation to specific strategies, policies and institutional mechanisms. Some of those are reflected in later chapters of the report.

1.4.3. Methodological approach to the report

The focus of the report is on the national level, including the sub-national and local levels. The report reviews efforts made by countries in terms of institutional arrangements in the public sector to promote policy integration. International governance of sustainable development is not examined here, nor are linkages between the international (and regional) and national levels, except in specific circumstances. This is not to say that those dimensions are not important. Indeed, they have received a high level of attention both from academia and from practitioners and have important impacts on countries.

The methodological approach chosen for the report is generic and can be applied to any issue or sector. It consists in identifying critical interlinkages between the issues being examined with the rest of the SDGs, and assessing how national public institutions and public administration address those linkages. In order to analyse institutional frameworks and administrative practices in a consistent way, the report and all its chapters use a grid of analysis that is based on the three dimensions of integration presented above (horizontal integration, vertical integration, and engagement).

The report is purposely empirical. It does not aim to build or test a theory of policy integration. Rather, it aims to point to a broad range of relevant examples of institutions and administrative arrangements for integration at the national level, distilling key features of those.

Research undertaken for this report made clear that it was important to differentiate between two levels of analysis, which are traditionally distinguished in the public administration literature addressing integration.³⁹ The first level can be called systemic or “whole-of-Agenda” level. It refers to the institutional and public administration arrangements that are

made to ensure that implementation of the Agenda and the SDGs as a whole is integrated. These types of high-level arrangements are those that have received the limelight in official presentations made by countries at the UN in the context of the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda (see chapters 2, 3 and 4 of this report).⁴⁰

The second level of analysis relates to integrated approaches in specific sectors, issues, and areas. This encompasses sectors that have their “own” SDG, such as health or education, lower-level issues such as freshwater management (addressed in several targets under SDG 6), as well as cross-cutting issues such as migrations and youth. Integrated approaches at those levels have been tried and codified in many sectors or areas where competing multiple uses have to be managed in a spatial context, in particular those related to natural resources. Sectors such as forest management, water resources management, management of coastal areas, have seen forms of integrated approaches evolve over time,⁴¹ often to the point of being coined and recognized in national and international law.

Lessons learned from the implementation of arrangements at these two levels can usefully inform the debate on integration in the context of the SDGs, and specifically, provide useful insights on how important linkages across SDGs can effectively be addressed by public institutions and public administration. This is because the generic factors that influence the performance of institutional arrangements in terms of integration are similar across the different sectors. **Table 1.1** provides examples of such generic factors for the three dimensions of integration considered in the report. A more detailed exploration is provided in chapters 2, 3 and 4.

1.5 Content of the report

This chapter has presented the methodological framework for the report, and its three dimensions of reference: horizontal integration, vertical integration, and engagement. The following three chapters each focus on one of those dimensions of integration. The second part of the report illustrates the application of the framework by looking at three current challenges that are - among many others - relevant to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda: integrated approaches to international migration at the national level; integrated approaches to health; and integration of peace, security and development in post-conflict situations. **Figure 1.2** illustrates the structure of the report.

The SDGs put high demand for horizontal (or cross-sectoral) integration on institutions at all levels, from the local to the global. Chapter 2 focuses on horizontal integration at the national level. The chapter highlights some of the institutional arrangements adopted by countries to manage the implementation of the SDGs at the systemic or “whole-

Table 1.1. Examples of generic factors influencing integration in various dimensions

