



Romania:

OECD Scan of Institutional Mechanisms to Deliver on the SDGs



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Foreword

Romania has shown impressive economic growth in recent years. In 2019 its GDP per capita in purchasing power standards reached 69% of the European Union average, up from 44% in 2007, the highest growth rate in the EU27. To ensure that this growth helps reduce inequalities across the country in a sustainable way, particularly in the post-COVID-19 context, Romania has been paying increasing attention to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The government is currently translating the Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 (SDS 2030), adopted in November 2018, into an Action Plan with time-bound actions and clear targets for 2030.

This *Institutional scan of governance mechanisms to support the SDGs in Romania* provides initial recommendations to help ensure policies and budgets help achieve Romania's targets for 2030. The review looks at how SDG-related responsibilities and tasks are allocated among the centre of government and other ministries and agencies. In particular, it focuses on how the policy formulation and evaluation processes support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

This report offers an analysis of the current strengths and weaknesses with regard to policy coherence throughout the policy cycle in Romania. It suggests preliminary steps for updating the existent institutional framework to implement the Action Plan and overall policy planning and financing. The conclusions of this report are in line with the country-specific recommendations (CSRs) from the 2019 EU semester report around strengthening decision-making predictability. The Action Plan and governance framework exercise is very timely for reinforcing the implementation of the CSR and highlighting how the SDGs could be embedded in the formulation of the next EU semester exercises, in line with the growing emphasis that the EU would like to give to the SDGs. In addition, ensuring that long-term sustainability is at the heart of the EU semester mechanism is even more important in the post-COVID scenario, given the pivotal role played by this mechanism in programming the Recovery and Resilience Fund.

The analysis is based on desk research and information from questionnaires filled by the Romanian Government, as well as a fact-finding mission conducted by the OECD in October 2019. The analysis also drew on the results of previous OECD [PCSD country reviews](#). In particular, the assessment takes into account the eight guiding principles for promoting good institutional practices for policy coherence according to the 2019 [OECD Recommendation on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development](#). This scan is a tandem report with the 2020 OECD report on *Romania: Linking Policy Planning and Budgeting to Support the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs)

The initial recommendations provided in this Scan will inform future OECD support for developing the Action Plan to implement Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy. The recommendations could be tested during the multi-stakeholder process that will lead to the formulation of the Action Plan.

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During a field mission in October 2019, the OECD conducted interviews with officials from Ministry of Public Finance, the centre of government, line ministries, the Supreme Audit Office, the Parliament, and the National Institute of Statistics, and held consultations with independent experts and representatives of civil society (see Annex 1). The authors would like to express their appreciation to all of these stakeholders for their availability and insights.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

GoR	Government of Romania
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CC	Consultative Council
CoG	Centre of Government
CPM	Chancellery of the Prime Minister
DCPP/PPCD	Policy and Priorities Coordination Directorate of the GSG, General Directorate
DDD/DSD	Department for Sustainable Development
ESIF	EU Structural and Investments Funds
GSG/SGG	General Secretariat of the Government/Secretariat General of the Government
ICCIE	The Inter-ministerial Committee for the Coordination of the Integration of Environmental Protection
ICSD	Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development
ISP/PSI	Institutional Strategic Plans/(Planul strategic institutional)
MLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
MoEF	Ministry of European Funds
MoER	Ministry of Education and Research
MRDPA	Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration
NRP	National Reform Programme
NSDI	National Strategy Development Indicators
NSI	National Institute of Statistics
OIPSDRU/POCU/POCS	Intermediary Body for Operational Program for Human Resources Development, turned into POCU and POCS for 2021-2027
PALG/ AWPG	Annual Working Plan of the Government
PMO/PMC	Prime Minister's Office/Prime Minister's Chancellery
RAS	Reimbursable Advisory Services
RIA	Regulatory Impact Assessment
SAI	Supreme Audit Institution
SDGs	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
SNDD/RSDS/ SDS 2030	National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Romania 2030

Executive summary

The Romanian Government aims to become a leader in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). There is a clear commitment to the 2030 Agenda and different institutional mechanisms have been set up to implement the SDGs. By mid-2021 the government is expected to operationalise the 2018 National Strategy for the Sustainable Development of Romania 2030 (SNDD) by drafting an Action Plan and developing a governance framework for its effective implementation.

This process prepares the ground for aligning Romania's budget with the SDGs targets by 2021, as announced during the High Level Political Forum in New York in September 2019.

Adopting Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) as a structuring principle for policy making could help Romania's government orient decision-making towards the most pressing priorities for sustainable development. Selecting policy priorities is even more challenging in the wake the COVID-19 pandemic. While meeting urgent priorities, the government needs to continue to pursue long-term sustainable objectives as set out in the SNDD.

Preliminary recommendations

1) Define clear short- to medium-term actions aligned with the SNDD in the forthcoming Sustainable Development Action Plan for the next ten years. Some of these priorities could emerge from the four-year priorities included in Romania's Institutional Strategic Planning (ISP) process.

2) Systematically involve the SDG-related bodies policy making: operationalise the existing SD institutions (DDD, Interdepartmental Committee and Sustainable Development Hubs) **and the Directorate for Coordination of Policy and Priorities (DCPP)**, using **standardised processes** to consult these bodies during the policy cycle (i.e. in the inter-ministerial working groups to embed the PCSD dimension during policy formulation; in the preparation of *ex ante* and *ex post* evaluation mechanisms to assess sustainable development compliance, in arbitrating among possible policy trade-offs ,etc.).

3) Strengthen ex ante regulatory impact assessment (RIA) by examining economic, environmental and social impacts in equal measure. An **integrated sustainability impact assessment** will also take into account trade-offs, potential alternative futures, the impact on developing countries and the intergenerational outcomes of new strategies and legislation. To ensure that the integrated *ex ante* sustainability impact assessment is systematically conducted for all new legislation, a change in the law should be introduced and resources should be allocated to this end. The legislation should also clarify which data need to be gathered to measure short- and long-term economic, environmental and social impacts, as well as the actors in charge of conducting and validating the integrated assessment. Most importantly, it should clarify how the RIA will be used for decision making. For instance, the Department of Sustainable Development could clear all sustainability assessments, thus enhancing its pivotal position during strategy formulation at ministerial and inter-ministerial level.

4) Embed an SDGs perspective in policy planning methodologies across the public administration

Given the difficulties in translating policy vision into projects, actions and indicators, the methodology for institutional strategic planning may need to be revised. In the short term it is important to update the methodology for the substantiation notes, which remain the most common planning instrument. Updated substantiation notes could help in proactively identifying potential synergies and trade-offs across sectors, consulting relevant non-state actors, and including an analysis on the transboundary and inter-generational impact of proposed programmes and actions. A government decision or a normative act **might be needed to review the methodology for institutional strategic planning (ISP)**. As the ISP will replace the substantiation notes as the main prioritization tool, the methodology for identifying sustainability issues should be embedded there as well. Updated planning methodologies could improve the links between strategic planning and budgeting by more clearly identifying which policies contribute to achieving the SDGs. Providing **guidance for ‘sustainability-sensitive strategic planning’** could help ministries translate strategies into time-bounded projects, actions and indicators for more coherent policy-making. Such guidance could also help inter-ministerial working groups and inspire cross-sectoral actions. It could refer to the standardised process for consulting with SDG bodies (see above) and cover sustainable procurement, engagement with multi-stakeholder platforms, sustainable financing, monitoring mechanisms, etc.

5) Streamline government data collection mechanisms and clarify which one is best placed to track SNDD indicators and policies’ impact on sustainability. In order to track how policies contribute to the implementation of SDGs, existing data collection mechanisms (i.e. monitoring ministerial plans, Institutional Strategic Planning, SIPOCA, national statistical database, etc.) should be linked to NSI’s new set of National Sustainable Development Indicators (NSDIs). One possibility would be to link **the ISP dashboard, which will monitor policies’ implementation across pilot ministries, to the National Sustainable Development Indicators (NSDIs)**. Data interoperability across ministries and levels of government may be a challenge. The government could also establish or train evaluation **statistical divisions within** each ministry to report on these indicators. Each Ministry could encourage career paths for staff who receive training on monitoring, evaluation and impact assessments.

6) Use the Action Plan to increase public awareness and ownership around SDGs. The formulation of the SD Action plan presents an opportunity for consulting the public, including at the local level on sustainable development. Capitalise on the synergies created during the formulation phase by considering setting up permanent cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholders consultation platforms. In 2020, the DSD will be supported by the Consultative council and the Coalition for sustainable development in these outreach efforts.

7) Train public servants on policy coherence and sustainable development. There is a strong focus on strengthening the public administration’s capacity for sustainable development, including among high-level civil servants and politicians. In order to reach the relevant civil servants the Sustainable Development Department (DDD) should work closely with the DCPP, who has responsibility for developing ministries’ capacity to plan, elaborate and implement strategies.

8) Increase the role of oversight bodies, such as the Parliamentary Sub-Committee for Sustainable Development and the Court of Audit, to provide greater scrutiny of government planning and implementation of the SDGs. The Parliament could play an increasingly important role in the follow-up and review of the implementation of the SDGs by extending or respecting the periods for consultation on legislative and budget proposals; including the budget declaration document in the budget vote; using the annual Sustainable Development report to raise awareness in the rest of the parliament and add a policy coherence dimension to the report. In addition the Sub-Committee for Sustainable Development could be promoted to a secondary parliamentary committee and tasked with systematically identifying the contribution of proposed legislative measures to SDGs.

9) More closely engage subnational levels of government by expanding the sustainable development hubs at the regional and local level and fostering alignment, complementarities and co-operation among SDG strategies and indicators formulated at local and national level.

10) Better linking budgeting and planning processes: tagging the budget measures according to SDGs targets could provide a mapping of how public spending contributes to SDG objectives. However, the absence of project management structures, as well as a myriad of other factors, hampers the roll out of programme-based budgeting [further detailed in *Romania: Linking Policy Planning and Budgeting to Support the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*]. This limits the impact of budgeting for SDGs as the budget measures are not directly linked to the implementation of specific project outputs.

Context

Households' consumption and pro-cyclical measures fuelled the strongest economic growth among EU countries in 2017. While Romania is doing well with regards environmental EU 2020 indicators, the social scorecard remains low compared to the rest of the EU and the situation on reducing poverty remains critical. The budget from the EU funding (ESIF 2014-2020) in 2017 represented 2,4% of GDP. Weak strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation are still perceived as causing persistent legislative instability and lack of decision-making predictability.

In 2017 Romania became the EU country with the strongest economic growth with real GDP up by more than 6%. GDP at PPP from 39% of the EU average in 2006 to 63% in 2017 and could realistically reach 80% by 2020. Yet, excluding the capital region, GDP per capita is half the EU average. Romania's economic growth model, based on consumer spending, affects the country's ability to reach EU living standards in a sustainable way (European Commission, 2019^[2]). Strong growth was fuelled, among others factors, by pro-cyclical measures implemented since 2015 such as tax cuts, substantial increase in the minimum wage, public sector wages and pensions (Bonker F., 2018^[3]). These measures risk putting pressure on competitiveness if not accompanied by corresponding productivity increases (European Commission, 2019^[2]). In terms of labour market, the high economic growth has translated into better job prospects and increased household disposable incomes. In 2018 Romania recorded the lowest unemployment rate in a decade (3.8 %). A declining labour force and persistent skills shortages have brought Romania close to full employment, which, together with negative net migration rate, makes recruitment difficult and drives wage growth. In February 2017 hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets forcing the government to withdraw decrees perceived as attempting to decriminalise corruption offenses and to help politicians accused or convicted for corruption.

Romania is on track on many EU 2020 indicators with regards renewable energy and greenhouse gas emission energy efficiency and consumption targets. This is the result of the promotion of clean energy policies to reduce climate change. In addition Romania reached two of the social targets, namely employment and reducing the people at risk of poverty or social exclusion. In 2019, the employment rate stood to 70,9%, 0.9 percentage points above the national target, and 2,755,000 person were taken out of poverty or social exclusion in 2018 . Regarding the rate of early leavers (age group 18 -24 years), in 2018 this rate decreased for the second consecutive year, to 16,4%. Although it is well below its maximum level of 19,1% in 2016, the rate remains one of the highest in the EU (EU average: 10,6%). Therefore, the national target of 11,3% is unlikely to be reached by 2020. Early school leaving persists due to a combination of factors, including socio-economic problems and gaps in the provision of quality education. In rural areas – where poverty is highest and the quality of education tends to be lowest -one in four people aged 18 to 24 left school too early. Meanwhile, in cities, the rate is 15% and only 4.2% in municipalities. People aged 30-34 having a tertiary degree, remain significantly below the EU-average (26.3% against 40%) despite having reached 2020 target. This raises concerns about equal opportunities, education

inclusiveness and relevance to the labour market Romania has not yet achieved a mature social dialogue, and its Social Scoreboard performance indicates a critical situation on reducing poverty (European Commission, 2019^[2]). Overall, the country still faces a number of gaps in achieving SDGs, including the ageing and decline of its population, significant emigration flows, low productivity of the agricultural sector, inequality between urban and rural settings.¹

The country budget for 2014-2020 ESIF (European Structural and Investment Fund) funding is 36,7 billion EUR (EU contribution is 30.8 billion EUR), represented 1548 euro per person over the seven years period² and 2.4% of GDP annually. In addition, EUR 1.2 billion was allocated to specific projects on strategic transport networks through the Connecting Europe Facility. Furthermore, Romanian research institutions, innovative firms and individual researchers benefited from other EU funding instruments, notably Horizon 2020. Around EUR 1 billion has been allocated to strengthen the capacity of the public administration at different levels and encourage cooperation with relevant stakeholders (European Commission, 2019^[2]). Gaps related to lack of coherent strategic planning, and linking the systems for planning to implementation and monitoring and evaluation, have compounded predictability, fragmentation in government decision making and policy formulation processes according to previous OECD analysis **Invalid source specified.** and governmental reports (Government of Romania, 2018^[4]). These Gaps include historical fragmentation between the line ministries and between the ministries and the ~~Centre~~ of Government, in addition to low robustness of performance management and deficient data transfer between institutions, the organisational culture is reacting to crisis and specific problem-solving rather than proactively forecast strategic action. However, without a systematic mechanism for assessing regulations based on data, a prioritisation system and with frequent changes in government (see Box 1.1), the bureaucracy struggles to sustain strategic direction (Bonker F., 2018^[3]). In addition, Romania's weaknesses lies much less in the planning architecture than in the persistent failure to follow through from plans to implementation (Evans G., 2015^[5]).

1 Chapter: Institutional framework for the delivery of the SDGs in Romania: main features, mandates and organisation

Effectively delivering on the SDGs requires governments to be able to work across policy sectors, and to adopt more integrated approaches to planning and implementation. OECD's work done in this area, suggests that even if progress towards policy coherence is fundamentally shaped by politics, trade-offs and governance dynamics, well designed institutional frameworks and mechanisms facilitate government's efforts to implement coherent policies in support of sustainable development goals. Drawing upon lessons learned, the OECD Recommendation on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development¹ proposes a framework of eight principles, as necessary mechanisms, for the systematic promotion of policy coherence for achieving the SDGs in an integrated manner.²

¹ The final adopted Recommendation (11 December 2019) is available online: <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0381>

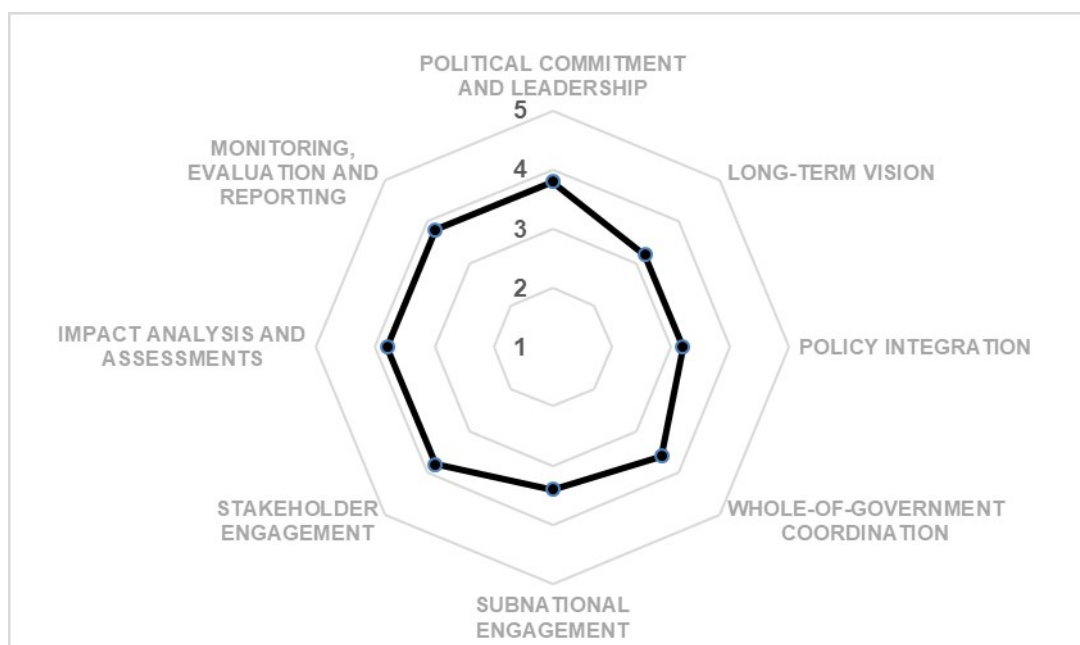
² The OECD Recommendation on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development adopted by all OECD member countries on 11 December 2019, provides a comprehensive standard to help countries equip policy-makers and key stakeholders with the necessary institutional mechanisms and policy tools to enhance PCSD. It presents a framework of eight principles under three main pillars. Notably it recommends that countries that have adhered to it set up and strengthen mechanisms that support: 1) political commitment and leadership; 2) strategic long-term vision; 3) policy integration; 4) whole-of-government co-ordination; 5) subnational engagement; 6) stakeholder engagement, 7) assessment of impacts and 8) Monitoring, reporting and evaluation.

