

CHARLES UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
Institute of Political Studies

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Department of International Relations

Master Thesis

**Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals: the case of the Czech
Republic**



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Abstract

This master thesis research deals with the process of the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (further referred to as “SDGs”) in Czech Republic. The aim of the research is to map a process of the implementation of SDGs in the country, to analyse to what extent Czech Republic behaves independently of international organizations (further referred to as “IOs”) in the question of implementing the SDGs. The analysis is built upon two theories – neoliberal institutionalism and constructivism. Based on these theories two hypotheses are suggested. The first hypothesis, based on the neoliberal institutionalist theory, is as following: The way of implementation of SDGs is determined mainly by the state government and its preferences. The IOs and their bureaucracies are in the implementation involved in a rather passive and indirect way (in particular by monitoring and information gathering). The way of implementation is, therefore, dependent mainly on the state. The second hypothesis, based on the constructivist perspective is that the IOs and their bureaucracies tend to infer in the process of implementation of SDGs on the domestic level, primarily by setting the priorities, and actively communicating about the implementation of the SDG related policies with the affected states. The way of implementation is, therefore, dependent not only on the state, but also on the IOs and their bureaucracies. The primary sources of data are official documents, such as Czech government statements, ruling party documents, strategic frameworks, reports of the IOs, supplemented by academic literature and media analysis on this issue. The second sources of information are semi-structured interviews with government officials and representatives of non-government sphere. The research draws a conclusion that currently the hypothesis H1 is partly confirmed and hypothesis H2 is not confirmed in the case of Czech Republic. The SDGs agenda implementation is fully dependent on the state and its priorities; however, it is not under current government priority. The IOs are not actively involved in the implementation process in Czech Republic. The research further suggests that the Czech government should give more priority to such an important agenda, as the Agenda 2030.

Keywords

Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs, Sustainable Development, International Organizations, Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030

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Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I compiled this thesis independently, using only the listed sources and literature, properly citing them.
2. I hereby declare that this thesis was not used to obtain a different or the same degree.
3. I hereby agree that this thesis may be published for research purposes.

Prague, 26.07.2020

Gulnara Mavlyutova

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List of abbreviations

CR 2030	Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030
EU	European Union
ECOSOC	UN Economic and Social Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HLPF	High-Level Political Forum
IAEG-SDG	Inter-Agency Expert Group for SDG Indicators
ILO	International Labour Organization
IO	International Organization
IR	International Relations
LA 21	Local Agenda 21
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MFF	Multi-annual Financial Framework
MLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
MoE	Ministry of the Environment
MRD	Ministry of Regional Development
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SD	Sustainable Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SD Unit	Unit of Sustainable Development
UN	United Nations

UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNIC	UN Information Centre
VNR	Voluntary National Reports
WB	World Bank

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Introduction

This master thesis research deals with the process of implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (further referred to as “SDGs” or the “Goals”) in Czech Republic. Based on the concrete example of Czech Republic, it seeks to investigate to what extent the states behave independently in the question of the implementation of the SDGs and to what extent this process is influenced by the international organizations (further referred to as “IOs“).

The concept of sustainable development (further referred to as ”SD”) has become a very important concept and attractive broad-based catchphrase for the global community. SD is defined as

development that meets the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.¹

Sustainable development is, therefore, a comprehensive set of strategies that by economic means and technologies allow to fulfil human needs - material, cultural and spiritual – taking into account in parallel the environmental limits of our planet. In order to accomplish it on a global scale it is necessary to define the sustainable development; understand the processes which are influencing it; identify how and by which means it can be accomplished on all local, regional and also global levels; specify which socio-political institutions and processes at these levels are responsible for what; clarify the challenges and solve them with the whole scope of the possible tools. Sustainability is a point of view which sees the growth or development of the world through a holistic perspective with the understanding that everything we do collectively or individually, we should see in a broader context. It is about taking the individual and group responsibility for the world and its future.

One of the most prominent representors of the SD discourse is currently the United Nations (further referred to as “UN“). The UN contributes to global sustainability on a basis of the Sustainable Development Goals within the Agenda 2030 (or also 2030 Agenda, according to different sources). Seventeen Goals represent a development program for the next 15 years (2015-2030). The document, which was completed in 2015 at the UN Summit in New York, sets the main objective of eradicating poverty, along with the establishment of environmental sustainability and economic growth, which must go hand in hand with social inclusion.

The agenda sets out 17 Goals for sustainable development, including eradicating poverty in all its forms around the world, eradicating hunger as well as ensuring a healthy life and improving its quality, ensuring equal access to inclusive and quality education. The SDGs agenda is global, cross- sectional and mainstream. SDGs carry a “one world” feature, which means that sustainable development objectives should be reflected in the policies of all countries in the General Assembly.² Under the resolution establishing the SDGs, the UN recognizes that each country has primary responsibility for its own path of economic and social development. Each SDG has a list

¹ MENSAH, Justice and Sandra RICART CASADEVALL. Sustainable development: Meaning, history, principles, pillars, and implications for human action: Literature review [online]. Cogent Social Sciences. 2019.

² UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [online], 21 October 2015, A/RES/70/1.

of targets which are measured with indicators. The Goals are represented in a clear and comprehensible form, the Goals are clear.

Agenda 2030 emphasizes the aspect that international public funding plays an important role, especially in the poorest and most vulnerable countries of the global South, which have limited internal resources. At the same time, international development assistance is only complementing the state's independent efforts to mobilize public resources in the country.³ Therefore, UN calls for the local mobilization to set the priorities towards the 2030 Agenda achievement: “National and regional authorities, sub-regional institutions, local authorities are needed to build the country system the scientific community, charities that would work closely with local governments and government agencies.”⁴

SDGs, being one of the foremost focuses among the international relations (further referred to as “IR”) scope, have significant influence on the IOs as well. Each of the 17 SDGs reflect current global issues that have a direct impact on the IOs dealing with these issues on a daily basis. The SDGs are reflected in the policies of more and more IOs, including prominent actors as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (further referred to as “OECD”), the European Union (further referred to as “EU”), or the UN, in the IR. These organizations take the SDGs seriously within the policy design and pledge to contribute in achieving the Goals globally by supporting the nation states to promote SDGs locally, including this case study state – Czech Republic.

Czech Republic is nowadays ranked as 8th most sustainable and developed country in the world according to the *Sustainable Development Report 2020*.⁵ The main responsible organ for the implementation of SDGs in Czech Republic is the Ministry of the Environment (further referred to as “MoE”), in specific one of the ministry’s departments dedicated to SD. This department along with the specific advisory agency - the Government Council for Sustainable Development of the Czech Republic – is responsible for the coordination of the sustainable development policy among central administrative authorities. The global Agenda 2030 is implemented locally in the country

³ Ibid., p. 11.

⁴ Ibid., p. 11.

⁵ SACHS et al. The Sustainable Development Goals and Covid-19. Sustainable Development Report 2020. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopmentreport/2020/2020_sustainable_development_report.pdf

throughout the Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030 and Implementation Plan. Many of the SDGs interfere with the competencies of several ministries but also with the internal and external policy of the state. The identification and implementation of specific sub-measures for the fulfilment of sub-goals falls within the competence of the concrete ministries.⁶ Even though the Agenda 2030 is supposed to be applicable in the whole world, some sub-goals of the SDGs are not relevant for Czech Republic.⁷

Five years have passed since the adoption of the SDGs, since the beginning of a fifteen years countdown to accomplish the Agenda 2030. It is of a great importance to understand whether countries, societies, and even individuals are moving towards solving global problems and fulfilling the SDGs globally and locally. The way the UN resolution “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” sets out the achievement of objectives is by emphasizing national assumptions. Under the resolution, each government decides primarily on how to ensure the fulfilment of tasks based on national planning processes, measures and strategies. It recognizes the link between sustainable development and local development.⁸ This is a key point, by which the countries can independently decide how, and by which means they are going to achieve the SDGs. This is the reason why I decided to explore throughout the diploma thesis how specifically Czech Republic is implementing Agenda 2030 and if the country does it independently (without the direct involvement of some international actors into the process of the implementation on the national level) or not. In addition, all 17 Goals, that are stated in the relevant national documents as one of the main reference points, are in scope of this research.