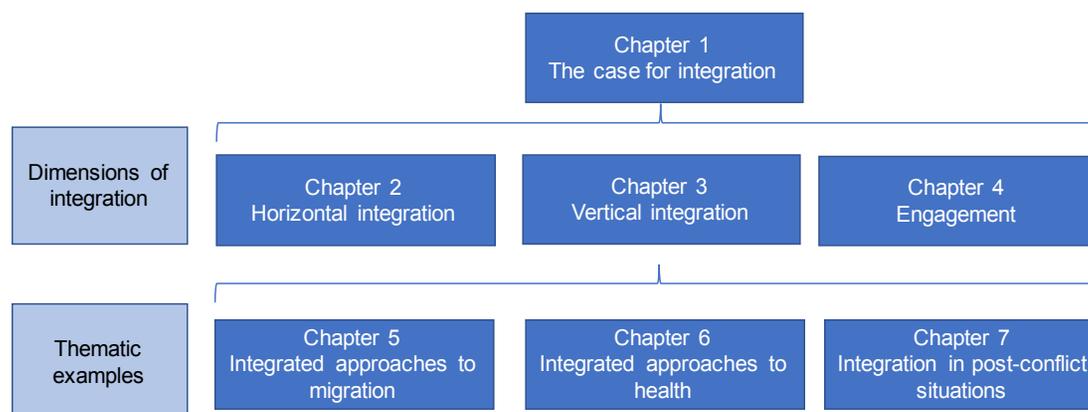
Horizontal integration	Vertical integration	Participation and engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-level, comprehensive “umbrella” strategy (e.g. national sustainable development strategy) • Cross-sector coordination structures and mechanisms • Budget processes • Existence of integrated planning tools • Incentives for institutions and for staff in those institutions to work cross-sectorally (mandates, charters, rules, regulations, internal accounting, etc.) • Public procurement rules • Awareness-raising, capacity development in Government institutions incl. capacity for systems thinking, planning • Robust science-policy interface, incl. modelling, data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processes for “localizing” the SDGs • Legal and regulatory framework for decentralization and related arrangements in practice • Political context at the national and local levels, accountability of local governments versus national government • Budget processes and resources available to local governments • Incentives for institutions and for staff in those institutions to work across levels of government • Local and national government capacity • Existence of integrated planning tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement of stakeholders in the design of national sustainable development strategies • Appetite for engagement of non-state actors in a country in general and in specific sectors • Level of institutionalization of engagement mechanisms for policy-making and implementation • Strategic use of engagement mechanisms as policy tools by governments • Degree of organization of civil society • Clout and influence of the private sector (society-wide and in individual sectors) • Policy capacity in civil society • Skills and resources for engagement in public service

Source: Authors’ elaboration, based on chapters 2, 3 and 4 of this report.

of-Agenda” level. This level has received high attention, in particular because it is the one covered in voluntary national reviews of the 2030 Agenda that countries undertake at the UN. The chapter then goes on to examine past evidence and examples in relation to a selection of tools or factors that are known to influence performance in terms of integration. The choice was made to focus on long-term strategies and plans, budget processes, incentives in civil service for integration, and monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Other elements that could be included in such a review in the future would include planning tools, public procurement rules, and science-policy interfaces. Lastly, the chapter also

looks back to experiences in fostering integrated decision-making at the sector or issue level in past decades.

The 2030 Agenda recognizes the critical role of sub-national and local governments in promoting integrated and inclusive sustainable development. All the SDGs have a local dimension that is critical to their achievement. Responding to people’s to needs and demands requires effectively connecting regional and local governments with national policies and strategies through an integrated multi-level approach. In addition, many targets included in the SDGs inherently involve spatial aggregation of local outcomes, which are themselves the product of local actions. Ensuring that a national target is

Figure 1.2.**Structure of the World Public Sector Report 2018**

Source: author’s elaboration.

met thus involves a collective action problem, which requires minimal levels of coordination across levels of governments. Vertical integration is therefore a critical complement to horizontal integration. Chapter 3 focuses on the efforts to ensure vertical integration in the implementation and follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. The chapter considers different stages of the policy cycle, from leadership to planning to implementation to monitoring and review, and examines different approaches and tools that allow the various levels of government to enhance integration and coherence of their actions. The chapter classifies such tools and mechanisms according to three categories: (i) those that result from the creation of genuine multi-level spaces for policy-making involving different levels of governments; (ii) those that come mostly from the national level and aim to support sub-national action (what could be dubbed “top-down” mechanisms); and (iii) those that are primed by sub-national action, not necessarily in full coordination with the national level. This classification is used to document experiences and challenges that countries have faced in the quest for vertical integration and coherence.