Figure 1.1. PCSD principles



As the implementation of the SDGs goes beyond the responsibility of one line ministry, appropriate coordination mechanisms are essential to improve policy coherence. Given the potential for conflict among diverse interests both in the public and the private sector on economic, social and environmental issues, attention needs to be directed towards the following elements: (i) the position of the body responsible for the co-ordination functions throughout the administration, e.g. Centre of Government, or line ministries (ii) the mandates given to the coordinating body to deal specifically resolve conflicts of interest and anticipate potential negative impacts, and (iii) the involvement of outside actors as a way to identify common Gaps and build ownership of the new policy agenda (OECD,2017).

Figure 1.2. Results of the PCSD self-assessment to review Romania's performance along the eight different principles of PCSD

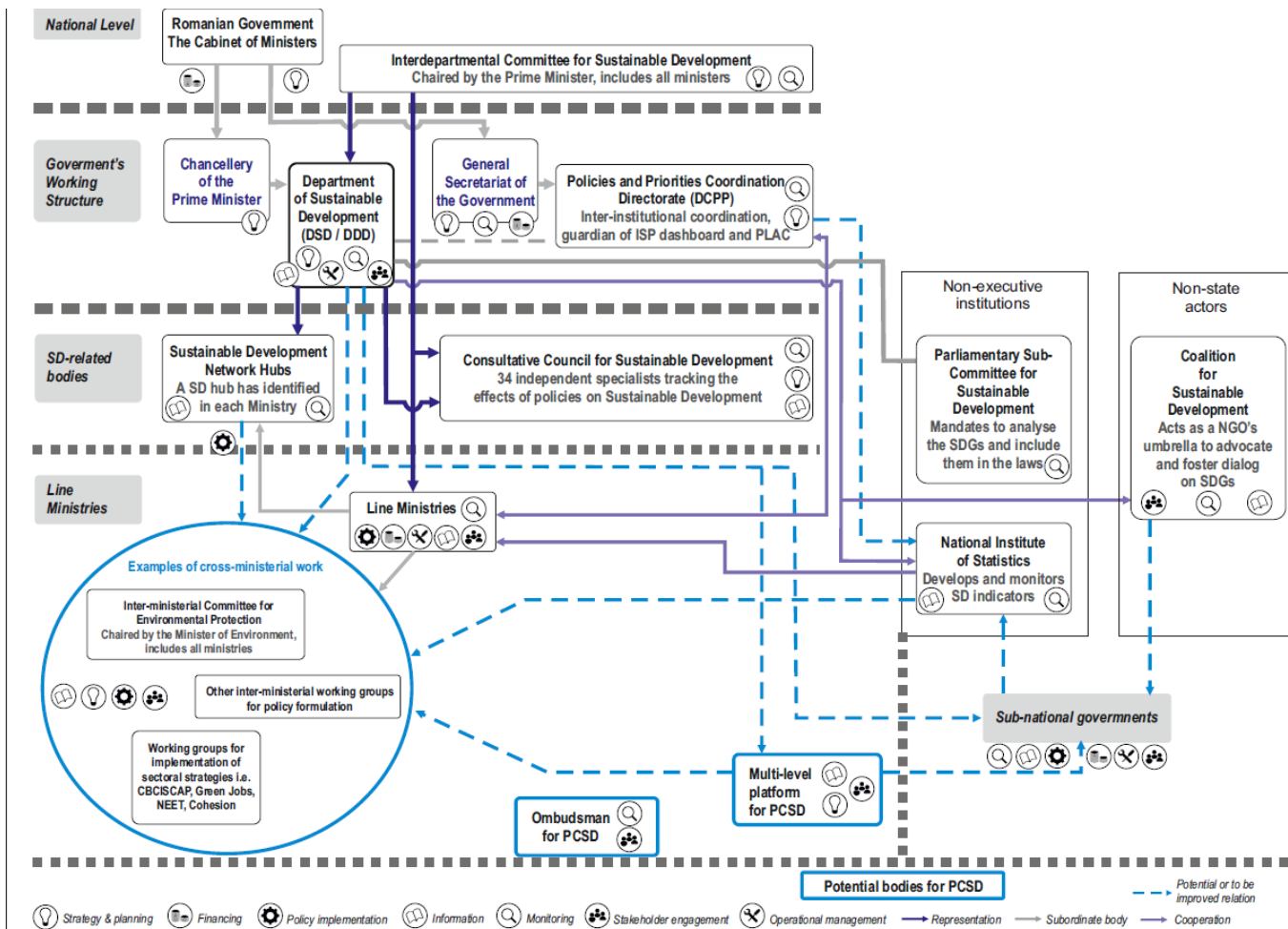


END NOTES

¹ According to the Sustainable Development Report 2019. Romania encounters mayor Gaps related to: SDG2 (Sustainable Nitrogen Management index), SDG 9 (Research and development expenditure represent 0.5% of GDP and is decreasing); SDG 10 (Gini Coefficient 52.4); SDG 12 (e-waste generated, production based CO2 emission) and SDG14 (Ocean Health index; fish caught by trawling).

² <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/countries/RO>

Figure 1.3. Romania Institutional Mapping



2.1) Listing key actors, mandate and responsibilities:

Name	Function	Composition	Status
Department of Sustainable Development (DSD/DDD)	<p>Set up in the PMO to coordinate implementation of Strategy 2030. In particular it is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plans and integrates data communicated by institutions to formulate proposals to streamline processes; -Coordinates localization and prioritization of targets -Supports National Institute of Statistics in coordinating the elaboration and updating of the set of indicators for monitoring -Reports to the Government when necessary - Presents annual report to the Parliament - To monitor the European Union's, the UN's, and Romania's own set of indicators that deal with Sustainable Development. -To propose potential adjustments of the goals at the national level, taking into account the specific needs, but also the evolving EU Directives. - Reports on the European Commission when pertinent 	<p>Under the Prime-Minister Office, the Department is led by a State Counsellor. Composed by civil servants appointed to the mission and there is a maximum of 13 positions, including the cabinet of the State Counsellor.</p>	<p>Established by Government Decision 313/2017</p> <p>The Department for Sustainable Development (DSD) benefits from an EU-grant to accompany the process of formulating an Action Plan for Sustainable Development by 2021 among other objectives..</p>
Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - follows the process of implementation, monitoring, evaluation and revision of the National Strategy for sustainable development of Romania 2030 including by 	<p>Chaired by the Prime Ministers it includes all ministries</p> <p>Currently composed by 12 staff members</p>	<p>Established by the Government Decision 272/2019 within the Prime Minister office</p>

	<p>formulating proposals for the implementation of the Strategy and endorsing a national set of indicators for sustainable development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - integrates RSDS 2030 requirements into sectoral policies and strategies - ensures coherence in the process of elaborating and promoting normative acts aimed at sustainable development - advises the Department for Sustainable Development on the elaboration of the report for the Parliament 		<p>It meets twice a year and the secretariat is the Department for sustainable development.</p>
Consultative Council of Sustainable Development	<p>Include inputs from scientific researchers, academics and experts in tracking the effects of policies in the field of sustainable development</p> <p>The council will be consulted during the formulation of the SD action plan</p>	<p>34 experts, split in 17 committees one for each Goal. The experts are selected from academia scientists, representatives of the business community, social partners and civil society ..</p>	<p>Established by Government Decision no.114/ 2020 at the initiative of the DSD</p>
Coalition for Sustainable Development	<p>This coalition should act as an NGO which advocates for the Goals and provide a space for a constant dialogue with the government.</p>	<p>Should include: representatives of civil society, NGO's, private sector, local authorities, unions, employers' associations, RDI institutions, academia, mass media, religious denominations, farmers, young people, elderly, families, etc.</p>	<p>Currently (April 2020) the coalition is underdevelopment. There is an initiative of the Sustainable Embassy in Romania to set it up.</p>
Inter-ministerial Committee for the Coordination of the Integration of Environmental Protection Principles into Sectoral Policies and Strategies at the national level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - providing Interministerial support and consultation in the environmental transposition and implementation process. - It updates and approves the National Action Plan for Environmental Protection 	<p>In 2011 was led by Grația Leocădia Gavrilescu, the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Environment. Currently is led by Ministry of the Environment and all ministries and other relevant institutions are represented at the level of State secretary/Director/Head of institution..</p>	<p>First created in 2001 and reviewed in 2011 (GD No. 741/2011) with responsibility for policy coherence for environmental protection. From 2011 to 2017 it implemented the system for evaluation, monitoring and review of the National</p>

			Strategy for Sustainable Development.
Parliamentary Sub-Committee for Sustainable Development	Has the mandate to analyse the SDGs and include them in legislative projects.	They receive an yearly report on SDGs implementation	Created in 2015
Network of the Sustainable Development Hubs	The function of each Hub is to pursue the implementation of the SDGs related to the field of activity of each institution while acting as liaison between its institution and DSD and National Institute of Statistics	The Hub is formed by existing staff of each institution with competency in the field of sustainable development.	Is foreseen in the "Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy 2030. By 2020 each line ministry has appointed 1 or 2 person at the expert level with the task to gather the information on the SDGs
National Institute of Statistics (NSI)	Has been given two years since the presentation of the Strategy in at the end of 2018, to update the national set of indicators accordingly to the 2030 Agenda they will have the duty of monitoring the implementation based on the new priority goals established in the SNDD and taking into account the UN and EU indicators for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development .		As the main producer of official statistical data, NSI is responsible for the coordination of all activities at national level regarding the data acquisition and processing related to the national SDGs,

2.2) Legal and strategic Framework for SDGs in Romania

Sustainable development has been part of the Romanian national agenda since 1999, when the government developed their first "*National Sustainable Development Strategy*". Since then, the Romanian Strategy has been updated and relaunched on two occasions:

- **1995: National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP)**

It was drawn up in compliance with the National Plan for the Adoption of the Acquis Communautaire. In August 1998, by Governmental Decision, an Inter-Ministerial Committee has come into existence in order to implement the NEAP. It requires the integration of environmental policies within those of other sectors (industry, agriculture, transport, physical

planning and health). The latest version of the National Environmental Action Plan was elaborated in 2011.

- **November 2008 “National Sustainable Development Strategy NSDS of Romania. Horizons 2013-2020-2030”.**

This document was elaborated by the ‘Inter-ministerial Commission for the elaboration of the SD Strategy’ in the context of Romania’s accession to the European Union. Thus, the main objective highlighted in the document focused on meeting the average performance of EU countries in terms of sustainable development indicators by 2030. The NSDS was a common project of the Romanian Government, through the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MESD), and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Romania³. This process in 2008 ensured a broad dialogue between different stakeholders including national authorities, public bodies, universities, the business community and civil society.

- **2016 Parliament declaration of support for the implementation of the 17 SDGs⁴**

Romania was the first Inter-parliamentary Union (IPU) member to make such a declaration of support. This declaration affirms the fact that the Parliament is a key actor in promoting the SDGs due to its power to legislate and budget. It calls upon the need for the SDGs need to be integrated within a Strategy. It calls for the establishment of a Department of Sustainable Development within the Prime Minister’s Office¹. Two handbooks “Self-assessment toolkit” and „A parliamentary handbook”- geared towards MP’s were translated into Romanian in 2016 to include the SDGs in the legislative process.

- **July 2018 Romania’s first Voluntary National Report is presented during the HLPF**

Romania is fully committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development and is determined to support other countries in achieving the SDGs. Romania has presented the first Voluntary National Review (VNR) at the High Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development from New York, in July 2018, under the coordination of the Ministry for Environment and Climate Change. Romania has assumed the necessary development policies with real impact on advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The VNR process has demonstrated the need for national coordination of the 2030 Agenda implementation in a systemic approach to the SDGs.

- **November 2018 Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy 2030⁵”**

The National Strategy for the Sustainable Development of Romania 2030 (SNDD) was formally adopted by governmental decision 877/2018 in November 2018. It includes 104 targets for 2030 which adapt the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to national context and priorities.

This document was drawn up under the direct coordination of the Department of Sustainable Development and with the contribution of the Editorial Commission, the General Secretariat of the Government. It was the result of a broad consultative process involving the ministries and other central institutions, local authorities, regional development agencies, academic and university forums, national institutes of research and development, employers’ associations and trades unions, the private sector and non-governmental organisations, and other bodies

³ <https://www.sd-network.eu/?k=country%20profiles&s=single%20country%20profile&country=Romania>

⁴ <http://dezvoltaredurabila.gov.ro/web/sdro/>

⁵ <http://dezvoltaredurabila.gov.ro/web/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Romanias-Sustainable-Development-Strategy-2030.pdf>

of civil society and interested citizens (Government of Romania, 2018^[6]). This is the main instrument guiding the implementation of the SDGs in Romania currently. For each SDG, the document assesses the shortcomings and additional efforts and resources needed, as well as linking them with Horizon 2020 objectives and its 2030 targets (see figure 1.4). The strategy proposes an institutional framework, describing the decisions to be taken to establish it. It also mentions the development of an Action Plan on how to achieve the SDGs to be presented by the end of 2019.

- ***Linkages with the EU framework***

The renewed EU Strategy for Sustainable Development (EU SDS) was adopted in June 2006 and foresees that Member States bi-annually report on how they address the priorities of the EU SDS. Romania has published its first national report on implementing the EU SDS in summer 2007. The EU legislation (art 7 of the EU regulation no.1303 on horizontal conditionality) imposes several assessments (environmental, social, etc) as conditionality when formulating EU-funded programme. The recent EU Council Conclusions on a sustainable Europe by 2030 encourage member states to proactively mainstream the SDGs into national planning instruments, policies, strategies and financial frameworks and urges the Commission to implement a comprehensive strategy to reflect and mainstream SDGs in all relevant EU internal and external policies process including as part of the EU semester². In particular, as of next, Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) horizontal conditionality could include to report on SDGs contribution.

Figure 1.4. SDG1 End poverty in all its forms everywhere as included in Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy 2030

HORIZON 2020

- *Establish sustainable quality and cost standards for all social services with a special focus on those aimed at vulnerable groups*
- *Develop a national system of social inclusion indicators by integrating all existing databases in the area of social assistance in digital form that take social mobility into account; perform effective yearly monitoring of results based on these indicators*
- *Encourage participation in the employment market of people fit for work who are at risk of exclusion by developing active measures of counselling and social assistance*

2030 TARGETS

- *Eradicate extreme poverty for all citizens*
- *Reduce by at least by half the number of citizens living in relative poverty*
- *Consolidate the unified national system of emergency intervention, rehabilitation, and compensation services in the event of natural disasters, industrial accidents, or extreme weather events*

Note:

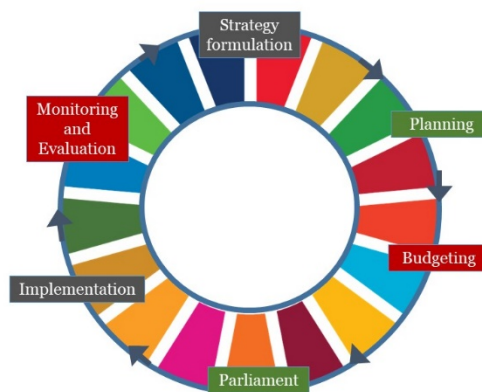
Source: Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy, <http://dezvoltaredurabila.gov.ro/web/about/>

2 Chapter: Strengths, Gaps and possible ways ahead in governance arrangements for the SDGs in Romania

This section scans the current strengths, gaps and suggests possible ways ahead in governance arrangements for the SDGs. It is structured across the four stages of the policy cycle: policy planning, oversight, implementation and evaluation as well as a cross-cutting section on communication issues. For each stage it assesses how the eight principles of PCSD have been applied, as necessary mechanisms, for the systematic promotion of policy coherence for achieving the SDGs in an integrated manner. The greenlight system in figure 2.1 shows how Romania governance mechanisms perform with regard the implementation of PCSD across the budget cycle.

