



Background

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an integrated agenda, and effective horizontal integration across sectors is critical for addressing the inherently cross-cutting, interconnected nature of the SDGs, including synergies and trade-offs across different goals and targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is well recognized, however, that overcoming sectoral boundaries to achieve horizontal integration remains a challenge. Nevertheless, governments likely already have concrete opportunities to facilitate integration in their structures and processes, and chapter 2 of the World Public Sector Report 2018 identifies some of those.

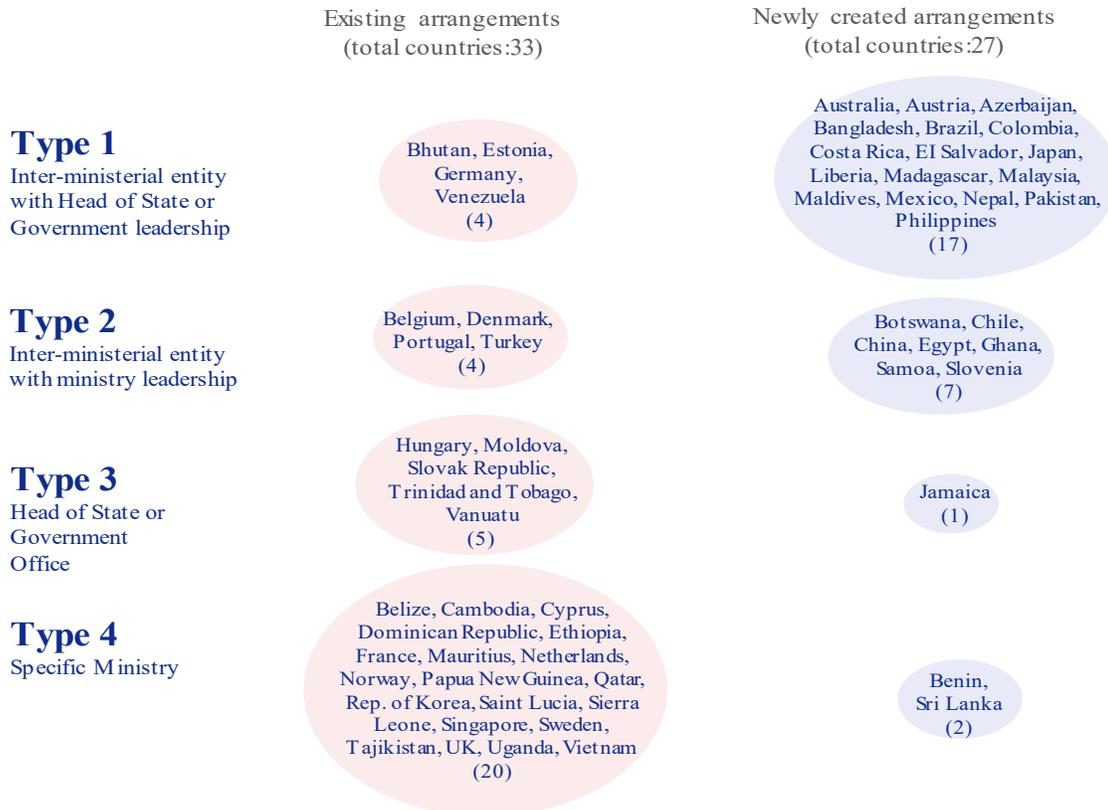
Organizing for cross-sectoral integration in the government

An increasing number of countries around the world are integrating the SDGs into their national policies and putting institutional frameworks in place. Some countries have given new mandates to existing mechanisms or are setting up new

coordination bodies and mechanisms for SDG implementation (e.g., high-level commissions). Arrangements are being made to ensure continuing leadership in SDG implementation, which may come from the heads of state and government or from line ministries.

In a sample of 60 countries selected for analysis, 27 had created a new structure for SDG implementation (including 17 new cross-sectoral entities). SDG implementation is chaired, coordinated or led by Heads of State and Government in 27 countries. Leadership at the highest level is often considered conducive to successful implementation of national policy, and expresses a commitment to SDG implementation in many countries. Out of the 60 countries examined, 32 have institutional arrangements in place for SDG implementation that span across sectors. This may be an indication of countries' interest in addressing the integrated nature of the SDGs and determination to rally all parts of governments around the SDGs.

Figure 2.1 National institutional arrangements to coordinate and lead SDG implementation



Source: Authors' elaboration.