Active action and involvement of all stakeholders is a prerequisite for achieving the SDGs. This is clearly recognized by the 2030 Agenda, which made “Partnership” one of the “5 Ps” that introduce the Agenda and included numerous references to inclusion and participation. The SDGs also emphasize the dimensions of engagement and participation and inclusiveness more generally. In other words, the SDGs cannot be achieved without engagement. At the broadest level, engagement is key to building integrated visions and strategies for the future, shared by all components of society, as a support to long-term transformation. In addition, linkages across the SDGs require the formulation and implementation of long-term integrated approaches which need to involve a wide range of stakeholders. Engagement is also critical to devise strategies and policies that benefit from large societal consensus, both at the sectoral level and at the level of sub-national territorial units within countries (e.g. regions, metropolis, cities) and key to address trade-offs among societal objectives. Chapter 4 document countries’ efforts to engage people, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders in the realisation of sustainable development objectives, with special attention to the potential of such engagement mechanisms to contribute to policy integration. Based on country examples, it examines how different mechanisms and channels for engagement can contribute to integration and coherence. Examples includes both “whole-of-Agenda”, cross-sectoral engagement mechanisms at national, sub-national and local levels, and forms of engagement in specific SDG areas or nexuses of SDGs. The chapter highlights mechanisms for engagement that UN Member States have put in place or are utilising specifically in relation to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Chapter 5 examines how public administration and public institutions can promote an integrated approach to responding to the needs of migrants and refugees. International migrations are cross-sectoral in nature. They lie at the intersection of development and humanitarian concerns and involve multiple political, economic, social, human rights, cultural and environmental dimensions. In addition, the relative importance of these issues varies according to the type of international migrations that is examined – critical issues faced by refugees may not be the same as those faced other types of migrants. Such linkages imply the need for integrated public administration and institutional approaches at the national level. These are complex, given the diversity of relevant sectors of public administration that have to play a role and the need for differentiated approaches for different groups of migrants. The chapter presents some of the important linkages between international migrations and the SDGs and examines how these have been addressed from the perspective of public administration and institutions at the national level. The chapter also documents ways in which public administration can foster access to public services by different migrant groups, looking at different types of public services and examples from multiple countries.

Health remains a high priority and high visibility issue on political agendas, both in developed and developing countries. From a public policy perspective, health is seen at the same time as an outcome, a determinant and an enabler of all SDGs, making it a major cross-cutting theme of the 2030 Agenda. The multiple connections between health and other sectors call for integrated policy and institutional approaches. This raises a range of demands on public administration, which in all countries has a key role to play in the management of the health care system and in the delivery of specific health-related services, as well as in shaping the so-called social determinants of health, which affect health outcomes. Chapter 6 aims to evaluate and substantiate the implications for public institutions and public administration of the need to adopt an integrated approach to health and well-being. It explores the interlinkages and interdependencies between health and well-being and other goals, highlighting a range of approaches that public institutions and public administration use to address such linkages, as well as enabling and constraining factors for such integrated approaches.

Countries emerging from conflict face complex and multifaceted challenges to realizing the SDGs. Particularly challenging is the pursuit of actions aimed at simultaneously sustaining governance reform, economic restructuring and rebuilding the social fabric destroyed during conflict, while at the same time securing visible achievements in terms of poverty alleviation, peace dividends, security and stability and environmental sustainability. The World Public Sector Report 2010, *Reconstructing Public Administration after*

Conflict, explored how to reconstruct public administration in post-conflict situations so as to enable it to promote peace and development in countries that have been affected by civil war and destruction.⁴² Chapter 7 revisits the issue, focusing on new developments since 2010 and exploring how the SDGs may help strengthen the connection between humanitarian, reconstruction and development perspectives, thereby contributing to the objective of sustaining peace, which has received considerable attention recently. The chapter examines whole-of-government approaches for post-conflict recovery and a phased approach towards sustainable development. It also explores the role of local governments and survey positive examples of arrangements that ensure stakeholders' participation in the design and implementation of post-conflict reconstruction strategies.