Figure 2.1. The Policy cycle and SDGs in Romania

The Policy Cycle and SDGs



Source: Author's elaboration

3.1) Policy planning formulation and budgeting

In adopting the 2030 Agenda, governments committed to “achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – in a balanced and integrated manner” (United Nations, 2015^[7]). Policy formulation and design is an important stage in the policy-making process to take into account the different, and often competing, economic, social and environmental priorities; to identify

potential synergies and trade-offs; and to ensure balanced and integrated approach to planning and implementation. Achieving this integrated approach requires specific mandates and mechanisms to allow ministries and public sector agencies to align respective sectoral programmes, budgets and policies to the shared sustainable development goals. This is essential to avoid duplication and allocate public resources in a more efficient and coherent manner. In most of the countries surveyed, planning tools and national strategies already exist and need to be adjusted to match the interdisciplinary and complex nature of the 2030 Agenda.

In this section we will scan how planning, budgeting and ex-ante assessment practices in Romania are aligned to the OECD recommendation for Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD)⁶ that are relevant for this phase of the policy cycle. Planning being the crucial phase for ensuring policy coherence four of the eight principles of the Recommendation apply to it.

Related to the first pillar of the PCSD recommendations: A strategic vision for implementing the 2030 Agenda

Principle 1) Political commitment and leadership

The First Principle of PCSD is on building a strong inclusive political commitment and leadership for PCSD *at the highest political level to foster whole-of government approaches to PCSD*. Among other actions adherents should

- a) Enhance whole of government approaches to PCSD by defining priority areas, time-bound action plans and key performance indicators for making progress on PCSD and communicating results to the public;
 - b) Systematically apply a poverty, gender and human rights perspective to PCSD frameworks in line with the 2030 Agenda ambition of ending poverty in all its forms everywhere, empowering all women and girls and achieving gender equality;
 - c) Introduce measures to promote PCSD within government structures so that commitment to PCSD outlives electoral cycles and changes in government, cabinet compositions or government programmes, including identifying a lead institution, responsible for promoting, overseeing and implementing PCSD;
 - d) Build leadership capacity in the public service to consistently formulate, implement and monitor policies coherent with sustainable development in across sectors.
-

Strengths:

- *The governmental commitment to PCSD is spelled out in the Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 (SNDD) "the nature of the issues the goals address [in the 2030 agenda] presupposes a high degree of sectoral policy coherence and coordination".*
- With this in mind, the coordination of the SDGs was assumed at the highest possible political level by the Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development and the Department of Sustainable Development (DSD). The DSD is established by Government Decision n. 313/2017. This is situated in the Prime Minister Office, officially under the leadership of a State counsellor and is financed by the General Secretariat of the Government³. The Department of Sustainable Development's leading

⁶ The final adopted Recommendation (11 December 2019) is available online: <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0381>

role *responsible for promoting, overseeing and implementing PCSD* is clearly established in the SNDD: “it will ensure policy coherence in the field of sustainable development and will be consulted in the case of draft laws to be adopted by the Romanian Government with direct application to the goals defined in the Strategy”.

- The SDNN also designates the Interdepartmental Committee for Sustainable Development, to be chaired by the prime minister, which has been established by Government Decision (272/2019). Among its responsibilities this body follows the process of implementation, monitoring, evaluation and revision of the SNDD 2030, approves the action plans and submits the Yearly Report to the Romanian Parliament. It has the responsibility for integrating SNDD’s requirements into sectoral policies and strategies, as well as the compliance with the reporting obligations assumed by Romania at international level and of the European Union in the field of sustainable development. It ensures coherence in the process of elaborating and promoting normative acts aimed at sustainable development by public authorities and institutions with responsibilities in implementing the Strategy at national, regional and local level (Government of Romania, 2019^[8]).
- In terms of defining priorities areas, time-bound action plans and key performance indicators for making progress on PCSD, the SNDD foresees: “to strengthen the strategic framework by drawing up an Action Plan, creating a suitable legal and institutional framework, as well as updating the set of specific national indicators”.
- The Sustainable Development Network is foreseen in the “*Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy 2030*” to enhance communication and cooperation among their respective ministries and the Department of Sustainable Development on the one hand and the National Institute of Statistics on the other.

Gaps

- While PCSD features as a principle in the SNDD it is not spelled out in terms of priorities, time-bound actions and indicators for making progress on PCSD.
- The role of the DSD as set out in the strategy “will be consulted in the case of draft laws to be adopted by the Romanian Government with direct application to the goals defined in the Strategy” as well as the role of the Interdepartmental committee in “ensuring coherence in the process of elaborating and promoting normative acts” have not yet been translated in governmental practice. Quote from one of the government officials interviewed by OECD: “there is a need to set up a body that would integrate all sectors of the government in achieving SDGs, beyond changes in governmental composition” this is the role foreseen for the Interdepartmental committee and not yet implemented.

Possible ways ahead

- *Include PCSD actions in the SD Action Plan:* The SD Action Plan could define which priorities – regulations and actions- for making progress on PCSD, across sectors and government levels, are strategic for delivering on the sustainable development targets selected. See also section below on Principle 4) Whole of Government coordination
- *Strengthen capacities for PCSD:* ensuring coherence in governmental action by professionalising the competences in strategic planning and sustainable development of the central public administration. This training should be provided not only to SD Hubs but to a large number of high level officers and politicians to ensure they interiorise the need to coordinate and to pursue the implementation of the SDGs. Currently, with support of a ESF funding, the DSD is training the SD Hubs and preparing existing public servants to become Experts in Sustainable Development, a new professional figure, with mandate to work as Sustainable Development hubs within their ministries and liaising with the DSD and the National institute of Statistics⁴.

Box 2.1. Examples of lead institutions responsible for promoting, overseeing and implementing sustainable development

Czech Republic

The Government Council on Sustainable Development CGSD includes representatives of ministries, parliament, the private sector, academia, civil society and regions and municipalities, and it is divided into thematic expert committees. Its secretariat, the Sustainable Development Department has migrated from the Office of the Government to the Ministry of Environment. These are the main coordinating institutions in charge of the SDGs. They have been assigned by government resolution (2017) the responsibility for ensuring policy coherence for sustainable development. The GCSD acts as a consultation mechanisms for the implementation plan of the Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030 (OECD, 2020^[9]).

Latvia

The National Development Council – a collegial advisory authority chaired by the Prime Minister – ensures planning and evaluation of the country’s long term development, initiates structural reforms to ensure the synchronicity of budget and policy planning, as well as coherence of national and local government policy (OECD, 2019^[10]).

Italy

In 2019 the Italian Government created a new Unit “Cabina di Regia Benessere Italia” at the Centre of Government to support the Prime Minister in coordinating the Government policies on well-being and sustainable development. Among other purposes the Unit is in charge of “promote, strengthen and coordinate the policies and initiatives of the Italian government for the implementation of the National Strategy, in the context of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development”.

Principle 2) Defining, implementing and communicating a strategic long term vision that supports PCSD

The Second Principle of PCSD is on *defining, implementing and communicating a strategic long term vision* that supports policy coherence and orients the government and stakeholders towards common sustainable development goals.

- a) To this end adherents should define a strategic long-term vision that defines desired sustainable development outcomes, scenarios and actions to enhance coherence across sectors and government levels, and between external and domestic policies in areas that are likely to affect developing countries;
- b) Use tools such as strategic foresight, scenario development and systemic thinking in the formulation of policy to identify prevent and mitigate actual and potential adverse impacts on the well-being and sustainable development prospects of future generations.

Strengths:

- Romania has developed strategic documents to put Sustainable Development at the forefront for policy making since 1995. In particular the 2018 Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 (SNDD) is a long-term vision that defines 104 sustainable development targets to implement the 17 SDGs. The government is now in the process of operationalising the SNDD 2030 by drafting an Action Plan and a governance framework for its effective implementation.
- The SNDD/SDS 2030 strategy calls for policy coherence between external and domestic policies by engaging to “support solutions that are realistic and favourable to developing countries [...] gradually increase ODA, [...] support Romanian economic agents to invest on competitive grounds in the economies of less developed countries”.

Gaps:

In Romania there is no current national strategy that sets the priorities across sectors other than the SNDD. The main reference while setting policy objectives have been the EU 2020 targets. Quote from a government official during OECD interviews: ultimately all our objectives come down to the ones set in the EU 2020 strategy since there were no political commitments made for our policy area and the government programme changes with changes in the coalitions

There is little evidence of using tools to assess the potential adverse impacts of national policies on the well-being and sustainable development prospects of future generations nor on developing countries.

There are no current methodologies applied to evaluate the long-term impact of public policies, nor their fairness to future generations.

Possible ways ahead:

The forthcoming SD Action Plan will prioritise some of the 104 targets formulated in the SDNN according to PCSD principles: the SD Action Plan could offer a clear direction and a time-bound framework for defining sustainable development outcomes in line with policy coherence principles. The policies to be included in the action plan should be selected according to the most pressing social, economic and environmental gaps and for their contribution to the forthcoming EU post-2020 targets. The SD action plan should build on the existing sectoral policies that contribute to achieving SDGs targets, and the ISP could provide a good basis for this identification as described in the paragraph below on principle three.

Use policy foresight, transboundary and intergenerational assessment tools: while selecting the priorities to be included in the SD Action Plan and more broadly at planning stage the government should test policies' resiliency and relevance in the face of global trends affecting the next decade, as well as their interdependencies, transboundary impact and intergenerational equity.

Box 2.2. Countries practices for developing and operationalise a strategic long-term vision that defines desired sustainable development outcomes

Latvia

Latvia's national sustainable development goals are defined in the country's Sustainable Development Strategy Latvia 2030 and operationalised through seven-year national development plans and sectoral policy strategies and plans. These goals are operationalised through the planning and budgeting, and include additional country-specific priorities such as facilitating natural population growth, reducing emigration and promoting Latvian civic awareness. (OECD, 2019^[10])

Czech Republic

The Government resolution (292/2019) that approved the *Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030* called on the Office of the Government to submit the implementation plan within one and half year and to report biannually on it. 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 Agenda 2030 including by developing specific tools to monitor and track progress under the strategic framework (OECD, 2020^[9]).

Principle 3) Improving Policy Integration

The third Principle of PCSD is on improving policy integration:

- a) Make strategic use of policy planning mechanisms and tools including the budget process and public procurement to manage synergies and trade offs and integrate sustainable development into sectoral policies
- b) Incorporate a PCSD/SD lens into national development plans, sustainable development strategies and financing plans and develop supporting tools such as guidelines or regulations, as well as coordination mechanisms for ministries and government agencies to align their mandates, policies and sectoral objectives with broader sustainable development goals

Strengths

- According to some analysis the most important strategic-planning unit within government is the General Secretariat of the Government (GSG), which was established in 2001 (Bonker F., 2018^[3]).
- There have been several projects (World Bank, 2017^[11]) to enhance the knowledge of approaches and tools for results-oriented policy-making (i.e. using SMS mechanisms for citizen feedback launching an online taxpayer platform, i.e.) within the CoG.
- Since 2014, the key planning tool for policy formulation is the *Annual Working Plan of the Government (AWPG/PALG)*: an electronic database where each ministry, central institution with regulatory role announces the main legislative measures to be introduced for the current year. The GSG is the coordinator of the PALG and presents periodically to the Government the state of play of PALG implementation. According to the National Programme report (Government of Romania, 2019^[12]) as of 2019 all the priorities on the public policies and normative acts with significant impact were included in the PALG.

- All public institutions perform economic and social impact assessments (macro-economic impact, impact on business environment, environmental and social impact) for each draft normative act that is submitted to Government's approval (Government of Romania, 2019^[8]). Each legislative proposal includes a 'substantiation note' which assesses the impact of the proposed measure across different dimensions (social, environmental, fiscal, etc).

- Each ministry presents a policy declaration (3 pages) with the draft budget report summarising the main policy axes.

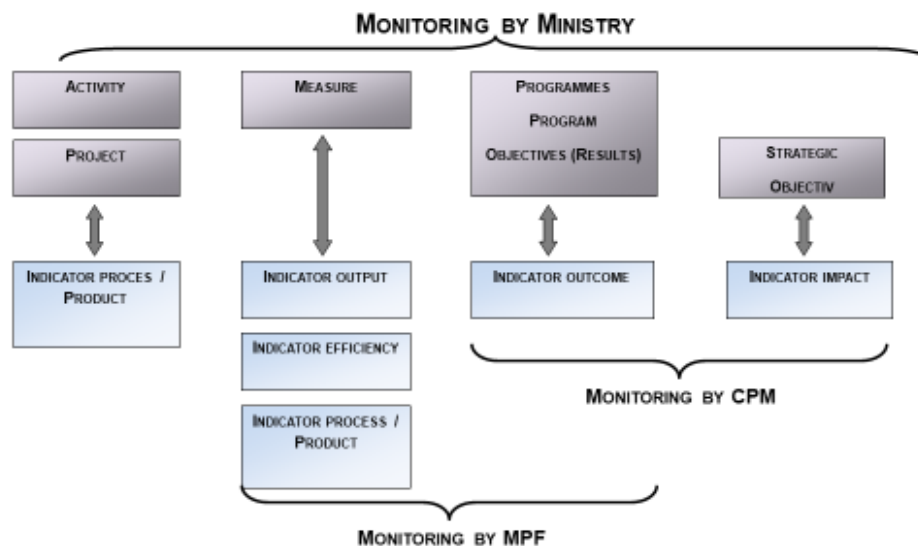
- *Institutional Strategic Planning (ISP)* (see Figure 2.2. Monitoring the implementation and results of ISP) is a policy planning mechanism to foster coherence and alignment between individual strategies, sectoral priorities, national and international targets and the budget. This mechanism has been piloted in 13 line ministries under the coordination of the Policy and Priorities coordination directorate in the GSG (DCPP/PPCD) with World Bank's support. This consolidation and streamlining exercise is one core element of the Government of Romania's emerging strategic planning system (Evans G., 2015^[5]) and is a notable effort to link planning and budgeting process. As part of this process 13 ministries selected their three four-year sectoral strategic objectives, spelled them out in programmes, sub-programmes, initiatives, activities, projects and matched them to the correspondent budget measures. Line ministries have to formulate ISP programmes over a four years period, identical to the Medium Term Budgetary Framework (MTBF). The programmes are broke down in annual plans with annual outcome, outputs and products that can be reviewed at the same time of the budget formulation so as to update budget measures accordingly to the implementation of the annual plan. In particular the DCPP directorate is the lead for the current policy planning mechanism ISP. The DCPP has accompanied the Ministries during the policy prioritisation process and is the guardian of the dashboard where all the programmes, indicators and related budget measures and disbursements are tracked.

- EU policies and administrative requirements foster the integration of PCSD lens during policy formulation. In particular:

A) All EU-funded projects have to comply with the Climate Change strategy that is managed by the Ministry of Environment (i.e. applying the indicators from the strategy, provide ex-ante environmental

Figure 2.2. Monitoring the implementation and results of ISP

Monitoring the implementation and results of ISP



Ministerul Finanțelor Publice, Proiect: Consolidarea responsabilității financiare a sectorului public IDP Grant nr. TF018442

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Source: World Bank Country Team Romania, November 2019

impact assessment, etc). Quote from OECD interviews with public officers: for each policy proposal for EU financing our Ministry has to comply with EU Climate Change strategy but we don't have to specify how they comply to SDGs.