In conformity with the UN resolution, mentioned above, the main goal of this case study is to investigate whether the Czech Republic behaves independently, so that SDG related politics is not influenced by the interference of the IOs, mentioned above, within the implementation process at the national level? Or is it rather that IOs have an influence and impact at certain extent on the

⁶ CZECH REPUBLIC, Ministry of the Environment. Implementace Agendy 2030 pro udržitelný rozvoj (Cílů udržitelného rozvoje) v České republice [IA2030-SDGs ČR 2018-2030] (Implementation of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (Sustainable Development Goals) in the Czech Republic) [online]. Prague: Ministry of the Environment of Czech Republic, 2018, p. 28.

⁷ More detailed list is available in the document CZECH REPUBLIC, Ministry of the Environment. Implementace Agendy 2030 pro udržitelný rozvoj (Cílů udržitelného rozvoje) v České republice [IA2030-SDGs ČR 2018-2030] (Implementation of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (Sustainable Development Goals) in the Czech Republic) [online]. Praha: Ministerstvo životního prostředí, 2018.

⁸ UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY. Transforming our world : the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [online], 21 October 2015, A/RES/70/1. 2015, p. 13.

implementation of SDG related policies at the national level? The focus of this master thesis research is, therefore, on the analysis of whether the SDGs implementation is mainly state driven or IOs' driven. These two views refer on the one hand to the neoliberal institutionalism theory and to authors such as R. Keohane, Kenneth W., Abbott, P. Genschel and others, who argue that states mainly act independently. The other view refers to the constructivism theory and to authors such as Martha Finnemore and Michael Barnett.

Since there have not been much analyses made on the examination of the extent to which the IOs' affect the SDGs related politics in the nation states (set the priorities for the states and be directly involved in the process or not), this research could contribute to the sustainable development community with such an input. In addition, in the scope of the research are all 17 Goals, which are stated in the relevant national documents, that will be one of the main reference points in this research.

The text of the research is divided into five parts. In the first chapter the focus is set on the theories of the International Organizations: Neoliberal institutionalism and constructivism with two respective hypotheses suggested. The chapter further covers the methodology. The second chapter provides the explanation of the SD concept and mainly the analysis of the implementation process of SDGs related policies in Czech Republic. The third chapter of this study is focused on the testing of the neoliberal institutionalist theoretical explanation through the Czech Republic government positioning towards SDGs. The aim of this chapter is to test hypothesis H1, namely, to investigate the Czech government interests in managing and controlling the SDGs politics; to check if SD is under the government's priority and to compare the state interests with the principles of SDGs in Czech Republic. The fourth chapter is focused on the testing of the constructivist theoretical explanation by bringing closer to the activities of IOs and their bureaucracies, and also to their institutional influence within the country. This chapter aimed to test the hypothesis H2. Namely, to find out whether the bureaucracies of the IOs such as UN, OECD, EU have a vision how the SDGs should be implemented locally at the national level, examine to what extent they seek to enforce such vision, if they have one, and how actively they communicate with the states in this regard.

1. Theoretical and methodological framework

There are few theories of the international organizations which claim to explain the causes, design and effects of the IOs in international relations: neo\liberalism, neo\realism, constructivism, historical materialism, etc. This research is mainly focused on whether the state behaves independently in the SDGs politics and to what extent IOs influence the implementation of the international policies domestically in the case of Czech Republic. Therefore, the two theories of neoliberal institutionalism and social constructivism were chosen to develop the hypothesis. This section is dealing mainly with these two theories, highlighting two hypotheses to answer the research questions.

From one side the scholars argue that actors in IR are rational actors, mindful of their material interests. This rule applies both to states and the IOs – both are the budget-maximisers. On the micro-level their bureaucrats maintain the gaps between their formal structures and actual work activities. Ultimately the individual rationality especially at the micro – level overpowers social expectations, norms of the coordinated groups, organizations etc.⁹ Although the actors are willing to cooperate, they are always cautious of their interests. This would be point of the neoliberal view. The other perspective is close to the constructivist one. The scholars emphasize the impact of rules, norms, and models, appropriate behaviour. Power still plays a great role, but what is taken into account is the IOs' and states' behaviour. The scholars also suggest that relatively static norms or world culture dictate the behaviours of organizations, but also states.¹⁰

According to both theories, IOs are either created by states, or by some other actors and powers, but still IOs have some general rules for the cooperation within the specific IOs scope. Already this fact (especially from the procedural approach) gives the IOs a legitimacy to create, for example, the development or the humanitarian politics in the IR. Both theories acknowledge that rules of exercising power within both IR and IOs exist, which means that legitimacy may be bestowed upon IOs that follow their own long-acknowledged rules, however (in-) effective or

⁹ CORMIER, Ben. Analyzing if and how international organizations contribute to the sustainable development goals: Combining power and behavior [online]. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*. 2018, p. 549.

¹⁰ Ibid..

(un-) equal those rules might be.¹¹ In this case study the legitimacy is given in regard to the SDGs politics.

Furthermore, both theories stress that the IOs influence states. In case of neoliberal institutionalism, however, states have their interests and they are willing to cooperate within the IR. Therefore, IOs have a regulative influence - they create the conditions in which cooperation is possible, but they do not influence the interests of states. According to constructivism, the influence can be even more profound. The IOs have the constitutive influence on states – they can change the identity and interests of states.¹²

In the research I examine, whether the implementation is driven by the states, so that they decide on the means of implementation independently (neoliberal institutionalism), or the implementation is somewhat affected\ influenced by the IOs; thus, the process of the implementation is dependent on the IOs (constructivism).

1.1. Neoliberal institutionalism

In the early 1980s the liberal theory in the IR, which stressed the plurality of actors within international arena was reformulated to the so-called “neoliberalism”. The emphasis had been put on the role of state as a main actor within the international relations. Due to the focus on so called "regimes", institutions in the broad sense and the cooperation of states dependent on those institutions, the term "institutionalism" or "neoliberal institutionalism" is also sometimes used to refer to it.

To go deeper into the understanding of the role of IOs and states in the international arena, we first need to figure out, what is meant by the regimes and the IOs from the perspective of neoliberal institutionalism. According to it, international regimes are the sets of implicit and explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures in accordance with which the

¹¹ Ibid., p. 548.