1.6. Preparation of the report

The report links and synthesizes analyses drawn from the developmental and public administration fields, coming both from the academic literature and practitioners' experiences. For example, the report presents findings on emerging institutional arrangements and innovative integrated strategies based on information presented by more than 60 UN Member States at their Voluntary National Reviews at the HLPF in 2016 and 2017. As such, the value added of the

report lies in the links that are made between the practical experience that exists in the field of public administration in relation to policy integration and the recently framed 2030 Agenda, focusing on challenges and opportunities for public institutions and public administration.

The report was led and coordinated by the Division for Public Administration and Development Management of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DPADM/ UNDESA). Chapter leaders were responsible for reaching out to relevant experts within and outside the UN system, mobilizing existing networks of experts working on the topics considered in the report. Open calls for inputs were circulated to expert networks as well as to the general public. In all, over 80 experts provided contributions for the report.

All chapters were informed by in-depth analysis of the development, institutional and public administration literatures, as well as analysis of national policy developments in relation to public administration (drawing inter alia on DPADM's large database of initiatives submitted for the UN Public Service Award). Two expert group meetings were organised in support of the preparation of the report, focused on chapters 5 (migration) and 7 (post-conflict situation) respectively. The expert meetings allowed for the incorporation of a broad range and inputs and perspectives in the report. Lastly, the report relied on extensive peer review, both from UN and non-UN experts.