B) In some policy areas, the EU formulates recommendations for increasing policy coherence. For instance:

=> Energy Decentralisation and decarbonisation Strategy. In its comments (European Commission, 2019^[13]) to Romania's draft Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan, the EU Commission recommends to: i) factor in the impact on electricity interconnections and trading in the region (Central and South Eastern Europe) that higher shares of renewables and clean transports could have; ii) extend its analysis of investment needs and risks from the energy strategy objectives to a general overview of the investments needed to reach its integrated national energy and climate plan; iii) better integrate the structural changes entailed by the clean energy transition in the analysis, by discussing measures needed to address social and employment impacts, in particular in mono-industrial regions depending on coal industry or other energy-intensive sectors.

=> Internal mobility schemes (a national mobility plan is in place). The EU Semester report highlights that one of the reasons why the implementation is lagging behind might be the lack of a more integrated solution for the unemployed or the NEET who are supposed to adhere to the mobility scheme (such as limited provision of social, childcare and education services for their family members) (European Commission, 2019^[2]).

Gaps

- Resistance to change: From past evidence on the implementation of public sector reforms (see box Box 2.3), there seems to be an inertia to incorporate change in the way strategies, policy and

financing plans are developed. This raises questions on the most effective ways of embedding SDGs lens in policy planning.

- Current tools for result-oriented policy making seems rather weak. Procedural requirements and ex-ante regulatory assessments for new legislations are in place but are highly uneven across ministries and don't always account for a quality evaluation of sustainability. SDGs perspective is currently not one of the dimensions of the RIA and there is no 'SDG's proof' compulsory assessment when legislations are approved in the Cabinet (see section 3.4) Monitoring & Evaluation).
- Weak link between planning, operationalisation and budgeting (further elaborated in *Romania: Linking Policy Planning and Budgeting to Support the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* report). Currently, Romania utilises line item budgeting with no clear alignment between budgets and strategies. In this context, the Ministry of Public Finance mainly assess past spending results than performance elements to inform decisions. Furthermore, stakeholder interviews have found limited engagement from oversight institutions, particularly the Parliament, to keep government programmes accountable to its commitments. This, as a result, presents limited opportunities to incentivise policy measures across policy sectors, sustain accountability and inform decision-making. Currently during budget negotiations the Ministry of Finance looks mostly at past spending results rather than the previous impact assessment of the policy financed. Also proposed policy indicators that accompany a new policy measure are not the object of budget negotiation. The budget is not yet result-based and the budget forecast (+1 and +3) are mere orientations. From OECD interviews emerged that little attention is given by parliamentarians regarding the policy information that is provided with the draft budget in the policy note as this is not the object of a vote. Quote: the governmental programmes is accidentally explained in the budget report. These weak links between planning and budgeting do not incentivise budget measures that are integrated across policy sectors and that will have an high contribution to achievement of SDGs
- Policy planning tools often overlaps and do not incorporate a PCSD lens: unless linked automatically, existing systems of policy tracking i.e. the ministerial annual institutional plan and the PALG might result overlapping with the ISP. This duplication might create more fatigue rather than an incentive for strategic planning and prioritising. In addition, none of these instruments incorporate a PCSD lens for strategically identifying potential synergies and trade-off across the policy measures that they compile. This is true also for the ISP that at the moment doesn't systematically account for sustainability of the policies inventoried nor it identifies policy interactions. Quote from OECD's interviews with public officers: the ISP is a good thing because is pushing to prioritise our policies but is causing us to report each new public policy and normative act according to another matrix than the annual institutional plan.

Possible ways ahead

- *Use the ISP as a support to select the priorities to be included in the Action Plan:* the ISP's list of ministerial priorities is a helpful support to scan existing policies in the areas related to sustainable development and identify which ones can be included in the Action Plan (see section 3.4) Monitoring & Evaluation). In addition, where policy gaps exist, the sustainable development Action Plan could introduce new cross-sectoral policies fit for reaching sustainable development objectives (see section 3.3) Implementation).
- Among existing policy planning tools and inventories, identify the most adequate to add PCSD lens during policy formulation: Assess the added value of the existing policy planning tools (I.E. PALG, ISP and annual institutional plans) in terms of identifying policies' synergies and trade-offs (PCSD lens) during their formulation. Based on this assessment, recommend the one to be included in the forthcoming Sustainable Development Action Plan as the key planning tool. The tool identified should also be linked to evaluation mechanisms that measure policies' positive and negative impacts on sustainable development.

- *Develop a PCSD Guidance for identifying alternative possible futures, transboundary impact and interdependencies during policy formulation through public dialogue:* DSD could develop supporting tools such as guidance or regulations for ministries and government agencies to align their mandates with broader sustainable development goals, identifying transboundary and intergenerational impact of new policies particularly through public dialogue. This guidance should be used for the work of the inter-ministerial working groups and should establish entry points for SDGs bodies (the DSD and the Interdepartmental Committee).

Related to the second pillar of the Policy recommendation: effective institutional mechanisms to address interactions across sectors and levels of government

Principle 4) Whole of Government coordination

The fourth Principle of PCSD is on ensuring **whole-of-government coordination** to identify and mitigate divergences between sectoral priorities and policies, including external and domestic policies, and promote mutually supporting actions across sectors and institutions.

- a) Use a high-level coordinating mechanisms to promote PCSD and the integration of sustainable development across central agencies, line ministries and other public institutions
 - b) Establish clear mandates, capacities and mobilise adequate resources for PCSD to identify policy divergences and conflicts related to the implementation of the 2030 agenda
 - c) encourage formal governance arrangements and informal working methods that support effective communication between ministries and other public sector bodies
 - d) Build capacities in public administration for PCSD
-

Strengths at policy formulation level

- The Interdepartmental committee for sustainable development (est 2019) has a clear mandate (Government Decision 272/2019) in connecting SNDD 2030's requirements to daily formulation of sectoral policies by ensuring coherence in the process of elaborating and promoting normative acts.
- While they do not only operate at policy formulation level, the Department for Sustainable Development (est 2017) and the SD hubs (est. 2019) have the mandate to align a whole of government implementation of the SDGs. This should start during the policy formulation by facilitating dialogue across central and line ministries, the local authorities and key stakeholders, coordinate stakeholders around potential synergies and trade-offs in the formulation of SD strategies and plans, etc.
- The formulation of legislative proposals largely remains under the remit of line ministers and the General Secretariat of the Government (GSG) provides administrative and legal support for this process (Bonker F., 2018^[3]). In particular the Policy and Priorities Coordination Directorate5 DCPP6, within the GSG, contributes to the preparation of legislative proposals before submission to cabinet meetings by verifying that the procedural requirements are met (i.e. RIA, social and environmental impact assessments, public consultation periods, etc). The Prime Minister's Chancellery (PMC) becomes involved to assess the proposal on policy ground only after the compulsory inter-ministerial and public-consultation procedures are finalized. The final decision on the content of the policy proposal tends to be made by the line ministry (Bonker F., 2018^[3]).
- Inter-ministerial consultations (either ad-hoc committees or written comments⁷) during policy formulation are required by law⁷. Before the law is submitted to the Cabinet each competent

⁷ Law no. 24, regarding norms of legislative technique for elaboration of normative acts, with the subsequent completions and modifications

ministry/agency has to endorse the substantiation note and the last ministry is the Ministry of Finance before the Ministry of Justice.

- Build planning capacities in public administrations for PCSD: the DCPD also has responsibility for developing ministries' own capacities to plan, elaborate and implement strategies and the improvement of ex ante impact assessments, state-capacity evaluations, and intra-governmental epistemic exchanges (Bonker F., 2018[1]). It coordinates methodologically the activity of the public policy units within ministries.

Box 2.3. Past initiatives for strengthening strategic planning and programme-based budgeting.

Between 2012 and 2015, in order to draft some of the sectoral strategies necessary to fulfil prerequisites for accessing EU Structural and Investments Funds (ESIF) for the 2014-2020 programming period, the government asked the support of the World Bank. Through 39 EU-funded Reimbursable Advisory Services (RAS) the WB supported the government in the preparation of national strategic frameworks for different areas of policy-making (education- lifelong learning, reducing early school leavers and tertiary education attainment-, administration capacities, public procurement action Plan, energy, etc). The World Bank was equally involved in a number of projects to enhance the efficiency of public spending (i.e. a grant to the Ministry of Public Finance for piloting a new results-informed budgeting model) (World Bank, 2017^[11]). According to the 2017 RAS assessment (World Bank, 2017^[11]), WB's support was needed in a context of lack of capacities for strategic framework formulation and there was no evidence for how effectively this support contributed to building long-term strategic planning skills. Moreover, between 2014 and 2015, to support the work of the CoG, the World Bank supported the establishment of a Delivery Unit within the Chancellery of the Prime Minister (CPM) (\$6.04 million project) which would 'use evidence-driven practices to improve the delivery of public services' (World Bank, 2017^[12]). Although the Delivery Unit could not be established, due to lack of funding to ensure its long-term existence, this project introduced some innovation in policy planning. For instance it established delivery agreements between CoG and implementing ministries, including performance targets that are monitored through the PALG. This was meant to improve discipline and predictability of legislative initiatives for the year and the approximate adoption date (OECD, 2016^[2]). Yet according to WB assessment in 2017 (World Bank, 2017^[12]) the use of the PALG seems to have improved only very slowly over time .

Gaps

- *SDG bodies' role in policy formulation has not been yet operationalised*: neither the role of the Inter-departmental Committee for Sustainable Development (Government decision 272/2019), nor of the DSD in supporting whole of government implementation of SNDD including during legislation formulation has not yet been translated into formal processes (i.e. validating/producing ex ante policy's sustainability assessments that will inform policy making, etc) beside the production of an annual report to be submitted to Parliament.

- *The inter-ministerial working groups rarely apply PCSD's lens during policy formulation*: During policy formulation inter-ministerial groups are created to develop a strategy. There is little evidence of how the cross-ministerial working groups apply PCSD while developing new strategies by identifying sectoral interdependencies, assess policies' resiliency in the face future global trends, intergenerational equity and their impact on developing countries. Also effective inter-ministerial coordination during policy formulation is undermined by operational obstacles such as: too many ministries involved, the short turnaround time allowed for review, etc. Moreover, informal coordination of the government's work is often steered by the

leading party, undermining the formal coordination mechanisms (Bonker F., 2018^[3]). Stakeholders from different line ministries interviewed by the OECD (Oct 2019) shared the view that inter-ministerial committees might take very long time to find an agreement over a strategy. This has been the case for instance for the energy strategy⁸ which has been prepared for over one year. In addition coordination within these working groups seems to fade out during implementation

- *Centre of government effectiveness in seeking coherence during policy formulation*: the persistent high level of policy fragmentation⁹ raises the issue of the Centre of Government's effectiveness in strategic planning and alignment of mandates, policies and sectoral objectives. This fragmentation compounds with broader sustainable development goals. The DCPD has a role in coordinating policy elaboration across ministries just before the act is tabled to the Ministerial Council, by organising a meeting that provides all relevant ministries with the opportunity to discuss the legislative proposal. However at this stage it might be too late for setting the strategic orientation and encouraging cross-ministerial synergies during policy formulation. In addition, the mandates of the GSG (Directorate for coordination of policies and programmes) and PMC in strategic planning could be clarified. Currently the DCPD is in charge of procedural requirements whereas the PMC has the role to assess the legislative proposals on policy ground.

Possible ways ahead

- The new institutional framework that will accompany the SD Action Plan could include time-bound actions for making progress on whole-of-government coordination for PCSD. For instance by:

- i) *Bolster DCPD and DSD's roles in increasing policy coherence from the outset of the formulation process*: the DCPD could work together with the DSD in providing policies' strategic direction to the inter-ministerial working groups or single ministries. This could include support in identifying and addressing competing policy issues related to that policy area as well as its transboundary and intergenerational impacts. This kick-off phase could rely on the PCSD Guidance mentioned above as well as on the results of the sustainability ex ante assessment (if already available) or inform its analysis.

- ii) *Include provisions for Standardising processes for promoting PCSD within government work through regulative changes*: a normative act could establish standardised administrative interactions between the centre of government, the SD-related bodies (DSD and the Interdepartmental committee), line ministries and local governments, in relation to SD topics during legislation and implementation processes including in order to generate and use sustainable development data. This normative act is foreseen among the objectives of the EU funded project "Sustainable Romania" that the DSD is implementing (see also the third and fourth Principle).

- iii) *Tasking the Development hubs to ensure effective communication across ministries and with DCPD and the SD Directorate when a new policy is discussed.*

- Bolster and streamline the collaboration between the sustainable Development Directorate and the DCPD (GSG) during policy formulation. In particular, clarify their respective contribution to checking on SDGs' alignment of legislative proposals and arbitrate between possible policy trade-offs.

Box 2.4. Countries practices in ensuring whole-of-government coordination

Czech Republic

The Government resolution (292/2018), which approves the Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030, establishes several measures to align actions across ministries and levels of government. These measures include: i) it calls on the Ministry of Regional Development to support the strategy through its Database of Strategies; ii) the Sustainable development Secretariat is charged with overseeing inter-ministerial consultations; iii) it requests the establishment of a monitoring mechanism to ensure the coherence of policies for sustainable development (*OECD, 2020^[9]*).

Luxembourg

The Inter-Ministerial Committee for Development Cooperation (ICD) makes recommendations relating to policy coherence. It does so by meeting six times a year to identify and discuss trade-offs and synergies, potential transboundary and intergenerational effects and formulates policies' ex-ante unbinding recommendations to government. Line ministries can decide on the follow-up on recommendations in their respective fields. It has adopted a new working method in 2014 involving consultations with civil society, on the choice of subjects, analysis and findings. Members of the ICSD participate in the ICD and vice-versa. Besides sharing information and formulating non-binding recommendations to the government, it provides mediation between ministries in cases of disagreement. In addition, the Interdepartmental Commission on Sustainable Development (ICSD), composed by representatives of all ministerial departments, is leading the coordination of SDG-related activities through the National Sustainable Development Plan. The Environment Department of the Ministry for Sustainable Development and Infrastructure coordinates national SDG-implementation and chairs the ICSD. It has adopted a new working method in 2014 involving consultations with civil society, on the choice of subjects, analysis and findings. Members of the ICSD participate in the ICD and vice-versa (OECD,2018).

Italy

The government established a coordination mechanism to prevent and resolve conflicts between aid and non-aid policies. The mechanism seeks to ensure alignment of the development activities with the structure and overall strategic objectives provided for by the 17 SDGs as well as the government's Three-Year Programming and Policy Planning Document.

Ireland

To ensure coordination across government departments, the government has established a Senior Officials' Group on the SDGs, composed of Permanent Secretaries from all Government Departments, which is supported by an SDG Interdepartmental Working Group that aims to facilitate information sharing as well as provide a platform for discussion and negotiation in the event of disagreements. Furthermore, it has defined a clear structure of responsibility, allocating ownership of SDG activity across all of government to departments and state agencies based on its SDG Policy Map.

Related to the third Pillar of the PCSD: Set of responsive and adaptive tools to anticipate, assess and address domestic, transboundary and long-term impacts of policies

The eight Principle of PCSD is on Strengthening Monitoring, reporting and evaluation systems
 a) Embed a policy coherence dimension in evaluation systems to inform decision-making regarding the linkages and potential trade-offs between sectoral policies as well as transboundary impacts

The considerations on ex-ante policy assessments have been included in section 3.4) Monitoring & Evaluation.

3.2) Policy oversight

Coherent implementation of the SDGs **requires mechanisms for effective participation of and reporting back to non-executive governing bodies and the public.** These stakeholders are essentials in providing feedback so that sectoral policies can be adjusted in light of potential negative or unintended effects.

Related to the second pillar of the Policy recommendation: effective institutional mechanisms to address interactions across sectors and levels of government

Principle 6) Effective Stakeholders engagement

The Sixth Principle of PCSD is on engaging stakeholders effectively

a) Engage proactively with stakeholders in different phase of the policy cycle to develop and prioritise initiatives for enhancing PCSD.

Strengths

- - The 2016 Parliament declaration of support for the implementation of the 17 SDGs⁸ (see Chapter 2.2) Legal and strategic Framework for SDGs in Romania) promotes the role of the Parliament in including the SDGs in the legislative process
- A Parliamentary Sub-Committee for Sustainable Development exists since 2015 within the Chamber of Deputies with the mandate to actively include SDGs lens in the work of the Parliament. The committee members are well aware of the need to analyse how the proposed legislations contribute to achieving the SDGs and of PCSD principles.
- Policy drafts are publicised online for comments¹⁰, and the civil society is admitted in the room during the budget Parliamentary hearings. In addition often NGOs provide inputs to the policy cycle through position papers.
- The Open Government Partnership¹¹ 2018 Action Plan, developed through online consultations, prioritises initiatives to activate public engagement in governmental activities such as: increasing the participation of local governments in open government's practices, communicating the draft budget more efficiently, increasing the number of proposals and comments received by citizens in policy-making, facilitating the access to online social services, etc.