¹² KARLAS, Jan. *Současné teorie mezinárodních institucí (The Contemporary Theories of International Institutions)* IN MEZINÁRODNÍ VZTAHY 1/2007. 2007, p. 72-78.

expectations of actors in a particular area are formed.¹³ International organizations can be part of a regime, one organization can even be part of several regimes, and vice versa. The biggest difference between IOs and regimes is that IOs can act on their own. International regimes provide a measurement for assessing right and wrong behaviour that is binding in international relations for the cooperation of autonomous actors. Regimes contain rules for exchanging information and, finally, shorten negotiation processes. Regimes determine the decision-making rules for a given problem area, and thus make it easier for governments to act, freeing them from the search for alternatives.¹⁴ The neoliberal scholars look at the cooperation through the lenses of patterns of behaviour of the actors, therefore, cooperation is a set of practices, expectations, and shared beliefs. Concept of international regimes is useful for understanding patterns of international cooperation on the one hand and discord in IR on the other hand.¹⁵ Thus, an IO is an institution, it is a permanent set of rules, which define appropriate behaviour and norms. Norms represent standards of good conduct for actors with a certain identity. The main difference between the institutions as such and the norms is that the norms define the various standards of conduct, while the institutions emphasize how the rules of conduct are structured and interconnected.¹⁶ It is also important to note that the norms in the neoliberal institutionalism are not moral. They claim, being a neoliberal does not mean pursuing the moral ideal, in contrast to the second theory – constructivism, according to which the standards and norms are both moral and contingent.

Talking about the neoliberal institutionalist governance of IOs, the scholars also refer to the so-called orchestration, meaning that the IOs or orchestrators create the multi-actor system of soft and indirect governance, geared toward shared Goals that the single actors cannot achieve on their own. The main governance goal of the IOs is to regulate target actor (either states or private entities) behaviour and to provide the public good.¹⁷ According to the “father” of neoliberalism R. Keohane, IOs serve the states to create a space for the cooperation. It “...occurs when states whose

¹³ KARLAS, Jan. *Současné teorie mezinárodních institucí (The Contemporary Theories of International Institutions)* IN *MEZINÁRODNÍ VZTAHY* 1/2007. 2007, p.67-68.

¹⁴ WAISOVÁ, Šárka. *Teorie mezinárodních režimů (Theory of international regimes)* IN *MEZINÁRODNÍ VZTAHY* 2/2002. 2002, p. 49-66.

¹⁵ KEOHANE, Robert. *After Hegemony*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1984, p. 49-84.

¹⁶ KARLAS, Jan. *Současné teorie mezinárodních institucí (The Contemporary Theories of International Institutions)* IN *MEZINÁRODNÍ VZTAHY* 1/2007. 2007, p.67-68.

¹⁷ ABBOTT, Kenneth W., Philipp GENSCHEL, Duncan SNIDAL and Bernhard ZANGL. *International organizations as orchestrators*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2015, p. 4 -5.

autonomous pursuit of self-interested goals would not automatically facilitate that of other states, negotiate coordinated policy and adhere to it, so as not to hinder each other...”¹⁸ Moreover, according to the principal-agent theory (where principal is a state, the agent is an IO) of the neoliberal institutionalism, relationship is defined by the contractual arrangements which provide a delegation of certain policy function from a principal to an agent. Whilst still the principals (states) endeavour to keep control over the supranational bodies.¹⁹ The IOs are perceived as products of state interests or dominant ideas and practices. They serve states while they provide the increasing information-sharing, decreasing uncertainty, and motivating the state actors towards the realization of mutual gains through the clarification and imposition of rules.²⁰ Furthermore, the neoliberal scholars assert that, although the act of sharing the information requires the delegation of some autonomy from the principal to the agent, this degree of IOs’ autonomy is rather minimal.²¹ The neoliberal institutionalist perspective is state centric, meaning that it pays great attention to the structure of state interest and collective action problems, which result from it.²² Although in this perspective it is institutions, who regulate state behaviour, it is the states who decide how this behaviour looks like. The states are, therefore, rational autonomous actors. The neoliberal theorists insist that studies of international regimes are consistent with the principles of sovereignty. Within the regimes, the states are capable to express their preferences and interests and pursue them, but at the same time not damaging the interests of others. It is also a space for the states to rationally change the interests at any time.²³

Originally, the IOs are established by states. Within the IOs states work out and express their common interests and values. The IOs’ actions are constrained by a charge to act in a common interest. The institutionalists also claim, that IOs carry out the function of community organization to develop and express the community norms and aspirations. The creation and development of IOs represent the common decisions by states to change their mutually constituted environment,

¹⁸ KEOHANE, Robert. *After Hegemony*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1984, p. 49-84.

¹⁹ RITTBERGER, Volker, Bernhard ZANGL and Andreas KRUCK. *International organization*. 2nd edition. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. 2012, p. 23-24.

²⁰ CORMIER, Ben. Analyzing if and how international organizations contribute to the sustainable development goals: Combining power and behavior [online]. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*. 2018, p. 547

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 549.

²² KARLAS, Jan. *Současné teorie mezinárodních institucí (The Contemporary Theories of International Institutions)* IN MEZINÁRODNÍ VZTAHY 1/2007. 2007, p.67-68.

²³ KEOHANE, Robert. *After Hegemony*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1984, p. 49-84

and therefore themselves. The institutionalist theory claims that IOs can affect the interests and values of states, but these processes are triggered and shaped by the states themselves. Moreover, the IOs are limited by the institutional processes.²⁴ Especially in these possibilities and limitations the liberal institutionalists (rationalists) and constructivists are contrasting.

The IOs have regulative influence on the states: Institutions help states eliminate problems of collective action. Thus, according to neoliberalism, the institutions have, in principle, regulatory influence, as they allow states to act in a way that leads to problems of collective action and cooperation.²⁵ In this regard, the states would incline the soft law as the legalization mechanism. To ensure the compliance the IOs can theoretically intervene in the domestic politics by integrating managerial and enforcement views of the process, but rather in a way of soft power: “Mobilization of shame” as an instrumental sense of enhancing reputational and other incentives, forums in which the suspicious non-compliant actions can be explained. Soft legalization allows states to adapt their commitments. This leads to flexibility in implementation domestically considering the states’ local political and economic consequences of an agreement.²⁶

Even though in overall the institutionalist rather believe in non-interference of the IOs, still the IOs can directly enforce some mechanisms, such as national reporting (where failure to report itself is indicated as improper behaviour) or technical assistance (where the critical enforcement is needed).²⁷ According to the theory, IOs can participate in the implementation, but rather passively or indirectly, by monitoring, gathering information. Active participation in form of priorities setting defining the goals and how the implementation should look like – does not take place, according to this theory.

All in all, according to neoliberal institutionalists - state is an independent, autonomous rational actor that is willing to cooperate within the IOs and endorse their own interests. The states therefore are not willing the organizations to interfere into the state processes and determine the way and form of their politics and specific policies themselves in accordance with the government interest.

²⁴ ABBOTT, Kenneth W., Philipp GENSCHER, Duncan SNIDAL and Bernhard ZANGL. *International organizations as orchestrators*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2015, p.24-26.

²⁵ KARLAS, Jan. *Současné teorie mezinárodních institucí (The Contemporary Theories of International Institutions)* IN MEZINÁRODNÍ VZTAHY 1/2007. 2007, p. 72 -75.

²⁶ ABBOTT, Kenneth W. and Duncan SNIDAL. *Hard and Soft Law in International Governance*. *International Organization*, vol. 54, no. 3. 2000 [online]. 2000, p.441–450.

²⁷ ABBOTT, Kenneth W. and Duncan SNIDAL. *Why States Act through Formal International Organizations* [online]. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 1998, p.24-26.

The IOs participate in the process at the national level, but rather passively in a form of the data monitoring, national reporting or SDGs related information gathering. The first hypothesis based on the neoliberal institutionalist perspective is:

H1: The way of implementation of SDGs is determined mainly by the state government and its preferences. The IOs and their bureaucracies are in the implementation involved in a rather passive and indirect way (in particular by monitoring and information gathering). The way of implementation is, therefore, dependent mainly on the state.