No single approach to institutional innovation seems more likely to facilitate integration independently from country context. Adapting the SDGs to national contexts while ensuring buy-in from stakeholders both within and beyond government is a delicate, political task. Beyond stated needs to enhance cross-sectoral integration and efficiency, factors influencing the choice of institutional arrangements include the dynamics and balance of power and resources in the country, as well as the prevailing political and institutional systems.

Beyond institutional arrangements: means and processes in support of integration

Beyond institutional arrangements, other instruments are available to governments to enhance integration. The report examines five of them: national sustainable development strategies, budget processes, incentives within public institutions, monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and the role of oversight institutions.

National strategies and plans provide a long-term vision that functions as a common reference for integrated approaches. This common reference enables a shared understanding across sectoral boundaries of the government's broad policy objectives. It allows different parts of the government to see how various interventions play together towards attaining the SDGs. Many countries have mapped the SDGs against their national development strategies, and a significant number of them, especially developing countries, have explicitly aligned their development strategies with the SDGs. Sierra Leone's integrated strategy within the framework of the Agenda for Prosperity 2013-2018 illustrates this approach.

The budget process can help implement national strategies at the level of programs and activities, and budget allocations for cross-sectoral priorities can encourage programs to align with the SDGs. Budgets can be used to track support to specific targets, identify opportunities for adjustment and constitute an incentive for alignment and integration of programs with the SDGs. The cases of Mexico and Norway show how the budgetary process can be utilized to advance cross-sectoral integration and the 2030 Agenda.

It is the public service that implements the national strategies and plans and plays an important role in the practical, day-to-day implementation. Hence, public servants need to have the understanding, incentives and mandates to work towards the realization of the SDGs. Based on the research undertaken for the report, few countries seem to be systematically mobilizing public servants around the SDGs, although public administration ministries are sometimes part of inter-ministerial committees. That said, there exist practices that aim to provide incentives for better integration, such as performance pay based on horizontal initiatives, or systems that make public servants move across departments for a limited period.

Monitoring, evaluation and review of progress are critical for integration and need to be an integral part of SDG implementation strategies. A challenge is that monitoring and evaluation frameworks tend to target specific policy interventions (e.g., a single policy or program in a particular sector), whereas it is important to assess overall progress

towards interrelated goals and targets. Based on the research done for the report, integrated monitoring and evaluation in the context of SDG implementation could include the following elements: ensuring alignment between the SDG strategy and the monitoring and evaluation process; mapping out critical interactions across the Goals and targets at the national level and identification of associated indicators; bringing together information collected by different sectors; leveraging monitoring and evaluation as a dynamic tool to encourage the continuous cross-sectoral collaboration; anticipating what data will be necessary for monitoring and evaluation and making efforts to fill in data gaps; ensuring that capacity for monitoring and evaluation exists at all levels of the government where it is needed; and strengthening the feedback between evaluation and policy making and budget cycles — an often-reported limitation of evaluation policy.

Parliaments and Supreme audit institutions have an important role to play in facilitating integration. Parliaments, through their oversight and budgetary functions, can help ensure that policies are supportive of the SDGs and integrated. Supreme audit institutions can play a key role in examining the overall, cross-sectoral effects of policies and providing oversight on governments' efforts to deliver on the SDGs, including success in terms of integration.

While the chapter focuses on opportunities for horizontal integration within national government processes and structures, the actions of development partners, both bilateral and multilateral, can support or hinder governments' efforts to adopt integrated approaches. Differing agendas, lack of coordination and integrated approaches among the partners themselves may seriously hinder or even counteract countries' effective horizontal integration. As illustrated in the report, countries in different contexts have strived to address this issue.

Going forward

Going forward, countries may be able to enhance horizontal integration by actively leveraging various means and instruments. For example, combining revised, integrated budget processes, incentives for integrated work in the public service and strengthening of the capacity of public institutions to track and monitor progress on the SDGs may reduce the likelihood of efforts from individual institutions being "stranded" in the face of challenges in other parts of government.

Progressing towards horizontal integration will require strong leadership, appropriate strategies, institutional arrangements, processes and enabling cultures, but also understanding and collective commitment. It should be clear across the government that ministries, offices and individuals depend on each other to meet specific targets and the SDGs as a whole. Achieving the SDGs is not an exercise in achieving a collection of individual targets, but rather an exercise in collaboration and joint efforts within government, to a level that has not been seen before.

More information

The World Public Sector Report 2018, its executive summary and other materials are available at:

<https://publicadministration.un.org/en/Research/World-Public-Sector-Reports>