⁸ <http://dezvoltaredurabila.gov.ro/web/sdro/>

- During the formulation of the Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 in 2017 the Sustainable Development Department organised consultations and high-level events to raise awareness, and provided a space for multi-stakeholder consultations.

Gaps

- The Sustainable Development Department (SDD) should produce and submit every year a Report on Sustainable Development progress to the Romanian Parliament. based on a consultative approval from the Interdepartmental committee for SD. The first report is scheduled at the end of 2020.
- From OECD's interview with the Parliamentary Sub-Committee for Sustainable Development it emerges that this body has no formal role in analysing proposed legislation thus it has little margin to include SDGs' dimension in the legislative process. In fact parliamentary committees don't have the obligation to systematically consult the Parliamentary sub-committee for SD when a new strategy is discussed thus the SDGs' dimension is not systematically included in the discussion of the leading sectoral parliamentary committee(s).
- The budget declaration document, where the link between expenditures and objectives is outlined, is not voted by the Parliament. This undermines transparency and policy coherence as the budget declaration document is the only document where the link between how the budget is contributing to policy priorities is made clear and there are uneven levels of details that ministries dedicate to this document.
- Previous studies (Bonker F., 2018[3]) argue that independent legislators have little resources and interaction with non-executive bodies to be informed on the likely effects of proposed policies. Committees may invite experts or civil society organisations to present their views on specific matters that are under discussion in the Committee. The frequency with which experts are invited has differed among committees.
- Short periods of consultation with the Parliament for legislative drafts and budgets weaken the parliamentary oversight. For instance in 2019, the executive budget proposal, was tabled in front of the parliament only in February leaving only 4 days for validation.
- Non-state actors and local authorities are rarely consulted in policy-making, and during sectoral strategy formulation. Despite the fact that Romanian NGOs have significant analytical capacities, especially in the areas of environmental policy and social protection, the quality of public consultation continues to be hindered by operational factors: short periods of consultation, late announcement of important legislative initiatives, and limited follow-up and feedback to stakeholders during and after the consultation process (EU commission, 2019[14]).
- The involvement of stakeholders in the majority of Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) processes or transparent methodologies such as public hearings, surveys or debates are respected only to a small degree (Bonker F., 2018[3]).
- Many NGOs suffer from a lack of resources and depend on international financing. NGOs themselves denounce the low response and level of involvement of many civil society organisations.
- Civil society reports a high level of dialogue while setting up the Open Government Partnership¹² (OGP) and the Anti-corruption cooperation platform¹³ which has establish a cooperation platform of the civil society that meets twice a year since 2017 with 4 NGS attending per meeting. While OGP platform allowed CSOs and institutions to work together, providing solutions, in constant dialogue, its sustainability over time has proven complex and NGO's participation level decreased.
- The SAI isn't currently systematically including the SDGs dimension of their impact audits

Possible ways ahead

- Increase the oversight role of the Romanian Parliament in SDGs implementation: the Parliament is envisaged to have an increasing important role in the follow-up and review of the implementation of the SDGs (Government of Romania, 2019[8]). In particular, parliamentary oversight could be strengthened by using the annual sustainable Development report to further sensitize the rest of the parliament. In addition the Committee could be tasked to systematically identifying the contribution of proposed legislative measures to SDGs as well as their linkages and potential trade-offs with existing sectoral policies as well as their transboundary impacts. One option could be to scale up the Sub-Committee for Sustainable Development to secondary parliamentary committee so as it would be consulted on the SD dimension of every draft law that is being adopted.

- Establish in a transparent manner the Coalition for sustainable development: this body is envisaged in the SNDD. It should be composed by representatives of civil society and ensure constant dialogue on SDGs. Criteria should be establish to select the members based on their capacities and representativeness of policy as well as minorities and vulnerable groups. It might be useful to capitalise on the recent process to form the CSO Platform within the OGP Action plan and to consider the complementarity and overlaps between the forthcoming Coalition for SD and this established platform.

- Establish clear entry points for the forthcoming Coalition for Sustainable Development (see section on implementation page 39) as an oversight body along the policy cycle in particular during the formulation and monitoring of the specific priority areas that have been included in the SD Action Plan. For instance, the Action Plan could include provisions for regular interactions between the SDGs Hubs in line ministries and representatives of the coalition. It could be considered to include the Coalition as permanent observer during the Interdepartmental committee for Sustainable development, and in the inter-ministerial committees for the formulation of sectoral strategy etc.

- The civil society Coalition should participate with the Consultative Council to the working groups that will draft the SD Action Plan. A broader consultation process with non-state actors during the formulation of the SD Action Plan.

- The SAI should systematically include PCSD and SDGs dimensions in their audits and consider conducting specific SDGs audits of policy impact.

Box 2.5. Examples of oversight of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and integrated policy planning and implementation

Latvia

The Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the promotion of integrated policy planning across all government levels, sectors and dimensions of sustainable development is monitored by the Government's National Development Council and the Parliament's Sustainable Development Committee. Every two years, the Government submits a report on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy and the National Development Plan to Parliament (*OECD, 2019^[10]*).

Italy

To incorporate the SDGs into the national institutional and administrative structure, a "Permanent Committee on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and of the Sustainable Development Goals" was established within the Chamber of Deputies in 2015 (*OECD, 2018^[15]*)

Related to the third Pillar of the PCSD: Set of responsive and adaptive tools to anticipate, assess and address domestic, transboundary and long-term impacts of policies

Principle 8) Strengthening monitoring, reporting and evaluation systems

The eight Principle Strengthening monitoring, reporting and evaluation systems to collect qualitative and quantitative evidence on the impact of policies and financing, and report progress on PCSD

c) Report regularly on PCSD and, where needed, build capacity and skills to strengthen data collection, management, storage, and reporting processes;

Strengths

- The SDIs indicators are collected and published on the the National institute of Statistic website.

Gaps

- There is no 'SDG's proof' compulsory assessment, neither during policy formulation nor when legislations are approved in the Parliament.

- The policy coherence dimension is not systematically embedded in the Report on Sustainable Development submitted yearly to the Romanian Parliament.

Possible ways ahead

For the first time in 2020, the Inter-departmental Committee for sustainable development will submit a yearly Sustainable Development Report to the Romanian Parliament for review and policy guidance (Government of Romania, 2019^[8]). A policy coherence dimension could be embedded in this report, providing Parliamentarians with a better insight on the linkages and trade-offs between sectoral policies as well as transboundary policy impacts. This policy evaluation tool could better inform parliamentary decisions when assessing new legislative proposals.

- The Report on SDGs progress produced by the DSD as well as the VNR should be disseminate to the large public via social media and organising public experts debates to increase public ownership of the results and remaining gaps

3.3) Implementation

Related to the first pillar of the PCSD recommendations: A strategic vision for implementing the 2030 Agenda

This section will present the current policy implementation tools, which allow to embed a PCSD perspective and maintain coherence among economic, social and environmental areas as well as to track the contribution of the policies to the SDGs.

Principle 3) Improving policy integration

The third Principle of PCSD is on improving **policy integration**:

- a) make strategic use of policy planning mechanisms and tools including the budget process and public procurement to manage synergies and trade offs and integrate sustainable development into sectoral policies
 - b) incorporate a PCSD/SD lens into national development plans sustainable development strategies and financing plans and develop supporting tools such as guidelines or regulations, as well as coordination mechanism for ministries and govern agencies to align their mandates, policies and sectoral objectives with broader sustainable development goals
-

Strengths:

- In September 2019 the Romanian Government declared its intention to report on the budget spending according to SDGs targets and indicators.
- The policy instrument to link strategic plans and concrete policies and actions in Romania are the substantiation notes. There is a 2006 government decision¹⁴ on the methodology for medium-term strategic planning of the public administration which includes institutional strategic planning implementation and the methodology for approving the budget programming component.
- The institutional strategic plans (ISP) and the ministerial operational plans are management tools for each ministry. They should guide the implementation of programmes, measures and activities for the next four years based on expected financial resources, results and indicators.
- The Law on Green Public Procurement is an example of policy tool for integrating sustainable development into sectoral policies. The law (No. 69/2016) sets the criteria for environmental protection when procuring eight groups of goods and services for the public sector. For this purpose a specific guide was developed and approved in 2018 by the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Environment and the President of the National Agency for Public Procurement. Currently, this order is undergoing an internal consultation process. Following this process the Ministry of Environment will develop the national action plan on green public procurement that includes specific annual targets.
- Two handbooks geared towards MP's on the parliamentary dimension of the 2030 Agenda were translated into Romanian in 2016 to include the SDGs in the legislative process.¹⁵

Gaps:

- Lack of supporting tools, such as guidance, incentives, reporting mechanisms or regulations, which generate an obligation for Ministries to report on how they incorporated a PCSD lens into their policies and sectoral objectives. Beside the parliamentary guidance and the existence of the SNDD 2030 there is little evidence of mechanisms and tools for encouraging and assessing alignments and

integrated actions for sustainable development during policy implementation (see also Monitoring and Evaluation section).

- The current coordination mechanism for ministries (i.e. the inter-ministerial groups) are not geared towards incorporating the PCSD lens during policy implementation. Ministries operating within the same inter-ministerial strategy report separately on their component and do not have the obligation to prove how the synergies and trade-offs generated by the different components are addressed nor to track the combined impact of their actions in terms of SDGs.
- Overall policy implementation remains weak in a number of sectors (see box [Box 2.7](#), let alone integrated policy implementation aligned with SDGs. Previous analysis (World Bank, 2015) as well as the findings from OECD's interviews with government officials highlight the weak link between strategic plans and concrete policies and actions. It emerged that some policies (i.e. poverty reduction, etc.) were not operationalised until a few years after their approval. According to previous analysis (World Bank, 2015[7]), the substantiation notes often suffer from inadequate identification of fiscal and policy impacts in addition their review is not done in conjunction with impact assessment instruments.
- The chain of management structure of Romania's public administration does not foresee project manager positions. Accountability for implementing a project remains associated with a ministerial department rather than with a team with a budget and expected deliverables (except for ESIF and CAP funded projects). This has consequences for identifying clear budget responsibility, programme-specific implementation timeline, deliverables and evaluation mechanisms. The incentives to facilitate the new approach to policy coherence might be more difficult to apply in an environment where managers are not responsible for their own spending or policy targets, consequently it is difficult to measure how effectively they promoted interactions across the multiple dimensions of sustainable development.
- The absence of project management structures, as well as a myriad of other factors, is among the bottlenecks to roll out programme-based budgeting (further detailed in *Romania: Linking Policy Planning and Budgeting to Support the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* report). This limit the significance of budgeting for SDGs as the budget measures are not directly linked to the implementation of specific project outputs. Nevertheless, tagging the budget measures according to SDGs targets will provide a mapping of how public spending is contributing to the SDGs objectives.

Possible ways ahead

- *Improve policy operationalisation tools and their alignment to PCSD:* The difficulties in translating policy vision into projects -actions, indicators-, calls for potential revision of the methodology for institutional strategic planning implementation and of the substantiation notes. The Institutional Strategic Plans (ISP) contribute to streamlining sectoral visions with their implementation over the next four years. The policy dashboard could support operational monitoring. Notwithstanding this process, as long as the substantiation notes are still the primary implementation tool of existing policies they could be amended to in order to identifying potential synergies and trade offs across sectors related to the proposed legislation. This will make them a useful tool for mainstreaming PCSD into policy making.
- *Pilot cross-sectoral actions conducive to sustainable development that bolster public administration's practice with policy coherence.* Such pilots could start by jointly identifying and prioritizing bottlenecks to effective cross-sectoral policy delivery. Then the relevant ministries, could identify concrete actions (if possible contributing to the SD Action Plan) and financing for cross-sectoral pilots that will operationalise synergies across the three dimensions of sustainable development. Throughout the implementation, the cross-sectoral teams will report using their

respective sectoral policies' indicators and the NSDIs. A measurement of the pilots' tangible impact in terms of accelerating both sectoral policies' and SDGs' implementation should be foreseen. A repository of lessons learned should identify which policy tools proved effective in implementing sustainable cross-sectoral actions for sustainable development (i.e. joint assessment of existing bottlenecks to increasing cross-sectoral delivery, use of contracts, incentives, joint budgeting, etc) and how they could be scaled up and integrated into regular policy implementation and budgeting exercises. The Department for Sustainable Development, the relevant inter-ministerial working groups, the DCPD and the national institute of statistics should coordinate and finance the implementation of these pilots. These pilots could start in those sectors that apply project based management practices for instance those that implement EU funded projects (ESIF and CAP funds) or that are piloting ISP.

- Use the lessons learned from the pilots (among other sources of information) for *identifying capacity gaps* to integrate sustainable development in ministerial day-to-day work, including public servants' capacities to engage with external stakeholders, analysing interlinkages and spill-overs related to sustainability, using latest technologies and data, etc.

Box 2.6. Countries' mechanisms and tools for increasing policy integration during implementation

Italy

The multi stakeholders platform on sustainable energy (Piattaforma Nazionale multi-attoriale 'energia e sviluppo') established in 2016 developed a guidance to implement the SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy) through a multi-sectoral approach and concrete activities.

Mexico

The SDG framework in Mexico allows the government to tag each area of its expenditure to an existent performance and budgeting structure and classify its contributions by having a *direct* or *indirect* impact towards SDG targets. This enables the government to identify how much of its existent budget is working to address the 17 SDGs. Underpinning all of this, over the long-run, is the *National Strategy for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda* which lays out the country's implementation goals in the medium to long-run. The government hopes the implementation strategy will serve as a guiding framework for subsequent National Development Plans.

Related to the second pillar of the Policy recommendation: effective institutional mechanisms to address interactions across sectors and levels of government

Principle 4) Whole of Government coordination

The fourth Principle ensuring whole-of-government coordination to identify and mitigate divergences between sectoral priorities and policies, including external and domestic policies, and promote mutually supporting actions across sectors and institutions.

- a) Use a high-level coordinating mechanisms to promote PCSD and the integration of sustainable development across central agencies, line ministries and other public institutions

b) establish clear mandates, capacities and mobilise adequate resources for PCSD to identify policy divergences and conflicts related to the implementation of the 2030 agenda

c) encourage formal governance arrangements and informal working methods that support effective communication between ministries and other public sector bodies

d) build capacities in public administration for PCSD

Strengths:

- Several inter-ministerial working groups for the implementation of sectoral strategies and public service delivery exist, such as: the National Committee for the Coordination of the Implementation of the Strategy for the Consolidation of the Public Administration 2014-2020 (CNCISCAP), the mechanism for implementation of the Strategy for better regulation 2014-2020, both these coordination mechanisms are ensured by the DCP¹⁶. Also the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) is involved in several working groups for implementing cross-sectoral strategies such as the National Strategy for Employment 2014-2020 and the National Strategy for Green Jobs 2018-2025, Cohesion policy and the National Plan for Implementing the Youth Guarantee 2017-2020, NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) strategy. The Ministry of Transport works with the Ministry of Environment and the water authority in the implementation of large infrastructure projects.
- Inter-ministerial coordination is often the result of the EU funding rules. In fact ministries have to work with the managing authorities (often the Ministry for EU funds or other relevant ministry) and operate as intermediate body during the implementation of the grants.
- While they do not only operate at policy implementation level, the Department for sustainable development (est 2017), the Interdepartmental committee for Sustainable Development (est 2019) and the SD hubs (est. 2019) have the mandate to integrate Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy (RSDS 2030) requirements into sectoral policies and strategies. Their role in aligning a whole of government implementation of the SDGs should facilitate dialogue and information sharing across central and line ministries, coordinate stakeholders around potential synergies and trade-offs in the implementation of SD strategies and plans.
- The Inter-ministerial Committee for the coordination of the integration of environmental protection principles: is in charge of coordinating the integration of the measures of environmental protection into sectoral policies and strategies at a national level and it operates under the central public authority for environmental protection. Since the creation of the Interdepartmental committee for sustainable development, it will continue to coordinate the environmental protection component of sustainable development (Government of Romania, 2019^[8]).