1.2. Constructivism

Another prominent school in the theories of international organizations is constructivism. Constructivism emphasizes the social nature of international relations and rejects the concept of the state as a rational actor. It differs from the institutionalism in two main aspects: The norms/rules-based governance in the IR and the structure of the IOs.²⁸

The first distinguishing point in constructivism is that state and society actors follow not only the “logic of expected consequences”, as in institutionalism, but also the so called “logic of appropriateness”²⁹, meaning that they follow the norms and rules that should be followed in the international sphere. From the constructivist perspective the states behave in accordance with the norms which constitute their interests and even identities. Essentially, the IOs are created depending on whether there is a consensus over values and norms within the participating societies and on common basic perception of the problem. The “norm researchers” perceive the IOs as products of states but established within the broader structural forces of both states and IOs. From the perspective of this theory norms are “the common understandings and practices that shape [IOs'] beliefs, interests, and behaviours in pursuit of governance”, which do set the context for the

²⁸ RITTBERGER, Volker, Bernhard ZANGL and Andreas KRUCK. International organization. 2nd edition. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. 2012, p .25-30.

²⁹ Ibid..

politics and policy establishment. Ultimately IOs become the product of a normative environment to accomplish the purpose they were created for.³⁰

The second distinctive point is in structure. It is the IOs, which are like bureaucracies, established to accomplish collective goals and to spread values by creation of social knowledge and expertise.³¹ Bureaucracies are the carriers of certain knowledge that classify, label, and invest meaning in information. They are given the authority to decide what information should be collected at the outset. By doing so they create the social reality as they carry the information - collect and store files and data. Simply, they create the rules that define, categorize, and classify the world. Consequently, their knowledge not only reproduces social reality, it also constructs that reality.³² In comparison to neoliberalism - the state centric theory- it is the states, who create the rules, therefore, also the reality. According to the constructivist scholars, IOs define what are the shared international tasks, they create new actors and categories, new interests for actors, define the work these actors should do, giving it meaning and normative value. Barnett and Finnemore further highlight three mechanisms by which this construction of reality becomes evident. First, IOs categorize problems, actors, and actions. Second, they fix meaning to these categories. Third, they diffuse norms and rules according to these meanings and categories, shaping and constraining how other actors behave.³³ These mechanisms give the definition the appropriate behaviour and actions for international actors to do in the IR.

Therefore, the IOs are not just the reflection of the state interests, as from neoliberal institutionalist perspective, but they are the autonomous and powerful independent actors.³⁴ The constructivists especially tend to humanitarianism and the shifts of focus to if and how familiar domestic moral obligations extend internationally. In their perspective the states are also significant actors to

³⁰ CORMIER, Ben. Analyzing if and how international organizations contribute to the sustainable development goals: Combining power and behavior [online]. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*. 2018, p.550

³¹ BARNETT, Michael N. and Martha FINNEMORE. *The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations* [online]. *International Organization*. 1999, p. 718-719.

³² CORMIER, Ben. Analyzing if and how international organizations contribute to the sustainable development goals: Combining power and behavior [online]. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*. 2018, p. 550.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 547 -548.

³⁴ BARNETT, Michael N. and Martha FINNEMORE. *The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations* [online]. *International Organization*. 1999, p. 700-702.

define humanitarianism, but still the dominant forms are to some degree both formed and theoretically modified by institutions such as IOs.³⁵

The theory is built on the belief that the power of IOs derives from their legitimacy and authority. Thus, the IOs can have the power to affect outcomes. Constructivism built upon the legitimacy which is referred to the idea that “evident effectiveness, fair and inclusive processes, and technical or rule-based behaviour grants power”. Meaning that IOs do have such legitimating characteristics and ultimately possess a position of authority in the IR. Furthermore, they are able to use “discursive resources” to influence others' behaviours.³⁶ The ideas of constructivists regarding the influence of institutions are among the main ideas of constructivism as such. One of the key features of constructivism is that this approach gives institutions a constitutive function. According to this, institutions constitute the identities and interests of states.³⁷ Thus, the constructivist view is that the IOs do not do what the creators intend them to do. Based on the arguments about bureaucracy and sociological institutionalist approaches to organizational behaviour, the scholars argue that the rational-legal authority that IOs embody gives them power independent of the states that created them.³⁸ Thus, the relationship is not driven by the state interest, but rather other way round – state interests and behaviours are constituted by the international community.

Furthermore, the constructivists are quite definite in the mechanisms through which IOs may have influence on their members' societies: Firstly, through the civil society to adhere to global norms (for instance, human rights); secondly, through the persuasion and discourse within the negotiations among states; thirdly and most importantly for the purposes of this research paper, through the promotion of values and engagement in persuasive communicative action of the bureaucracies of IOs with the member states. In this sense, the IOs act as the “teachers of norms”, addressing the norms and rules to the states. The IOs, being bureaucracies and having the bureaucratic authority, according to the theory, determine properties, such as standardization,

³⁵ CORMIER, Ben. Analyzing if and how international organizations contribute to the sustainable development goals: Combining power and behavior [online]. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*. 2018, p. 547

³⁶ BARNETT, Michael N. and Martha FINNEMORE. *Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics*. Cornell University Press [online]. 2004, p. 5.

³⁷ KARLAS, Jan. Současné teorie mezinárodních institucí (The Contemporary Theories of International Institutions) IN MEZINÁRODNÍ VZTAHY 1/2007. 2007, p. 75-78.

³⁸ BARNETT, Michael N. and Martha FINNEMORE. *The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations* [online]. International Organization. 1999, p. 700-702.

proceduralism, release from other environmental influences and path dependency.³⁹ They are often motivated by the bureaucratic inertia and budget maximization to solve changing problems with static rules, procedures, and solutions.⁴⁰

According to Finnemore and Barnett (one of the main contributors to the constructivist theory in IR), IOs effect the domestic politics and interfere in it, when there is a need in accordance with the norms of the international society (for instance, UN was forcing the developing countries to establish certain scientific agencies).⁴¹ Doing this, the IOs exercise power over the states.⁴² Finnemore explicitly draws an explicit example how the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (further referred to as “UNESCO“) had a direct influence on states by showing the states the importance of bureaucratic units which deal with the science and taught of how important the scientific approaches to policy are.⁴³ Another example is the World Bank (further referred to as “WB“), which has a special role in defining appropriate development-related behaviour. Simply, the WB has its own vision of what is good development policy, which is projected across borrowers and lenders alike as appropriate policy. WB, therefore, by its authority influences directly the development discourse, norms, and formation of state interests, because WB finances the states, which must follow the WB’s policy prescriptions in order to get the financial resources.⁴⁴ The second hypothesis based on the constructivist perspective is following:

H2: The IOs and their bureaucracies tend to infer in the process of implementation of SDGs on the domestic level, primarily by setting the priorities, and actively communicating about the implementation of the SDG related policies with the affected states. The way of implementation is, therefore, dependent not only on the state, but also on the IOs and their bureaucracies.

³⁹ RITTBERGER, Volker, Bernhard ZANGL and Andreas KRUCK. International organization. 2nd edition. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. 2012, p. 28-30.

⁴⁰ CORMIER, Ben. Analyzing if and how international organizations contribute to the sustainable development goals: Combining power and behavior [online]. Journal of Organizational Behavior. 2018, p.550.

⁴¹ FINNEMORE, Martha. International organizations as teachers of norms: the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization and science policy [online]. International Organization. 1993, p. 565-598.