Endnotes

- 1 See the syntheses of voluntary national reviews for 2016 and 2017 prepared by the UN Division for Sustainable Development, accessible at: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/127761701030E_2016_VNR_Synthesis_Report_ver3.pdf and https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/17109Synthesis_Report_VNRs_2017.pdf.
- 2 United Nations, 2015, *Global Sustainable Development Report 2015*, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York, July.
- 3 Taking the example of education, depending on the country and specific location considered, in order to improve educational outcomes, the marginal dollar of public resources may be most efficiently invested in additional classrooms; in improving the quality of teaching; in complementary investments such as sanitation facilities for girls, road network linking schools with surrounding settlements or electricity provision. For an example of comprehensive mapping of education with other sectors, see Vladimirova, K., D. Le Blanc, Exploring Links Between Education and Sustainable Development Goals Through the Lens of UN Flagship Reports, *Sustainable Development*, 24, 4, 254–271. For a focus on the SDGs as a whole, see International Council for Science (ICSU), 2017, *A Guide to SDG Interactions: from Science to Implementation*, D.J. Griggs, M. Nilsson, A. Stevance, D. McCollum (eds), International Council for Science, Paris.
- 4 For example, integrated policy-making aiming at waste reduction may result in solutions where waste generation is avoided through policies in other sectors, rather than treated. The same applies to sectors like transport. One of the first modern example of payments for ecosystem services was designed by the city of New York, when it was realised that it would be less expensive to pay landowners around water reservoirs to avoid certain land management practices than to construct additional water treatment facilities to provide drinking water to the city residents. This implied using resources from a sector (water) to use in another sector (land use or agriculture). See Appleton, A.F., 2002, *How New York City Used an Ecosystem Services Strategy Carried out Through an Urban–Rural Partnership to Preserve the Pristine Quality of Its Drinking Water and Save Billions of Dollars and What Lessons It Teaches about Using Ecosystem Services*, paper presented at The Katoomba Conference, Tokyo, November 2002.
- 5 See references below in this chapter.
- 6 This has been established in sectoral (e.g. oceans., agriculture) and multi-sectoral (e.g. climate, land, energy and water) contexts. Typical sectoral examples are fisheries and biofuels.
- 7 United Nations, 2012, *Back to Our Common Future: Sustainable Development in the 21st century*, summary for policy-makers, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York, June.
- 8 In their seminal review article, Stead and Meijers classify the facilitators and inhibitors of policy integration in five broad types of factors: political factors; institutional and organisational factors; economic and financial factors; process, management and instrumental factors; and behavioural, cultural and personal factors. Stead, D., E. Meijers, 2009, Spatial Planning and Policy Integration: Concepts, Facilitators and Inhibitors, *Planning Theory and practice*, 10, 3, 317–332.
- 9 See chapters 2, 3 and 4 of this report.
- 10 See chapters 2, 3 and 4 of this report.
- 11 United Nations, 2013, Lessons learned from the Commission on sustainable development: report of the Secretary-General, A/67/757. UNDESA, 2012, *Sustainable Development in the 21st Century: Review of implementation of Agenda 21*, New York.
- 12 For example, in Europe, which was usually considered a leader in the operationalization of the sustainable development concept, the primacy of economic growth translated into competing strategies (Lisbon strategy and Sustainable Development Strategy), and in practice the growth and competitiveness strategy received higher attention and priority, see Steurer R., G. Berger, M. Hametner (2010), The Vertical Integration of Lisbon and Sustainable Development Strategies Across the EU: How Different Governance Architectures Shape the European Coherence of Policy Documents. *Natural Resources Forum* 34(1): 71–84. The same researchers point to the fact that the EU SD strategy was de facto abandoned when the Europe 2020 strategy was adopted. See Nordbeck, R., R. Steurer, 2016, Multi-sectoral strategies as dead ends of policy integration: Lessons to be learned from sustainable development, *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 2016, 34, p. 748.
- 13 See Bazilian, M., Rogner, H., Howells, M., Hermann, S., Arent, D., Gielen, D., Steduto, P., Mueller, A., Komor, P., Tol, R.S.J., Yumkella, K.K., (2011). Considering the energy, water and food nexus: Toward an integrated modeling approach. *Energy Policy*, 39, 12, December.
- 14 For example, in a prominent article on integration for the SDGs written by leading scientists, recommendations in relation to institutions were limited to the following two: (i) Integrated sustainable development plans that enforce linkages among fragmented sectors and promote policy coherence; and (ii) political leadership on sustainable development at the highest levels of government, for example in a dedicated powerful ministry or the executive branch. See Stafford-Smith, M., Griggs, D., Gaffney, O. et al. Integration: the key to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, *Sustainability Science* (2016). See also Natural Resources Forum, 2012, Special issue on institutions for sustainable development, 36.
- 15 Meuleman, L. and Niestroy, I. (2015), Common But Differentiated Governance: A Metagovernance Approach to Make the SDGs work, *Sustainability*, 7(9), 63–69
- 16 Rayner J, Howlett M, 2009, Implementing Integrated Land Management in Western Canada: Policy Reform and the Resilience of Clientelism, *Journal of Natural Resources Policy Research*, 1, 4, 321–334.
- 17 UNDESA, 2012, *Sustainable Development in the 21st Century: Review of implementation of Agenda 21*, New York.
- 18 United Nations, 2012c, *Sustainable Development in the 21st century, summary for policy-makers*, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York, June, available at http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/UN-DESA_Back_Common_Future_En.pdf.
- 19 Le Blanc, D (2015), Towards Integration at Last? The Sustainable Development Goals as a Network of Targets. *Sust. Dev.*, 23, 176–187.
- 20 Presentation of Colombia’s national statistical office at a side event organised by ICSU at the HLPF, July 2017.
- 21 De Zoysa, U., 2017, presentation at the UN -INTOSAI Development Initiative Supreme Audit Institution leadership and stakeholder meeting, New York, 20–21 July, “Auditing preparedness for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals”, Division for Public Administration and Development Management, available at: <https://publicadministration.un.org/en/news-and-events/calendar/ModuleID/1146/ItemID/2947/mct/EventDetails>.
- 22 For example, Tribunal de Contas da União, the SAI of Brazil, has audited the policy setting that applies to organic agriculture (related to SDG target 2.4). See UNDESA, 2017, Report of the IDI Leadership meeting, New York, 20–21 July 2017, Division for Public Administration and Development Management, New York.
- 23 Weitz, N., Carlsen, H., Nilsson, M., Skanberg, K., (2017). Towards systemic and contextual priority setting for implementing the 2030 Agenda, *Sustainability Science*, doi 10.1007/s11625-017-0470-0.