Gaps:

- Ministries do not have an obligation to report to the formal SDGs coordination mechanisms (Hubs for SD, the Department for SD and the Interdepartmental committee for Sustainable Development) on how they coordinated or on the results achieved in the implementation of the SD strategy.
- Inter-ministerial working groups for the implementation of sectoral strategies do not report to formal SDGs coordination mechanisms on how their strategies contributed to sustainable development in terms of achieving SDGs targets, balancing trade-off, addressing transboundary and intergenerational impacts.
- The effectiveness of Inter-ministerial working groups for cross-sectoral strategies is found to be uncertain at the implementation stage: gaps in coordination between sector ministries during policies' implementation has been documented in several World Bank reports (World Bank,

2017[11]) and has been confirmed during OECD's interviews with national stakeholders (see Box 2.7).

Box 2.7. The main bottlenecks observed in delivering cross-sectoral strategies in Romania

- During the implementation phase each ministry reports on the priority of the inter-ministerial strategy for which is competent. Reporting remained separated: each Ministry reports according to their Ministerial yearly action plan. There is no holistic assessment of the combined impact of the cross-sectoral strategy. One exception are the cross-sectoral indicators currently being experimented by the Ministry of Labour to monitor the Cohesion Policy that resulted from cross-sectoral working groups.

Quote: the challenge is aligning the institutions that are responsible for each measure of a cross-sectoral strategy because we don't have the indicators thus the focal points who participated during the working groups for the elaboration of the strategy don't know which information they should provide from their respective ministries.

- Strategies are often aligned with a number of policy instruments and regulations that is too high to ensure coherence. For instance, the National Roma Inclusion Strategy 2021-2020 relies on the implementation of 58 legal provisions for addressing Roma needs

- Strategies often rely on local service delivery while the local level has not been involved in the formulation, implementation mechanism

- Weak coordination and stakeholder ownership in delivering a cross-sectoral policy: a certain resistance to interiorising coordination practices and awareness of the roles that each actor is playing in a given policy area has been observed. For instance the implementation of the National Roma Inclusion Strategy had a limited impact on the long-term awareness of the role related to Roma's integration that each actor was playing, including the National Agency for Roma, the Ministry of Health, MoESR, etc. The weak coordination between sector ministries and the National Agency for Roma has been identified as a key capacity constraint in delivering the strategy. Coordination constraints were also highlighted in the implementation of the National Strategy for Active aging and the elderly. "Two years down the implementation of the strategy lack of stakeholder ownership and technical capacities to implement it were observed" (World Bank, 2017[6]). Also in relation to the Strategy on social inclusion and poverty (2015-2020) the WB report observes that lack of a coordinated approach was the 'key missing ingredient' undermining the provision of policies and programmes targeted to poor and vulnerable people and poor and marginalised areas.

- The broad consultation mechanisms and working groups set up during the formulation of cross-sectoral strategies to increase commitment across agencies are rarely sustained over time. This was observed for the implementation of the National Strategy for Active aging and the elderly and the Strategy on social inclusion and poverty: "there is no evidence that the institutional consultation mechanisms with 17 ministries and non-state actors introduced during the formulation of the framework for social inclusion and poverty reduction remained once implementation begun nor that actions to address weak administrative capacities have been implemented" (World Bank, 2017[6]).

- Weak administrative capacity, including the lack of an integrated ICT system, the need for evidence based policy decision and for the modernisation of the payments systems.

Source: Author's elaboration

Possible ways ahead

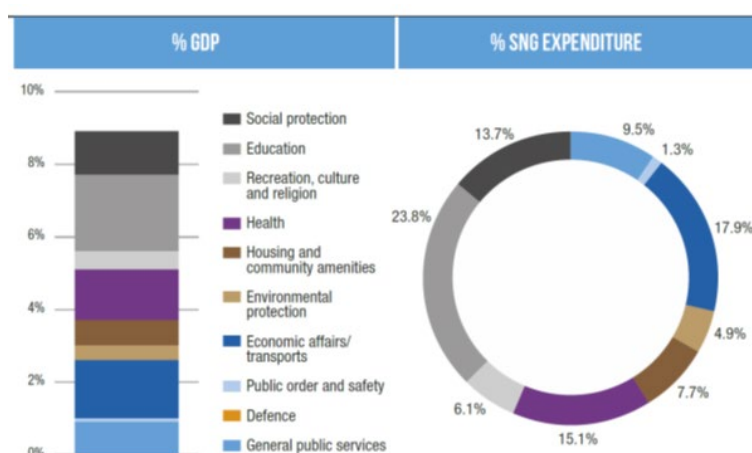
- *Consider how to standardize the interactions between the DSD and the Inter-Departmental Council Ministries and each inter-ministerial working group during policy implementation through regulation, guidance, time-bound actions identified in the action plan.* This oversighting and advising role would ensure that the PCSD dimension is streamlined in ministerial work and the work of inter-ministerial groups. Through guidance and reporting tools (as recommended in the above principle) the SDGs coordination bodies could ensure closer follow up on project implementation, collect PCSD-related data and coordinate stakeholders around potential synergies and trade-offs in the implementation of the strategy. This oversight of ministerial and cross-sectoral strategies will help building knowledge on what works and doesn't work in terms of joint policy implementation, and overcome the dispersion of information generated by the frequent turnover in the composition of the working groups.
- Clarify the added value of the Inter-ministerial Committee for the coordination of the integration of environmental protection in implementing environmentally related strategies and how it is complementary to the Interdepartmental committee for sustainable development and how it works with the inter-ministerial working groups working on this policy area. Use the lessons learned from this body to improve the interactions of the DSD with sectoral ministries and inter-ministerial committees to integrate SNDD into sectoral policies and strategies.

Principle 5) Sub-national engagement

The fifth Principle Engaging appropriately sub-national levels of government in areas where they have a role in policy coordination

- a) Promote PCSD at different levels of government and work with key stakeholders to develop tools that support local and regional governments in applying PCSD in their legal frameworks, plans and actions for localising the SDGs;
-
-

Figure 2.3. Romania subnational government expenditure by functional classification –COFOG 2016



Source: OECD-UCLG (2019) 2019 Report of the World Observatory of Subnational Finance and Investment

Strengths

- Counties have developed their local Sustainable development strategies and they use them in programming the EU funds allocated through regional managing authorities. Sustainable development lies at the heart of local strategies in Romania since the early 2000s when a project (the LA 21 project), supported by UNDP, spread the implementation of Agenda 21¹⁷ at the local level in approximately 33 communities. This experience strengthened the local authorities' capacity to adopt the principles of sustainable development in their local strategies¹⁸
- Regional and local environment action plans exist with the aim to update the planning tools on the regional and local level in the field of environmental protection. Thus they contribute to the definition of a regional and local strategy of sustainable development.
- Regions and local authorities have been involved in setting the SNDD 2030

Gaps:

- Differences across regions are substantial in Romania. In 2016, the Bucuresti-Ilfov region recorded a GDP per capita in Purchasing Power Standards of EUR 40 400, 1.4 times the EU average and almost 4 times that of the Nord-Est region, the country's poorest region. Excluding the capital region, GDP per capita is half the EU average (EUROSTAT, 2019^[16]).
- From previous OECD-UCLG analysis (UCLG-OECD, WORLD OBSERVATORY OF SUB-NATIONAL LEVEL FINANCE^[17]) and from the views collected during OECD's interviews with state and non-state actors overall, local authorities lack the funding, the administrative capacity and the human competences to provide high-quality public services. This is especially the case in urban areas where services are very fragmented. Local authorities often act as spending agents on behalf of the central government but they are not involved in decision-making. Stakeholders reported lack of consultation with national authorities who often have limited understanding of grassroots problems. There is no practice at the local level to set priorities based on local needs or to cost priorities.
- Currently there is no mechanism to involve systematically regions and cities in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of national plans for sustainable development. Conversely, there is no mechanism enabling the national level keeping track of the strategies developed by sub-national government and establishing a guidance/good practice inventory from where other localities could be inspired.

Box 2.8. Background on multi-level governance in Romania

Although Sub-National Governments (SNGs) spending in Romania remains lower than the OECD and EU28 average (16.2% of GDP and 40.4% of general government expenditure in 2016) achieving some key SDGs targets depends on accessibility and quality of local services. For instance, the primary area of SNGs spending in Romania is education. Local authorities are in charge of operating and maintaining school facilities, paying the salaries of teachers and administrative staff on behalf of the central government. However, SNGs have no control over staffing numbers or wage levels in the education sector. Usually the regional schools inspectorates at county level coordinate between the local authorities, who have spending capacities and the national level which set the standards. The second spending area of SNGs in Romania is economic affairs, in particular local roads and infrastructure. Health and social protection sectors are also major spending sectors, especially since the decentralisation of health in 2010. SNGs are also responsible for 70% of expenditure for environmental protection and 43% of spending on housing and community amenities (in particular water supply), whereas on the other hand they spend less than their EU counterparts on general public services (OECD-UCLG, 2019[9])

Source: author's elaboration

Box 2.9 Countries' practice to promote coordinated actions and enhance coherence across levels of governments for sustainable development

Luxembourg

The Government has taken inventory of SDG-related local initiatives to ensure that priorities and policies are well-aligned. It has provided a reference guide for local communities based on ISO 37120:2018 on 'Sustainable cities and communities: Indicators for city services and quality of life' and the Sustainability Reporting Standards of the Global Reporting Initiative (OECD, 2018[1]; Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2018[2])

Italy

In order to promote synergies between national, regional and local policies, the National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) was endorsed in 2017 at regional and local level, through the adoption of the document in the State and Regions Conference. The NSDS calls on regional and local authorities to take part in the implementation of the Strategy and mobilise resources at all levels of government. Regions drafted their own sustainable development strategies according to the NSDS framework (OECD, 2018[15]).

Possible ways ahead

- Consider establishing a permanent multi-level platform and policy tools for policy coherence. This space for dialogue would enable coordination with regions and local authorities in the formulation and implementation not only of the SD Action Plan but also of other national strategies contributing to

sustainable territorial development. The multi-level platform will integrate regional perspectives into policy planning. It should be linked to the Interdepartmental committee as well as to cross-sectoral committees.

- Set up county platforms for discussing policy coherence at territorial level: engage key stakeholders from across levels of government and non-state actors (NGOs, Private sector, union etc) around how sectoral policies (i.e. energy transition, internal mobility schemes, vocational skills, SMEs, green jobs, etc). The aim would be to achieve a maximal synergy in the mid- to long- term development plans of that region.
- Consider the multi-level dimension while developing the National Sustainable Development indicators (NSDIs) to ensure they contribute to fostering alignment, complementarities and cooperation between SDG strategies formulated at local and national level. For this purpose it might be useful considering the recently OECD- developed *Subnational SDG targets*¹⁹ and seek compatibility while establishing the national SDIs with the 105 SDG targets that have been identified as highly relevant for regions and cities in OECD countries.
- Extending the sustainable development hubs at the regional and local level. These focal points will have the mandate to facilitate effective two-way communication across levels of government, providing feedback on the national strategies and incentivising policy alignment (Government of Romania, 2019^[8]).

Principle 6) Stakeholders engagement

The Sixth Principle: Engaging stakeholders effectively to sustain broader support for PCSD and its implementation

- Engage proactively with stakeholders in different phases of the policy cycle, including through the exchange of knowledge and expertise, to develop and prioritise initiatives for enhancing PCSD, making specific efforts to reach out to the marginalised and vulnerable groups in society and to advance inclusive social and economic development, in line with the aspirations of the SDGs
 - Work with stakeholders to raise public awareness and mobilise support on sustainable development and government commitments supporting PCSD, through campaigns, policy dialogue, capacity building and information sharing.
-

Strengths:

- There are mechanisms of social dialogue in place that could serve as a basis for establishing a policy dialogue on sustainable development and PCSD. For instance there are two tripartite bodies, the Social and Economic Council (Consiliul Economic și Social) and the National Tripartite Council for Social Dialogue (Consiliul National Tripartit pentru Dialog Social, CNTDS).
- The representatives of civil society and academia interviewed by the OECD shared the view that the Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 is a valid document. The challenge is now to implement it and translate it in concrete engagements and provide a defined timeline.
- The DSD organised consultations and high-level events to raise awareness, provide a space for multi-stakeholder interaction, discussion, promoting good practices on SDG implementation and foster dialogue and partnerships on SDGs. A number of stakeholder forums, academic institutions and voluntary associations exist to support SDG implementation and contributed to the formulation of the SNDD 2030 (Government of Romania, 2019^[8]).
- The Sustainability Embassy in Romania, has been created to galvanise private sector involvement and leverage additional funding for implementing SDGs related objectives.

Gaps

- Business associations, private sector, unions, academia and social dialogue bodies have so far played a minor role in proposing concrete actions for enhancing SD and PCSD. Conversely, the

government created few opportunities for their involvement through regular policy dialogues, exchanges of knowledge and expertise, capacity building sessions etc. From OECD interviews with representatives of academia it emerged that academia is not regularly involved in policy formulation and in the inter-ministerial mechanisms. They have been punctually involved in the formulation of the SDGs strategy but feel they could be engaged more systematically during its implementation.

- There is little evidence of efforts made by the Government to reach out to the marginalised and vulnerable groups in society to proactively engage them in the different phases of the policy cycle in line with the aspirations of SDGs

Possible ways ahead

- DSD is facilitating the setting up of the Coalition for Sustainable Development. This body is foreseen in the Strategy 2030 to act as an NGOs which advocates for SDGs. It should enable a constant dialogue with broad sectors of the civil society and local governments. As of November 2019 an initiative by the Sustainable Embassy in Romania was setting up the coalition. In the vision of the Department for Sustainable Development (Government of Romania, 2019^[8]) the coalition will be involved in several aspects of policy making: as a body that ensures commitment to PCSD beyond electoral cycles, as a body that advocates for future generation, as support to whole-of-government implementation of the SDGs. To be effective in these roles, clear entry points have to be identified along the policy cycle as mentioned in the Policy oversight section (page 35).
- A Consultative Council of Sustainable Development is being (end 2019) appointed by the DSD with the aim to gather inputs from leading academics on the formulation of the SD Action Plan and to track its implementation. The council will be composed by 34 experts, split in 17 committees one for each Goal. The experts are selected from academia. It would be important to clarify the interactions with the Coalition for sustainable development and with the Inter-departmental committees.
- Representatives from the academia suggested during interviews with the OECD to involve academic institutions in a transparent way, by launching public calls for proposal or establishing frameworks of agreement in order to produce research on the priorities for sustainable development and their costing.
- Establish an ombudsman body where different perspectives on sustainable development are confronted and key policy nodes and trade-off are debated among representatives of civil society, academia, private sector and government.
- The Romanian Orthodox Church, which represents as much as 85% of the population, could be a powerful actor in promoting sustainable development in the public debate and be a partner in the implementation of some of the Action plan objectives in particular targeting the most vulnerable.

Box 2.10. Countries practices for sustaining broader support for PCSD and its implementation

Italy

The aim of the Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASVIS) is to raise the awareness of Italian society, economic stakeholders and institutions about the importance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to mobilise them in order to pursue the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It was established in 2016 at the initiative of a foundation (Unipolis) and the University of Rome (Tor Vergata). It relies on the expertise of 600 professionals designated by the 220 member organisations. It is organised into sectoral and transversal working groups (i.e. financing for SDG, indicators, models to assess alternative policy scenarios, etc). Other products of the Alliance are: i) an analysis of the Italian Budget Law, highlighting which SDGs it affects the most; ii) the annual report 'Italy and the Sustainable Development Goals' which tracks the progress on each SDG in Italy, its regions, and Europe and is presented to the Italian government; iii) the Sustainable Development Festival (Festival dello Sviluppo Sostenibile). This is a 17-days national awareness-raising campaign organised by the Alliance every year to promote and spread a culture of sustainability in Italian society - www.asvis.it.

Hungary:

The Office of the Ombudsman for Future Generation is a separate entity established in 2008, responsible for protecting fundamental rights to health and sustainable development for current and future generation.

Sweden

The Equality Ombudsman's role is to supervise compliance with the anti-discrimination Act.

3.4) Monitoring & Evaluation

Informed and evidence-based decision-making is a critical element of enhancing policy coherence for sustainable development.