⁴² BARNETT, Michael N. and Martha FINNEMORE. The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations [online]. International Organization. 1999, 718-719.

⁴³ FINNEMORE, Martha. International organizations as teachers of norms: the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization and science policy [online]. International Organization. 1993, p. 565-598.

⁴⁴ CORMIER, Ben. Analyzing if and how international organizations contribute to the sustainable development goals: Combining power and behavior [online]. Journal of Organizational Behavior. 2018, p. 550.

1.3. Methodology

This case study is of qualitative nature. The primary sources of data are official documents, such as Czech government statements, ruling party documents (ANO and CSSD), strategic frameworks, reports of the IOs etc.; supplemented by academic literature and analysis of media on this issue. The second sources of information are semi-structured interviews. Therefore, descriptive content analysis was selected as the most appropriate methodology for the interpretation of the textual materials. The interviews were conducted with officials and actors from the governmental, non-governmental and business sector. In total there were 16 interviews conducted. From the government sector the interviewed were from several ministries, responsible for the SDGs policies implementation, such as the Ministry of Environment (3 interviews), Ministry of Regional Development (2 interviews), Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (1 interview), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1 interview) of Czech Republic. Additionally, several respondents were from the Government Council for Sustainable Development of the Czech Republic both from the governmental (some respondents from the ministries are also part of the Council) and non-governmental side, namely with the representatives of the umbrella association of 86 important ecological non-governmental organizations (further referred to as “NGOs”) in the Czech Republic – “Green Circle”⁴⁵, who are part of the Council (3 interviews). One interview took place in the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament (1 interview). One interview was conducted with the representative of the UN office in Czech Republic (1 interview). Two other respondents were from the two NGOs “Institute of the Circular Economy”⁴⁶ (1 interview) and the “Centre for Transport and Energy”⁴⁷ (1 interview). Finally, two interviews took place in “SAP” (1 interview) and “Deloitte” (1 interview) from the business side to find out the relationship between the government sphere and business; whether the two sides are related in regard to SDGs. To protect the anonymity of respondents, the names are hidden. The questions were conceptualized to map the process of implementation of SDGs in Czech Republic, to find out how and to what extent the interviewed stakeholders are involved in the process, to identify which actors are mainly responsible for the SDGs implementation in Czech Republic, which actors influence it at most and to investigate to which extent the IOs affect or also interfere into the implementation process in Czech Republic.

⁴⁵ In Czech “Zelený kruh”.

⁴⁶ In Czech “Institut Cirkulární Ekonomiky”.

⁴⁷ In Czech “Centrum pro dopravu a energetiku”.

The full list of questions can be found in the Appendix 1 as an English version, and Appendix 2 as a Czech version. For this Czech Republic case study, three significant global actors were picked to investigate their influence within the implementation process from the perspective of three types of organizations: The UN as an international organization, the OECD as an intergovernmental one and the EU as a political and economic union.

The main indicators for the measurement of further suggested hypotheses are the state documents, IOs' documents and the results from the conducted interview. Based on the mentioned sources' interpretation, I will be able to conclude if the hypotheses can be confirmed.

Throughout the chapter 3 the hypothesis H1 will be tested. From the neoliberal institutionalist perspective, because the state interests dictate IOs' behaviour, they somewhat limit the autonomous effect of IOs on political outcomes both in the international sphere and locally.⁴⁸ SDGs is an agenda of a bottom - up type. Such a not-binding approach has enabled broader participation and support for the SDGs within the international regime, therefore, the states could have decided in accordance to their preferences, to what degree the agenda is going to be implemented within the state politics. However, such flexibility comes with several risks: First, with the risk of unbalanced attention given to the SDGs. Governments may choose to prioritize certain SDGs over others based on their specific preferences, national policies, political or economic interests.⁴⁹ Second, there is also a risk of when states, once committed to meeting the goals, disregard accomplishing this by not including the Goals into the state politics. And finally, states can even refuse to commit to the goals. Therefore, the hypothesis H1 can be evaluated on several units of measurement: Based on the government documents, which are focused on the state priorities, and conducted interviews (both with the governmental and non-governmental actors), the government would hypothetically suggest the prioritization of SD and commitment to meeting the SDGs agenda; the national government would further suggest the vision, approach and methods for the implementation of SDGs in Czech Republic; IOs would not interfere within the

⁴⁸ CORMIER, Ben. Analyzing if and how international organizations contribute to the sustainable development goals: Combining power and behavior [online]. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*. 2018, p. 549.

⁴⁹ FORESTIER, Oana and Rakhyun E. KIM. Cherry-picking the Sustainable Development Goals: Goal prioritization by national governments and implications for global governance [online]. *Sustainable Development*. 2020, p. 1-10.

process of implementation actively, but rather passively in a question of data monitoring/gathering, providing a space for the further communication of states within the forums.

Consequently, throughout the chapter 4 the hypothesis H2 will be tested. Based on the constructivist theoretical explanation, IOs are the autonomous actors, constituting the norms, values and hence the identity of the member states. They tend to infer in the process of the implementation of the policies on the domestic level, for example, set the priorities and be actively involved in the processes. For the hypothesis H2 testing the following units of measurement in a form of dichotomies are suggested: The bureaucracies of the IOs are rather passive or active in communicating with the state representatives; the bureaucracies merely monitor the state of the implementation or they establish the active communication as a dialogue to implement the goals; the bureaucracies respect the way the states set up the implementation process of the SDGs or they endeavour to recommend the mechanisms, tools, policies – simply, means of implementation to the states.

Another means of the IOs to effect the states' SD politics can be hidden in creating a set of global indicators. Measuring and quantification of the performance of the social, political, and economic is creating a new ontology of the reality. It is a highly important tool which quantification and statistical reasoning helped to develop. Especially such area of the SD as “good governance”, which is not quantifiable from the first sight, becomes with the help of the statistical knowledge at once possible to research, observe and develop. The quantification and statistical knowledge have become a means of governing. Therefore, such tools as indicators, measurement and monitoring can also serve as a coordination of collective action at both national and global level. When creating a set of global measurement of SD globally, IOs create an ontological reality, norms of measurement, consequently, norms of SD worldwide.⁵⁰ As Malito demonstrates, “indicators serve the IOs and states for judging the performance mainly of the states, they can also serve as the assessment of compliance with mandated standards and also as a tool for the framing or addressing a certain problem, for example, corruption.”⁵¹

⁵⁰ MALITO, Debora Valentina, Gaby UMBACH and Nehal BHUTA, ed. *The Palgrave handbook of indicators in global governance* [online]. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. 2017, p. 1-6.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.7.

This can be interpreted as an attempt of the IOs' effect on the states towards reaching the SDGs in accordance with the global SD norms. However, the scholars suggest that such means of collective action across the bigger territorial scope, for example the globe, demands extensive kinds of knowledge, which is hard to gather.⁵²

For the theoretical frame several publications were reviewed, such as the *International organization* by Volker Rittberger and his colleagues, Jan Karlas' publication *The Contemporary Theories of International Institutions*, an article *Analyzing if and how international organizations contribute to the sustainable development goals: Combining power and behaviour* by Cormier Ben and other for both theories. On the neoliberal perspective one of the most comprehensible title is the *International organizations as orchestrators* by Kenneth W. Abbott and his colleagues, but also several articles from already mentioned Kenneth W. Abbott, Duncan Snidal as well as the publications by the "founder" of the neoliberal theory in the International Relations Robert Keohane. For the constructivist theoretical part, the publications of two main scholars of constructivist school Martha Finnemore and Michael Barnett were selected. I also considered for necessary to introduce the reader to the sustainable development concept in the theoretical part. The implementation of SDGs section is dealing mainly with the documents, such as the Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030 (further referred to as "CR 2030")⁵³ and Implementation plan of the Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030 (further referred to as „the Implementation plan“)⁵⁴ and other relevant documents. Certain details of the process were also consulted during the interviews with the experts on the topic. For the third and fourth chapter the primary sources of data are official documents, such as Czech government statements, ruling party documents (ANO and CSSD), strategic frameworks, reports of the IOs and academic literature which brings closer to topic of global governance and its effects on the national state governance. When it comes to sources, even within the SD community, there are not many analyses which had been done on the issue of IOs' interference into the states' governments politics. Therefore, for the purposes of the research, a part of the conducted interviews was dedicated to the IOs' effects within Czech

⁵² Ibid., p. 1-6.