- 24 Swanson D, Pinter L, Bregha F, Volkery A, Jacob K, 2004, National Strategies for Sustainable Development: Challenges, Approaches and Innovations in Strategic and Coordinated Action (IISD and GTZ, Winnipeg).
- 25 Rittel, H., M. Webber, Dilemmas in a general theory of planning, *Policy Sciences* 4, Elsevier Science, 1969, 155-173.
- 26 Wellstead, A., J. Rayner, M. Howlett, 2014, Beyond the black box: Forest sector vulnerability assessments and adaptation to climate change in North America, *Environmental Science & Policy*, 35, 109-116.
- 27 Stead, D., E. Meijers, 2009, Spatial Planning and Policy Integration: Concepts, Facilitators and Inhibitors, *Planning Theory and practice*, 10, 3, 317-332.
- 28 For example, see Underdal, A. 1980. "Integrated marine policy: What? Why? How?", *Marine Policy*, July, 159-69. For him, integrated policies can be characterised by the following features: comprehensiveness (in terms of time, space, actors and issues); aggregation (policy alternatives are evaluated from an overall perspective), and consistency (a policy penetrates all policy levels and government agencies).
- 29 For a thorough discussion and comparison of various related concepts, see Stead, D., E. Meijers, 2009, Spatial Planning and Policy Integration: Concepts, Facilitators and Inhibitors, *Planning Theory and practice*, 10, 3, 317-332. Policy integration can also be defined with regards to the three dimensions of sustainable development. One definition that reflects this notion, can be found here: <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org/ecosoc/files/publication/desa-policy-brief-policy-integration.pdf>.
- 30 This can encompass, for example, exchange of information, data, and resources.
- 31 OECD (2017), *Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development 2017: Eradicating Poverty and Promoting Prosperity*, OECD Publishing, Paris.
- 32 For example, the Free Dictionary Online (www.thefreedictionary.com) proposes the following definitions for "joined-up government" and "joined-up thinking", respectively: "with all departments or sections communicating efficiently with each other and acting together purposefully and effectively" and "focusing on or producing an integrated and coherent result, strategy, etc". While the former is closer to "collaboration" in the Meijers-Stead scale, the latter would seem to belong to "integrated policy-making".
- 33 See United Nations, 2015, The science-policy interface, *Global Sustainable Development Report 2015*, chapter 1, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York.
- 34 Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2008, Policy Coherence for Development – Lessons Learned. *OECD Policy Brief* series, Paris.
- 35 Sources: GIZ/ICLEI. "Vertically integrated nationally appropriate mitigation actions (V-NAMAS). Policy and implementation recommendations."; Alcalde, G. 2017. "The 2030 Agenda as a framework for sub-national policy-making", Paper prepared for the 9th Congress of ALACIP, Montevideo, July; SNV Netherlands Development Organisation, Centre for Development Innovation of Wageningen UR (CDI), royal Tropical Institute (KIT), and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). 2017. "The power of multi-sectoral governance to address malnutrition: Insights from sustainable nutrition for all in Uganda and Zambia", SNV.
- 36 An example of the former could be whether the various Committees of the Parliament collaborate when addressing topics of overlapping interest. An example of the latter could be whether the work of a supreme audit institution supports enhanced integration in government as a whole on a given issue.
- 37 Candel, J. J. L., 2017, Holy Grail or inflated expectation? The success and failure of integrated policy strategies, *Policy Studies*, doi: 10.1050/01442872.2017.1337090.
- 38 Candel, J. J. L., 2017, Holy Grail or inflated expectation? The success and failure of integrated policy strategies, *Policy Studies*, doi: 10.1050/01442872.2017.1337090, p16.
- 39 See for example, Rayner, Jeremy, and Michael Howlett, 2009. Conclusion: Governance Arrangements and Policy Capacity for Policy Integration. *Policy and Society* 28 (2): 165–172. doi:10.1016/j.polsoc.2009.05.005.
- 40 In this category, one would also typically find institutions such as NSDCs.
- 41 Those include: integrated water resources management (IWRM), which was first codified in 1992, and is referred to in successive international outcome documents on sustainable development, including in SDG 6.5; integrated coastal zone management (ICZM); ecosystem-based management for oceans; community-based forest management; and others. Payment for ecosystem services (PES) are also intrinsically cross-sectoral arrangements that seek to link the preservation of ecosystem services with economic incentives of those who are in a position to affect them.
- 42 United Nations, 2010, *Reconstructing Public Administration after Conflict*, World Public Sector Report 2010, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York.