Related to the third Pillar of the PCSD: Set of responsive and adaptive tools to anticipate, assess and address domestic, transboundary and long-term impacts of policies

The Seventh Principle on analysing and assessing policy and financing impact

a) Introduce, where possible, regular assessments to identify and assess potential positive and negative impacts on sustainable development, building on any existing tools such as Regulatory, Environmental, Gender and Social Impact and Strategic Assessments;

The Eight Principle on strengthening monitoring, reporting an evaluation systems to report progress on PCSD:

-
- a) Monitor and report back on policy and financing impacts drawing on national, regional and local sources, where available, and publish regular reports about progress on PCSD outlining progress made on addressing impacts on sustainable development at home and abroad;
 - b) Identify existing reliable and timely data, indicators and information, that can help better capture economic, social and environmental externalities imposed beyond national borders (transboundary impacts); and understand the country's contribution towards global efforts for implementing Agenda 2030;
 - c) Report regularly on PCSD and, where needed, build capacity and skills to strengthen data collection, management, storage, and reporting processes;
 - d) Embed a policy coherence dimension in evaluation systems to inform decision-making regarding the linkages and potential trade-offs between sectoral policies as well as transboundary impacts
-

Strengths:

a) Embed a policy coherence dimension in evaluation systems to inform decision-making regarding the linkages and potential trade-offs between sectoral policies as well as transboundary impacts (including through ex-ante assessments):

Ex-ante assessments exist to inform decision-making. Legislative proposals cannot complete the legislative process without Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) approval from the DCPD of the General Secretariat of the Government (GSG). According to the legislation, the RIA should include economic and environmental-impact assessments. Some assessments are compulsory, for instance all EU funded projects must comply with the EU climate change strategy, and use climate change related indicators.

b) Tracking progress in the implementation of the National sustainable development strategy and the SDIs:

- National Sustainable Development Indicators (NSDIs): the Directorate for Sustainable Development (DSD) monitors the implementation of the SDGs at national level in co-operation with the National Institute of Statistics (NIS). Romania built a set of 103 indicators for tracking progress in the implementation of the previous 2013-2020-2030 National sustainable development strategy. Building on this set, a new set of National Sustainable Development Indicators (NSDIs) to track the SNDD 2030 and the upcoming Action Plan are being developed by the National Institute of Statistics in collaboration with the DSD. The new set of indicators should reflect the United Nations', the European Union's post-2020 indicator sets and existing sectoral policies indicators, to choose the right indicators to address Romania's specificities (Government of Romania, 2019[8]).
- Romania drafted in 2018 a Voluntary National Review, providing information about the implementation process of Agenda 2030 and the Strengths towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The review resulted from the analysis of SDGs indicators from multiple sectors and it represents a baseline for future progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Line ministries monitor their policies through yearly operational plans (see Figure 2.4). Some ministries have established significant good practices in data collection and evaluation such as the Ministries of Environment, Agriculture, Labour, Education²⁰.
- The implementation of the ISP has pushed ministries to identify indicators at all policy levels: from high level impact indicators of the strategic objectives all the way down to activity indicators. Some indicators already existed in the strategies (at least at the level of impact) other were developed for the first time particularly at the level of policy outputs. Indicators were filtered also for their relevance to SDGs.

c) Build capacity and skills to strengthen data collection, management, storage and reporting process

- The Policy and priorities coordination directorate (DCPP), in the General Secretariat of the Government (GSG), is responsible for the central Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) and has the mandate to strengthen impact assessment capacities across line ministries. Several efforts²¹ for strengthening capacity and awareness of the need for conducting regulatory impact assessment have been undertaken. For instance, a guide was developed by the DCPP in the Chancellery, based on the RIA methodology for the quality control of substantiation notes produced across the government.
- As mentioned in the Policy planning section (page 31), the Sustainable Development Department is currently implementing the ESF-funded project “Sustainable Romania” which includes a component oriented at strengthening capacities for monitoring the SDGs and presenting the results in a way that allows for evidence based decision making. In particular, the project will allow reinforcing the GSG team and the capacities of the National Institute of Statistics.

Gaps

a) Weak linkages to PCSD and SD in the current ex-ante evaluation and reporting mechanisms

- While the RIA methodology manual requires that sustainability concerns are incorporated in assessment reports, in practice, most such reports are primarily legalistic and pay limited attention to issues of sustainability (Bonker F., 2018[1]). Currently the ex-ante assessment framework does not include an assessment of the linkages and potential trade-offs between sectoral policies and trans-boundary impacts of the policies evaluated.
- The use and the quality of RIA is highly uneven (Bonker F., 2018[3]) (EU commission, 2019[14]) with environmental policies making greater progress toward true evidence-based RIA, whereas many RIAs remain superficial. It has been noted that the RIA have been primarily aimed at assessing potential legal conflicts arising from new proposals rather than focusing on their policy impact (Bonker F., 2018[3]). One of the reasons, according to EU semester report, is that the legal and institutional framework for a quality control function of impact assessments at government level has not been formally established. This was one of the country specific recommendations (CSR) from 2018 EU semester report. In addition to a legislative change, in order to establish consistent use of RIA, additional resources are required as well as an increased demand from politicians to stop passing regulations without having data, beyond EU Commission’s funding requirements (World Bank, 2017[11]).
- Lack of reporting mechanisms or regulations, which generate an obligation for Ministries to report on how they incorporated a PCSD lens into the implementation of their policies and sectoral objectives. Beside the parliamentary guidance and the existence of the SNDD 2030 there is little evidence of mechanisms and tools for encouraging and assessing alignments and integrated actions for sustainable development during policy implementation.
- Assessments of the policies’ impact on sustainable development of countries abroad are not systematically conducted nor there is evidence so far of using SDGs to influence Romania’s allocation of its development cooperation budget. The only experience Romania reported so far is through the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes which has a component dedicated at assessing and addressing spill-over effects of domestic policies on other countries.

b) Need to build capacity and skills to strengthen data collection and use

The capacities to monitor and evaluate public policies are uneven across the government: past reports highlighted *the lack of a systematic, government-wide, transparent policy monitoring, reporting and diagnostic system* (World Bank, 2015); (EU commission, 2019[14]).

Data collection efforts are stronger before approval of a new legislative initiative while there are *no central reporting requirements* for monitoring and evaluation during implementation phase beyond EU, Fiscal Responsibility Law or National Institute of Statistics requirements. Most ministries do not use their plan as an active management and monitoring tool and ex-post evaluations are carried out on an ad-hoc basis. The concern raised by several ministries during OECD’s interviews is that the indicators used in the

yearly action plans, measure only the actions done or the money disbursed rather than the results achieved. *Quote: we should associate money to indicators not to financial disbursements, in general we report more about the actions done rather than the results.*

- Data produced is not always used for policy cycle or shared with other ministries: “the Romanian public administration faces a sort of paradox: although there is a tremendous amount of available statistical data, it lacks the access to a database containing all the relevant public data needed for the foundation of the decisional processes”⁹.
- Weak data interoperability makes it complicate to track the implementation of cross-sectoral strategies and data collection is done through parallel ministerial systems.
- Effective data collection on policy outputs is partially undermined by the absence of statistical units within line ministries.
-

c) Tracking progress in the implementation of the National sustainable development strategy and the SDIs: monitor and report back

Once created, the set of indicators to report on the SNDD (the NSDIs currently being developed by the NSI) will have to be linked to the existent mechanisms that collect data on policy outcomes. In Romania, policy results are *tracked through parallel monitoring and reporting systems* (see Box 2.). Although these monitoring and reporting initiatives are welcome, they also increase the risk of incompatibility and duplication. The Institutional Strategic Plans (ISP) aims at including in a single reporting system the Annual Working Plan of the Government (PALG) and the institutional operational plans. This link would feed information in a single dashboard from all line ministries, the ministry of finance and the prime ministry office on the implementation of the projects. It emerged from stakeholders interviews with the OECD that the pilot is currently in stasis as the introduction of ISP will require a change in legislation (to align the reporting frameworks). Several line ministries reported resistance in their own economic departments to use the ISP. Among other reasons they mentioned the fact that to report on costs, all ministries will have to calculate the cost of goods and immediate results that compose a programme in a uniform way. In addition another data aggregator exists, the SIPOCA 11 which was completed in 2019 with indicators tracking the State of the Nation strategy. The “Sustainable Romania” project currently implemented by DSD with ESF funding prioritises this data aggregator to track the implementation of the SNDD. The aggregator will have a double functionality: as a support to decision makers by “formulating projective positioning and forecasting of future socio-economic developments” and monitoring the implementation of the NSSD 2030 and 2030 SD Agenda (Government of Romania, 2019^[8]).

⁹ <http://starea-natiunii.ro/index.php/en/>

Box 2.11. Cross-government policy monitoring and reporting systems in Romania

There are several cross-government initiatives underway to address the performance monitoring gap. (see Figure 2.4)

- [2010] National Strategy Development Indicators (NSDIs)

A first national set of indicators was developed in 2010 by the NIS to monitor the implementation of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Romania NSDS- Horizon 2013-2020-2030 (NSDS) (National Institute of Statistics, 2018[15]). The NSDIs database (SDIR) includes 103 indicators, with data series, available in the national statistical system since 2000. The indicators cover all the range of policies that the NSDS assessed including those not covered by the EU strategy.

- [2015] Monitoring and reporting system for strategic planning (the MARD IT system)

The World Bank worked with the Chancellery on a cross-government monitoring and reporting initiative supported by an IT application. It was successfully implemented in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. In parallel the Delivery Unit (which was temporarily set up in the Chancellery) had implemented its own monitoring and reporting framework to improve implementation quality in four priority areas: public procurement, energy, youth unemployment and tax administration. Both the Delivery Unit and MARD systems used a dashboard format.

- [2016-2019] “State of the Nation – designing an innovative instrument for supporting public policies” (SIPOCA 11)

It is an online data aggregator created with the ambition to gather existing database containing public data since 1990 and make it available to decision-makers. 106 indicators were aggregated in the online database funded by ESF (3.4 million EUR) and implemented by the Center for Analysis and Strategy of the GSG with the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA). While stakeholder expressed concerns during OECD’s interviews with regards the sustainability of this aggregator, the forthcoming EU-funded project “Sustainable Romania” will strengthen it. The Directorate for Governmental Strategies within the GSG will manage the aggregator and five IT persons will be hired to work on it including by conducting opinion polls (involving a sample of 1000 respondents), and disseminating the results through periodic reports.

- [Current] Institutional Strategic Plans ISP (see box section 2.3)

This is also an initiative to agree on a cross-ministries performance measurement framework that would link policies to budget.

- [Current] Annual Working Plan of the government (AWPG/PALG)

Electronic database where all line ministries announce planned legislative initiatives for the year and adoption date. The General Secretariat of the Government monitors government-wide policy priorities through this tool (see section 1.1).

- [Current] Ministerial operational plan monitoring

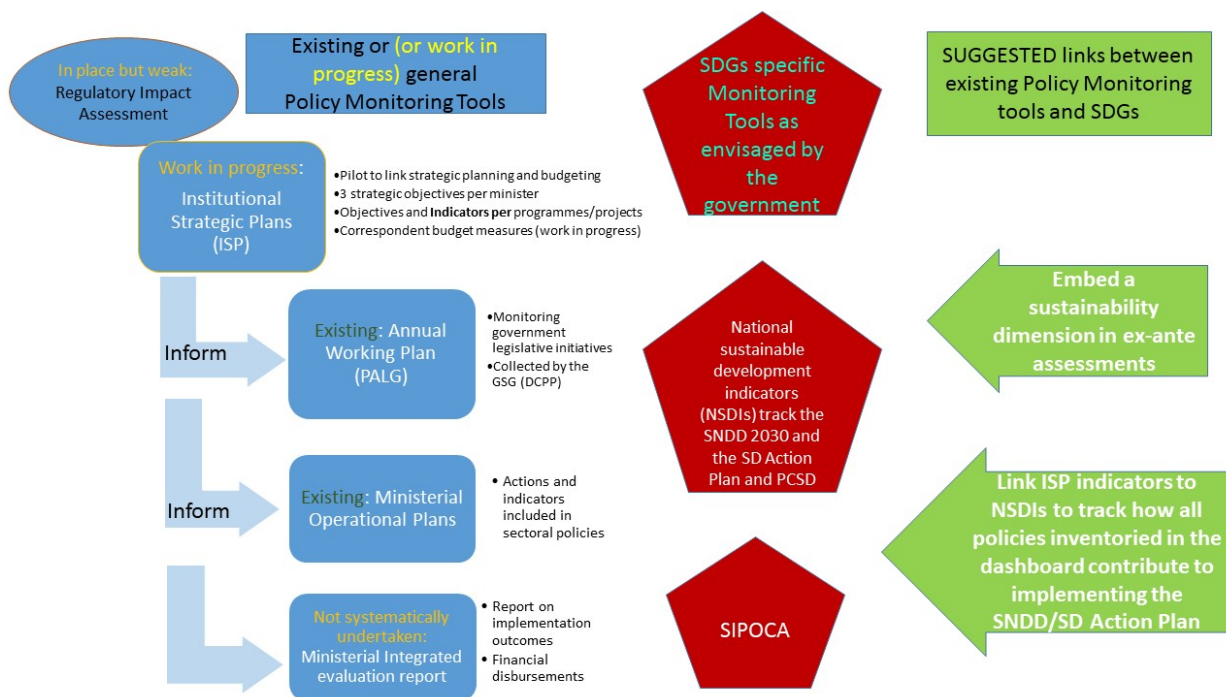
Line ministries collect data according to the actions and indicators included in sectoral policies. Most of the ministries also report on implementation outcomes and financial disbursements.

- [Forthcoming] New set of indicators to monitor and report on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy of Romania 2030

According to the project proposal “Sustainable Romania” a new system will combine the indicators developed in the aggregator SIPOCA with the ones identified by the INS to report on the implementation of the SNDD (Government of Romania, 2018[4])

Source: Author’s elaboration

Figure 2.4. Romania policy monitoring tools



Source: Author’s elaboration

Possible ways ahead:

Embed a policy coherence dimension in evaluation systems to inform decision-making and report on policy results

- From 2020 a progress report on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy will be submitted annually by the Government to the Parliament (Government of Romania, 2019[8]). It could include a section monitoring progress on PCSD and considerations related to budget execution.
- The Government of Romania expressed interest in developing a “PCSD reporting framework” to assess the performance of public institutions with regards to policy coherence for sustainable development (i.e. institutional coordination track record, impact in terms inter-generational, transboundary issues, etc) . The PCSD indicators could also look at the link between PCSD-compliant mechanisms and their impact in terms of Sustainable Development (i.e. assess if more coordinated policy measures achieved greater impact in terms of SDGs; assessment of the linkages and trade-offs between sectoral policies as well as transboundary policy impacts, etc). The policy coherence dimension could be embedded in the new set of sustainable Development indicators (NSDIs). This framework could be useful for Ministries and each inter-

ministerial working group to assess cross-sectoral actions' combined impact and to report on how they mainstreamed PCSD during policy formulation and implementation. The PCSD reporting framework could already be annexed to the proposed strategy when tabled to the cabinet.

- An ex-ante sustainability impact dimension could be embedded as part of the Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA). This sustainability dimension would require to integrate the existing ex-ante assessments (Environmental, Gender and Social impact, etc) into one analysis in order to support decision makers in the identification of the best policy option according to their linkages and potential trade-offs between sectoral policies as well as transboundary, inter and intra generations equity impacts (OECD, Forthcoming^[18]). In addition it could allow a screening of the impacts (positive and negative) on all the SDGs for each new policy initiative. To ensure that ex-ante sustainability impact assessment is systematically conducted, a change in the legislation should be introduced and resources should be allocated. The legislation should equally clarify which studies needs to be conducted, and the actors in charge of the conduction and validation of these studies. Having a mandate for validating the sustainability impact assessment for all new legislations, could bolster the Department of Sustainable Development's role as guardian of the implementation of the SD strategy, while giving it more centrality during strategies' formulation at ministerial and inter-ministerial level.

Box 2.12. Countries' practices on assessing policy and financing impacts on national sustainable development as well as intergenerational and transboundary impact

Latvia

In 2009, Latvia introduced a legal obligation to conduct impact assessments for all draft legal acts. The analysis comprises impact on social groups and economic development and the budget, administrative burden, administrative costs and public participation in decision making. Also the Government conducts bi-annual impact assessments. The assessments cover all sectoral policies included in the National Development Plan, including public health, inclusive education, inclusive employment and other areas and provide guidance for the planning of future policy (OECD, 2019^[10]).

Luxembourg

To strengthen policy coherence and better understand potential national and transnational effects of policies on sustainable development, the government plans to establish a broader sustainability check. The so-called "Nohaltegkeitscheck" will allow for a systematic check of policy impacts across all three dimensions of sustainable development as well as for effects on future generations (OECD, 2019^[19]).