⁵³ CZECH REPUBLIC, Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, Department of Sustainable Development Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030. Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030 [online]. Praha: Polygrafie of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic in Prague, 2017.

⁵⁴ CZECH REPUBLIC, Ministry of the Environment. Implementační plán Strategického rámce Česká republika 2030 (Implementation Plan of the Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030) [online]. Praha: Ministerstvo životního prostředí, 2018

Republic politics. Additionally, the relevant IOs' executive documents, reports, but also few academic analyses on the SDGs policies were reviewed.

Initially there was one more research question raised in the master thesis project: Whether there is a correlation between the (un)-successfulness of the SDGs and (non)-interference of the International Organizations on the national level. However, throughout the analysis the decision was made not to further investigate on this issue. The reason is hidden in the inappropriateness for this question methodology which was chosen for the whole analysis - qualitative descriptive content analysis and in the lack of the indicators for the measurement of the (un)-successfulness of the SDGs policies. Further elaboration and identification of such indicators would distract from the focus of this research.

2. Implementation of SDGs in Czech Republic

2.1. Sustainable development

Before elaborating on the implementation process of SDGs related policies in Czech Republic, it is necessary to figure out what is sustainable development itself. This section will provide an explanation of what are sustainable development and SDGs.

The idea of sustainable development is not that young. It has a history of around fifty years and has become a significant paradigm shift of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. It all started with a concept of eco-development, which appeared in the 1960s, which did not yet emphasize a socio-economic and anti-poverty development but remains a precursor to the concept of sustainable development. The sustainability development has established in the early 1970s.⁵⁵ SD was concretely defined “to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development or also known as Brundtland Commission.⁵⁶ SD is a process of improving the

⁵⁵ BARROW, C.J. Sustainable Development [online]. The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology. 2018 John Wiley & Sons. 2018, p.2

⁵⁶ Ibid.

life and life standards, while not destroying the ecosystem and not causing such problems as climate change, loss of biodiversity, deforestation, or the pollution of air, soil, and water.

It is noteworthy to mention, that although “SD” and “Sustainability” are often used as synonyms, many scholars suggest that the concepts slightly differ, since sustainability is the goal or endpoint of a process called sustainable development.⁵⁷ Meaning that while sustainability is a state, SD is a process. Sustainability in its turn means improving and sustaining a healthy economic, ecological and social system for human development.⁵⁸

In principle, SD bears a conflict due to two intellectual traditions: Limits versus growth. The former is the limit which nature presents; the latter is the increasing human material demand for further development. It can be elegantly presented as an environmental care “married” to development.⁵⁹

As it was already mentioned, SD is a certain intellectual paradigm shift in understanding relationships of humanity with nature and between people.⁶⁰ Because of the countless environmental problems, along with the socio-economic issues to do with poverty and inequality and general concerns about the development of human being on our planet, the concept of the SD is strongly linked to environmental and socio-economic issues.⁶¹ It is firmly believed that society needs to change. And although there is no single unified philosophy of sustainable development; there is no sustainable “developmentism”⁶², it is commonly acknowledged that SD has three dimensions of change. It is the change within the relationships among the three pillars of SD: The environment, the economy and the society.⁶³ (See figure 1).

From the economic perspective there are three main activities that are carried out in an economy, such as production, distribution and consumption. However, blind growth of them and the revenue

⁵⁷ MENSAH, Justice and Sandra RICART CASADEVALL. Sustainable development: Meaning, history, principles, pillars, and implications for human action: Literature review. *Cogent Social Sciences*. 2019, p. 6.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.5.

⁵⁹ BARROW, C.J. Sustainable Development [online]. *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology*. 2018 John Wiley & Sons. 2018, p.3.

⁶⁰ HOPWOOD, Bill, MELLOR, Mary and Geoff O’BRIEN. Sustainable development: mapping different approaches [online]. 2005. *Sustainable Development*. 2005, p.38.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.39.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.47.

⁶³ MENSAH, Justice and Sandra RICART CASADEVAL. Sustainable development: Meaning, history, principles, pillars, and implications for human action: Literature review. *Cogent Social Sciences*. 2019, p. 9-11.

focused accounting framework distorts values, society and environment. The growing demand for goods and services continues to drive economy and markets, while vital cost components, for example the impact of depletion and pollution, are ignored. The destructive, one-sided mindset of the economic sector, which affects the environment, requires that preferences should be given to solutions that are most equitable, lucrative, environmental and social-growth friendly.⁶⁴

The social perspective covers such notions as empowerment, equity, accessibility, participation, cultural identity, institutional stability, quality of life, of education, health systems, etc.. According to this pillar, the people themselves are of great importance since development is about people. Social sustainability implies that the social human development and poverty reduction should neither entail unwarranted environmental destruction nor economic instability. Social sustainability goes hand-in-hand with many issues such as human rights, gender equity and equality, public participation and rule of law all of which promote peace and social stability for SD.⁶⁵

The last pillar of SD is the concept of environmental sustainability. It is a question of the natural environment and how it remains productive and resilient to support human life. The pillar

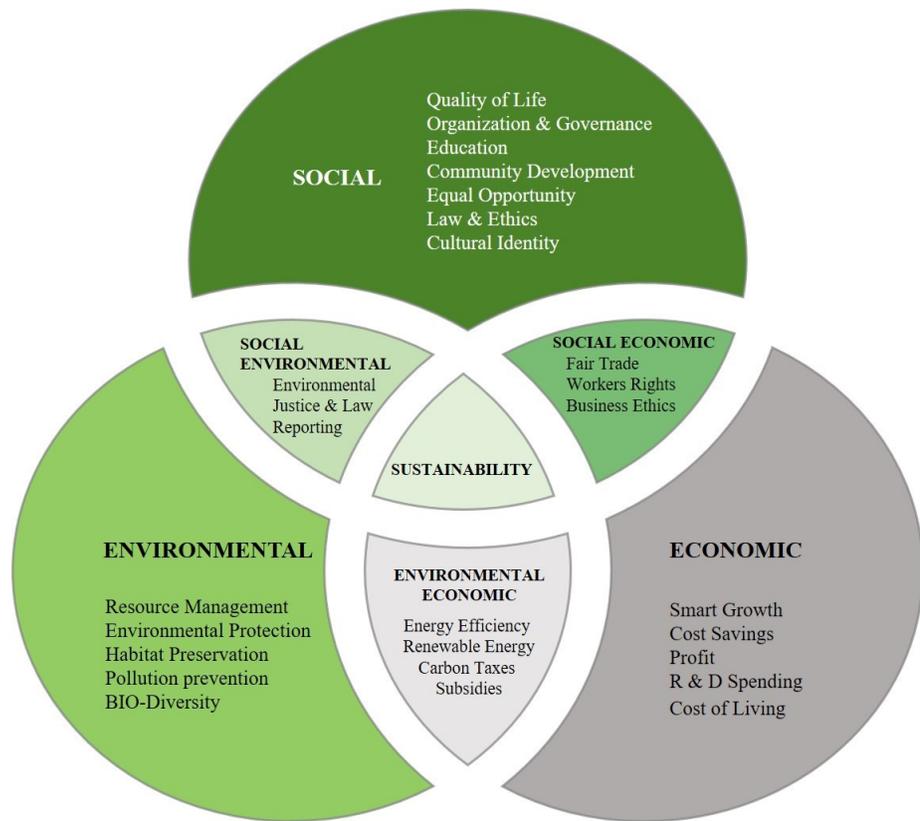


Figure 1. Three pillars of sustainable development.
 Source: Adapted by author from AMINUDDIN, Adam Shariff Adli and NAWAWI, Mohd Kamal Mohd. Investigation of the Philosophy Practised in Green and Lean Manufacturing Management. 2013. International Journal of Customer Relationship Marketing and Management.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