Ireland

When preparing any proposal for the government, Irish Government Departments are formally required to identify and address (potential) spill-overs related to that proposal under a range of headings. These headings include, inter alia, impacts on poverty, gender equality, employment and competitiveness, people with disabilities, as well as certain transboundary issues (OECD, 2018^[20]).

Czech Republic

The Department of Development Cooperation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) is using SDGs to influence its own budget allocations. The challenge they face is in delivering results and showing the impact of their activities. Their development strategy is not based explicitly on the SDGs, and the budget presented to Parliament does not include SDG related proposals. Their office is therefore 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 (OECD, 2020^[9]).

Italy

While a policy impact assessment legislation does not yet exist, environmental assessments of plans, programmes and projects provide information on transboundary effects on environmental issues. Within the Italian development cooperation system, mitigation of potential negative spill-overs of domestic policies on international cooperation activities are addressed by a coordination mechanism centred around the Deputy Foreign Minister with International Cooperation portfolio, who "is invited to participate, without the right to vote, in the meetings of the Council of Ministers dealing with subject matters that may directly or indirectly affect the coherence and effectiveness of development cooperation policies" (OECD, 2018^[15]).

Germany

All proposals for new laws and regulations are subject to a Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA). The SIA is based on indicators, targets and management rules, which include intergenerational and transboundary dimensions. Since March 2018, laws and regulations can be checked against those through an online tool: www.enap.bund.de.

Tracking progress in the implementation of the National sustainable development strategy and the SDIs

- The National Sustainable Development Indicators (NSDIs) are being formulated and will be a concrete tool for tracking the progress made on SDGs through the implementation of the National Sustainable development strategy (SNDD 2030) and the Action Plan.
- *Increase operational alignment during policy implementation and tracking of SDGs outcomes through the ISP dashboard:* Assess which data aggregator (SIPOCA, Ministerial monitoring reports, or the ISP dashboard) is the best placed for tracking overall policies' contribution towards SDGs, beyond the ones tracked within the Action Plan. By linking the indicators currently measured in the ISP dashboard to the NSDIs the ministries could directly monitor how the expenditures and outcome indicators of their policies contribute to SDGs. This operation should be facilitated by the fact that the indicators inserted in the ISP were filtered by their connection to SDGs. Linking ISP and NSDIs indicators will develop data interoperability across ministries and levels of government to track the implementation of SDGs. To systematise this alignment in the dashboard, the national institute of statistics (NIS) should work with the DCPD and the SD Department.

Box 2.13. Collecting and using data on SDG targets

Latvia

In the framework of a mapping process, the government linked each of the 169 SDG targets to performance indicators defined in Latvia2030, the National Development Plan 2014-2020 and other strategic documents to assess policy coverage and coherence. The Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia – the main institution for collecting and publishing national statistics – collects data on the 55 national targets (of which 44 are also SDG targets) set out in Latvia2030 and the 96 indicators defined in the National Development Plan 2014-2020 (OECD, 2019^[10])

Italy

The Coordination unit for well-being and sustainable development, created in 2019 in the Centre of Government, is coordinating the process of harmonising the well-being and quality of life indicators with the sustainable development goals of the 2030 Agenda, in order to identify a single, defined and representative set of indicators to be included in the economic planning cycle (OECD, 2018^[15]).

Ireland

Ireland's initiative to improve quality and use of gender disaggregated data has significantly advanced the measurements of progress on sustainable development in the area of gender equality. The new data enhances PCSD by allowing for more effective monitoring, reporting and evaluation of progress on, and interrelations between, a broad range of SDGs (OECD, 2018^[20]).

Germany

An inter-ministerial working group of representatives from the government and the statistical offices develops and adopts new indicators to track the German Sustainable Development strategy on a rolling basis. Some of them include transboundary consequences of national policies. One example is the target to increase the share of imports from LDCs, another one is to increase membership of the Textile Partnership (OECD, 2018^[21]) .

- Establish mechanism to ensure compatibility between local and national indicators of sustainable development strategies

Build capacity and skills to strengthen data collection, management, storage and reporting process

- Consider establishing statistical divisions within each line ministries to systematically collect data on policy implementation. This will strengthen commitment and capacity to monitor and develop career paths for the staff who receives training on monitoring and evaluation and impact assessments.
- Consider establishing a regulation to standardise the use of data related to sustainable development throughout policy making processes.

3.5) Communication

Related to the first pillar of the PCSD recommendations : A strategic vision for implementing the 2030 Agenda

The first Principle Building a strong, inclusive political commitment and leadership for PCSD

a) Enhance whole of government approaches to PCSD by defining priority areas, time-bound action plans and key performance indicators for making progress on PCSD and communicating results to the public;

The second Principle Defining, implementing and communicating a strategic long-term vision that supports policy coherence and orients the government and stakeholders towards common sustainable development goals.

Related to the second pillar of the Policy recommendation: effective institutional mechanisms to address interactions across sectors and levels of government

The fourth Principle: Ensuring whole-of-government coordination

a) Encourage formal governance arrangements and informal working methods that support effective communication between ministries and departments, and between ministries and other public sector bodies under their aegis;

The Sixth Principle of PCSD is on engage stakeholders effectively

a) Work with stakeholders to raise public awareness and mobilise support on sustainable development and government commitments supporting PCSD, through campaigns, policy dialogue, capacity building and information sharing

Strengths:

- The Department of Sustainable Development communicates to a large public about the stage and the evolution of the Sustainable development strategy through different channels: the website, social media account (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), the press and by sending an electronic monthly newsletter to more than 2000 recipients.
- The DSD organizes events dedicated to the implementation of the SNDD 2030 in partnership with several stakeholders (Academia, RDI institutes, mass-media, Coalition for SD, representatives of civil society & youth, representatives of the economic environment and employers, trade union leaders, etc)
- DSD representatives regularly participated in national and international events to explain their work in promoting sustainable development.
- In order to improve general knowledge of governmental institutions and policies, the Ministry of Education and Research, along with other public authorities, launched in mid-2017 an initiative to provide more space in primary and
- Secondary curricula to issues such as the constitution, legislative process, how the judiciary functions, basic elements of civil and criminal law and the fight against corruption (Bonker F., 2018^[3]). There is also in implementation the optional school course "Legal education", especially for upper secondary level. This course can be implemented within the curriculum at the school's decision.

- DSD organised consultations with broad sectors of the civil society during the formulation of the SNDD 2030 strategy in 2017.
- DSD regularly meets and inform the SD hubs on sustainable development issue, it also collect their views with regards implementing SDGs within their ministries

Gaps

- Weak public knowledge of government policies: according to some reports most of the population, especially in rural areas and small towns, has little information on what government policies are being proposed or implemented (Bonker F., 2018[3]).
- Past governments have invested little efforts in “a unified and coordinated communications strategy, defaulting instead to a decentralized approach with individual ministries’ communicating new policy initiatives and programs” (Bonker F., 2018[3]).

Possible ways ahead

- Invest in a centralised communication from the government on the SNDD and the Action plan to increase public knowledge of government policy, collaborating in particular with the Coalition for sustainable development and non-partisan mass media or online news sources.
- One of the activities of the project "Sustainable Romania" is the elaboration of the communication plan for the implementation of the SNDD 2030. The plan could include billboards, video clips, expert talk, etc. as well as identifying SDGs champions that can speak to a large public about their engagement for SDGs.
- From 2020 DSD will organize annually a Sustainable Development gala and awards to showcase the outstanding efforts toward the 2030 Agenda that different partners put in place (Government of Romania, 2019[8]). This event could reward in particular the engagement of local level and non-state actors in the promotion of the SDGs.
- The DSD could organise “SDG rallies” involving the most active cities and regions to share their experiences in the implementation of sustainable development agenda in their territories.
- The DSD could support school curricula with a focus on sustainable development especially in most remote areas.
- The DSD could sustain engagement practice between the SDG council, civil society and the SD Hubs within ministries to foster data and information exchange on sustainable development.

Box 2.14. Countries' practices to raise public awareness and mobilise support on sustainable development

Czech Republic

The Department for Sustainable Development 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. It has therefore developed tools to provide information on how to get more people involved, including organizing 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. It equally regularly feeds a website to share articles and results related to the Czech Republic 2030 strategy as well as posting on social media (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) (*OECD, 2020^[19]*).

Ireland

The Irish government has identified the lack of awareness of the SDGs among civil society, business and citizens as a major constraint for effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The government developed an online SDG platform as a ‘one-stop-shop for SDG information and learning’. Following input from the Irish SDG Stakeholder Forum, it will select national organisations as ‘SDG Champions’ to raise awareness of the Global Goals among the general public. The Stakeholder Forum will also develop a number of toolkits and communication materials to reach out to national and local organisations and support their contributions to a coherent and comprehensive implementation of the 2030 Agenda (*OECD, 2018^[20]*).

End Notes

¹ Declaration no 1/2016 Parliament support to SDGs

² The recent EU Council conclusions on A sustainable Europe by 2030 encourage the commission to mainstream SDGs in all policy process including the EU semester and in the horizontal conditionality of the next Multi-annual Financial Framework.

³ The Centre of the Government CoG (Office of the Government in Romania) has two institutional pillars: the General Secretariat of the Government (GSG) and the Chancellery of the Prime Minister (CPM), the first focusing on formal coordination while the latter, consisting of about 15 state counsellors, provides the policy expertise.

⁴ The ESF (European Social Fund)-funded grant “Sustainable Romania” within the EU Operational Program Administrative Capacity (POCA) 2014-2020, aims, inter alia, at training the Experts in Sustainable Development, this are existing public servants who will be trained. The project aims at establishing these Hubs for sustainable development also at local level and to provide them with training.

⁵ The DCPD has the mandate for inter-institutional coordination from policy elaboration to implementation among other by monitoring the PALG. It was initially called the Public Policy Unit, it was established in November 2003.

⁶ Website of the Secretariat General of the Government: <https://sgg.gov.ro/new/despre-institutie/organizare/#2bf2c97qpl>

⁷ Ad hoc committees are convened by the leading minister and are composed by deputy ministries or top civil servants from relevant line ministries. The written consultation allows ministries affected by each act to review it within five days.

⁸ World Bank experts had provided energy scenario modelling for the demand side as an input for the energy strategy; however, the new strategy has not yet been elaborated and there is no evidence of how the inputs resulting from this analysis will be used (World Bank, 2017[3])

⁹ Previous external (World Bank, 2015) and governmental analysis identifies historical fragmentation between the line ministries and between the ministries and the Centre of Government. The Office of the Government recently identified 365 separately existing strategies.

¹⁰ Law n. 52/2003 on stakeholder engagement and law n. 544/2001 on transparency require ministries to public all regulations for comments on their websites for a minimum of ten days.

¹¹ The Open Government Partnership has the ambition to“(...) promote transparency, participation in civic life and the use of new technologies at the level of public administration.” (Government of Romania, 2018: 3).

¹² Romania joined in 2011 and the 2018 4th National Action Plan established Department for Open Government and Civil Society Relations was set up at the Secretariat General of the Government, to support the coordination of the partnership.

¹³ *'National Anti-corruption Strategy 2016-2020'*. The strategy includes six general objectives aiming at fostering a culture of transparency, building management capacity to prevent corruption particularly within the most vulnerable sectors and areas (the Parliament, health, education, public administration, electoral campaigns, public procurement, etc.). The Ministry of Justice is the entity responsible for the implementation of the Strategy. Each public institution with an average of 50 employees was expected to allocate around EUR 200, 000 (RON 900, 000) to assure a minimum level of implementation. Additional funding was made available through the Operational Programme for Administrative Capacity established by the European Commission. . According to the Strategy, each public institution had to elaborate its own Integrity Plan. For instance each public institution/unit in the education and professional training system will elaborate its own Integrity Plan.

¹⁴ Government Decision No. 1807/2006 for approving the Management Component within the Methodology regarding the medium-term strategic planning system of the public administration institutions at central level. Government Decision No. 158/2008 for approving the Budget Programming Component within the Methodology regarding the medium-term strategic planning system of the public administration institutions at the central level for institutional strategic planning implementation

¹⁵https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/parliamentary_development/parliament-s-role-in-implementing-the-sustainable-development-go.html

¹⁶ Website of the Secretariat General of the Government: <https://sgg.gov.ro/new/despre-institutie/organizare/#2bf2c97qpl>

¹⁷ Agenda 21 was the outcome of the Rio Conference on environment and development in 1992. It provides a framework for tackling social and environmental problems, including air, water and soil pollution, deforestation, biodiversity loss, health, population trends, poverty, energy consumption, waste production, and transport issues.

¹⁸ <https://www.sd-network.eu/?k=country%20profiles&s=single%20country%20profile&country=Romania>

¹⁹ <http://www.oecd-local-sdgs.org/>

²⁰ For instance, the Ministry of Labour and social justice (MLSJ) has developed an action plan with indicators (according to the stage of the implementation) for each one of the strategies in place (i.e. social inclusion, active ageing, employment and developing green jobs, transversal strategies for persons with disabilities, children's, gender equality between, safety at work, etc). Currently an EU-funded project is supporting the Ministry in developing a set of indicators and data collection to measure the implementation of the "National strategy for social inclusion and poverty reduction". Another concrete improvement is the establishment of a database to keep track monthly of the presence of students who benefit of scholarships for VET training. This allows adjusting the spending to the actual presences.

²¹ Including a RAS World Bank project implemented between 2012-2015.

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Annex A. List of Organisations and ministries participating to OECD's interviews (7-11 October 2019)

Directorate for Sustainable Development	Ministry of Environment
Prime Minister Office	Ministry of Economy
Romanian Parliament	Ministry of Transport
World Bank Romania	Ministry of Finance
Ministry of Energy	National Institute of Statistics
Ministry of National Education	Ministry of Labour and Social Justice
Ministry of Health	Sustainability Embassy in Romania
University of Romania	Funky citizens
FONSS	Fond Romania
World Vision Romania	

Annex B.

List of related Relevant strategies (Government of Romania, 2018^[4]):

- Integrated Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Danube Delta (2030) - Pillar 1: Protection of natural resources and the environment

- Integrated Strategy for the Sustainable Development of the Danube Delta (2030) - Pillar II: Sustainable Development, in order to support

local economy and local opportunities for improvement

- Integrated Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Danube Delta (2030) - Pillar III: Improving connectivity
- National Strategy for Research, Development and Innovation 2014 - 2020
- National Strategy on the Digital Agenda for Romania 2020
- Next Generation Networks National Plan for NGN Infrastructure Development
- National Strategy for Employment 2014-2020
- National Strategy for Promoting Active Aging and Protection of Older Persons for the period 2015-2020
- Government Strategy for the Development of the Small and Medium Enterprises Sector (SME)
- National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction 2014-2020
- Strategy of the Romanian Government for the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority for the period 2015-2020
- National Health Strategy 2014-2020
- Strategy for Reducing Early School Leaving in Romania
- National Strategy for Tertiary Education 2015-2020
- National Strategy on Lifelong Learning
- Strategy for the Consolidation of Public Administration 2014-2020
- Strategy for better regulation 2014 2020 (SMBR)
- National Competitiveness Strategy 2014-2020
- National Action Plan on Renewable Energy
- Master General Transport Plan
- Master Plan on the Protection and Rehabilitation of the Romanian Coastal Zone
- National Strategy for Waste Management 2014-2020
- National Strategy for the Management of Flood Risk in the medium and long term (period 2010 - 2035)
- Romania's National Strategy on Climate Change 2013 - 2020
- National Strategy and National Action Plan for Managing Contaminated Sites in Romania
- National Strategy for Road Safety 2013 - 2020
- Priority Action Framework for Natura 2000
- National Strategy and Action Plan for Biodiversity Conservation 2013 - 2020
- National Action Plan in the Field of Energy Efficiency III
- The National Action Plan in the Field of Energy from Renewable Sources
- Strategy for the Marine Environment
- The Plan for the Transboundary Maritime Space Management of the Black Sea area
- Master Plan for the development of national tourism 2007-2026
- Master Plan for the development of spa tourism
- Sectoral Strategy in the field of Culture and National Heritage 2014 - 2020

- National Strategy for Sustainable Development
- National Strategy for Regional Development
- The territorial development strategy of Romania
- National Strategy for Mental Health of Children and Adolescents 2015-2020
- National Strategy on Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities 2014-2020
- National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of the Child 2014 - 2020
- National Reform Program (PNR)
- Integrated Strategy for the Sustainable Development of the Danube Delta (2030) - Pillar V: Promoting efficiency, accessibility and sustainability