implies that the natural resources must not be overexploited and can be harvested no faster than they can be renewed or regenerated.⁶⁶ Especially it must be applied when it comes to the natural resources that cannot be replaced, such as natural gas and fossil fuels. Furthermore, waste and amount of pollution must be emitted no faster than they can be assimilated by nature. Currently, one of the main problems remain in the rate of biodiversity, because the loss exceeds the natural rate of extinction and climate change due to which a lot of species are predicted to modify.⁶⁷

For the introduction and implementation of SD, it is essential to have practical tools and methods. SD must be measured, monitored and planned to ensure effective strategies and good governance. The scholars of SD believe that SD must adopt a proactive approach, evaluating short term effects against long term effects. It needs to be coordinated at all levels in order to avoid negative spill-over effects. That means, when SD is pursued in one locality or sector, activities may threaten stewardship elsewhere. Commonly, SD planners, managers, policy advisors and governments are sought to “think globally and act locally”, however, not forgetting about the aid to those in the poverty.⁶⁸

Currently the world has agreed upon the Agenda 2030 or SDGs to meet SD. The Goals were developed not just by a certain group of experts but by an unprecedented global and participative priority-setting process, involving over a million people around the world through global surveys, reports and consultations in nearly 100 countries.⁶⁹

The agenda sets out 17 Goals for sustainable development, including eradicating poverty in all its forms around the world, eradicating hunger as well as ensuring a healthy life and improving its quality, ensuring equal access to inclusive and quality education. The SDGs agenda is global, they carry a “one world” feature, which means that sustainable development objectives should be reflected in the policies of all countries in the General Assembly.⁷⁰ Each of these 17 goals (See

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ BARROW, C.J. Sustainable Development [online]. The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology. 2018 John Wiley & Sons. 2018, p.4

⁶⁹ FRIEDMAN, Eric A. and Lawrence O. GOSTIN. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Achieving the Vision of Global Health with Justice [online]. Georgetown Law Faculty Publications and Other Works. 1777. 2016, p.5

⁷⁰ UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY. Transforming our world : the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [online], 21 October 2015, A/RES/70/1.

table 1) has its own specific targets, all -in-all 169, and 230 indicators that ought to be achieved by 2030.

Sustainable Development Goals
Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries.
Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

Table 1. Sustainable Development Goals

Source: UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY. Transforming our world : the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 21 October 2015, A/RES/70/1.

2.2. Institutional history of sustainable development in Czech Republic

Already more than 15 years sustainable development is one of the topics next to other relevant political issues in Czech Republic, which is addressed institutionally (see table 2). The first governmental agency which was dealing with sustainability was *The Government Council for Sustainable Development* within the *Government Office*. It was established in response to the

international activities in the field of sustainable development⁷¹ by Government Resolution No. 778 of 30 July 2003 as a permanent advisory, initiating and coordinating body of the Government of the Czech Republic in the area of sustainable development and strategic management. In 2006, the Council was transferred to the responsibility of the MoE. Until 2014 the main responsible agency was MoE, however, the changes came in June 2014 with the shift back the Government Office of the Czech Republic.⁷² In 2015 the world has been formally presented to the new Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the Heads of State and Government and High Representatives introduced the Sustainable Development Goals to their national governments. During an interview conducted on 22 June 2020, the representative of the Committee for Sustainable Development Indicators at the Government Council for Sustainable Development confirmed that this point of time between 2015 – 2017 was a favourable time for the SDGs due to the political formation, which welcomed the SDGs in the Czech Republic. Under the Office of the Government the SD topic gained even more importance.⁷³ On March 14, 2018, the government decided to transfer the performance and coordination of the sustainable development agenda from the Government Office to the MoE. At the same time, it approved the new statute of the Council, according to which the President of the Council is the Minister of the Environment and the Deputy Minister for Regional Development. The chairman of the Council is now the Minister of the Environment Richard Brabec and the vice-chairman is the Minister for Regional Development Klára Dostálová.⁷⁴

Year	Institution
2003 - 2006	Government Office
2006 - 2014	Ministry of Environment
2014 - 2018	Government Office
2018 – till now	Ministry of Environment

Table 2. Institutional background of SD in Czech Republic.

⁷¹ For instance, so called “Earth Summit” took place in Johannesburg, South Africa during 26 August - 4 September 2002. It was a World Summit on Sustainable Development, which brought together various stakeholders, including heads of State and Government, national delegates and leaders from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), businesses and other major groups focusing on economic development, social development and environmental protection at local, national, regional and global levels.

⁷² CZECH REPUBLIC, Ministry of the Environment. Rada vlády pro udržitelný rozvoj. Ministerstvo životního prostředí [online]. © 2008–2020 Ministerstvo životního prostředí [Accessed 2020-05-05]. Available from: https://www.mzp.cz/cz/rada_vlady_pro_udrzitelny_rozvoj

⁷³ Representative of the Committee for Sustainable Development Indicators, Government Council for Sustainable Development of the Czech Republic, Ministry of Environment of Czech Republic, interview by author, Prague, 22.06.2020.

⁷⁴ CZECH REPUBLIC, Ministry of the Environment. Rada vlády pro udržitelný rozvoj. Ministerstvo životního prostředí [online]. © 2008–2020 Ministerstvo životního prostředí [Accessed 2020-05-05]. Available from: https://www.mzp.cz/cz/rada_vlady_pro_udrzitelny_rozvoj

2.3. Sustainable development interaction model in Czech Republic

At present the 2030 Agenda is in the responsibility of the Ministry of Environment of Czech Republic (see figure 2). The activities in regards to SD in the country are administratively and technically ensured by the Unit of Sustainable Development (further referred to as “SD Unit”) led by Jan Mareš at the Department of Environmental Policy and Sustainable Development led by Anna Pasková at the MoE.⁷⁵

From 2018 it is a main responsible body for transferring and managing the global SDGs to the Czech Republic politics. The SD Unit has several roles and duties. The two main duties of the SD Unit are communication and coordination of SDGs across Czech Republic. One of the goals of the SD Unit is to make the SDGs Agenda cross-sectional and mainstream as much as possible, thus, in 2019 a network of focal points covering all ministries was established.⁷⁶ The focal points is

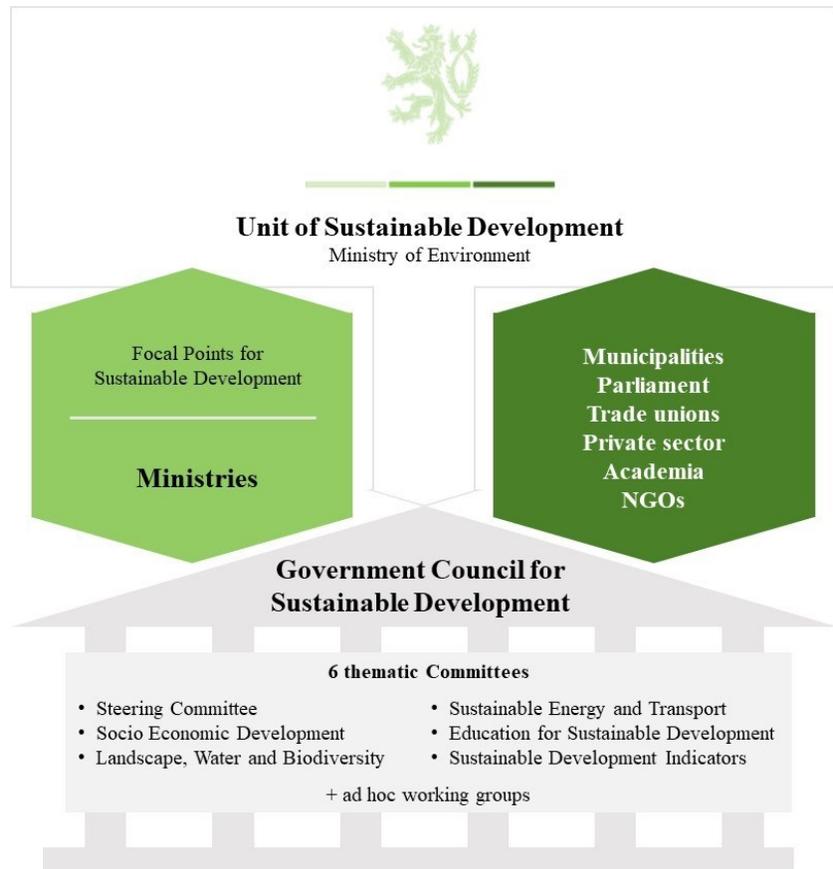


Figure 2. Sustainable development interaction model in Czech Republic.

a horizontal network within the public administration, created by the SD Unit. On each ministry there is a person appointed by the minister who communicates with the SD Unit, which simplifies the communication within the ministries. The communication with the focal points is less strictly

⁷⁵ More information on sustainable development, the Czech Republic 2030 and other activities of MoE and the Government Council for Sustainable Development available from www.cr2030.cz and the Facebook profile “Udržitelný rozvoj” (“Sustainable Development”) available from <https://www.facebook.com/udrzitelnyrozvoj>.

⁷⁶ Czech Republic. European Sustainable Development Network | ESDN [online]. © BMNT 2020 [Accessed 2020-05-10]. Available from: <https://www.sd-network.eu/?k=country%20profiles&s=single%20country%20profile&country=Czech%20Republic#basic>

formal, than the usual communication with the state organ through the secretariat: Emails, telephone conversation, meetings, etc. For example, if the SD Unit needs a document or to communicate on a specific issue, the focal point would be a person to communicate with. This person then further communicates on this issue within the respective ministry itself. The focal point can also turn to the SD Unit about some specific regard. The main role of the SD Unit therefore lies in the coordination of the network of focal points, the processing of tasks for ministries, requesting their feedback and outputs of policies at the ministries.⁷⁷ The SD Unit also analyses the consistency of departmental action in relation to the specific objectives of the CR 2030 (the Strategic Framework) based on a review of links between specific objectives and departmental measures⁷⁸, which are in the implementation document. For this purpose, it also follows a plan of the general government's legislative work plan, as well as the non-legislative tasks.⁷⁹

Another key role within the SD interaction model is played by the Government Council for Sustainable Development. It is a permanent advisory, initiative and coordinating body of the Government for the areas of sustainable development, strategic management and long-term priorities. The Council for Sustainable Development is composed of representatives of ministries, the Office of the Government, the Parliament of the Czech Republic, social partners, non-governmental and non-profit organizations as well as the academic community. The Council currently has 39 members, which gather 2-3 times per year. The main tasks of the Council are:

- Implementation of the Strategic Framework of the Czech Republic 2030 and the UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development
- Discussion on the Report on Quality of Life and its sustainability and the Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which evaluate the fulfilment of measures and indicator sets

⁷⁷ Representative of the Unit of Sustainable Development, Ministry of Environment of Czech Republic (2), interview by author, Prague, 12.06.2020.

⁷⁸ In Czech "opatření"

⁷⁹ CZECH REPUBLIC, Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, Department of Sustainable Development Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030. Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030 [online]. Praha: Polygrafie of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic in Prague. 2017, p. 114.

- Methodological coordination of conceptual documents⁸⁰

The Government Council for Sustainable Development has set up thematic committees and working groups for ongoing work. The Council can set up the new committees, or repeal and renew them. Currently there are 6 committees and ad hoc working groups (See Figure 3).

During an interview conducted on 12 June 2020, the representative of the SD Unit, confirmed that several committees were repealed due to various factors that are elaborated in the following section. He explained, when the goals were created 2015-2016, the whole institutionalization model and set up had a spirit of start-up. One of the first steps which had to be done was the creation of a network and communication, with focus on how the committees settle, who is responsible for which area etc. Now the situation with the committees and working groups is stable, but recently several changes came into place. The Committee for Municipalities and the Committee for the coordination of positions of the Czech Republic on Sustainable development were repealed. In case of the Committee for Municipalities, two ministries MoE and the Ministry of Regional Development (further referred to as “MRD”) have been implementing two strategic documents: The Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030 and the Regional Development Strategy 2021+. The MRD created a participatory robust network for the preparation and further implementation of the agenda after 2021, covered thematically, and by type of municipalities. It turned out that the same issues at both mentioned ministries within the mentioned strategic documents were addressed. Having decided to create a joint project that covers the 2030 Agenda and the Ministry of Regional Development's Strategy for Rural Development, so called “Mechanisms for promoting sustainable development in the state report”⁸¹, the Committee was repealed. Since the introduction of the Focal point system, the Committee for the coordination of positions of the Czech Republic on Sustainable development was no longer necessary. Another change with regards to the committees’ functioning and the SD Unit in general, has occurred after 2018: The Working Party for the Agenda 2030 has appeared within the EU Council. This working group began to deal more and more with SDGs in the EU context. Since the foundation of the

⁸⁰ CZECH REPUBLIC, Ministry of the Environment. Rada vlády pro udržitelný rozvoj. Ministerstvo životního prostředí [online]. © 2008–2020 Ministerstvo životního prostředí [Accessed 2020-05-05]. Available from: https://www.mzp.cz/cz/rada_vlady_pro_udrzitelny_rozvoj

⁸¹ In Czech: „Mechanismy prosazování principů udržitelného rozvoje ve státní správě (PUDR)“

working group the growing number of instructions, mandates and framework positions have started to emerge, which must be considered in the SD Unit.⁸²

Apart from the administrative coordination and communication, the SD Unit collaborates with the public sphere, interest groups, NGOs, etc. Further elaboration is provided in the *Local participation* section (see section 2.7. Local participation).

2.4. Vision of Sustainable Development

Czech Republic's vision about SD is based on an internationally recognized approach. Sustainable development is a type of development that also seeks to eliminate or mitigate the negative effects of the current way of development of human society. Therefore, sustainable development takes into account not only economic growth, but also social values and natural resources. According to the vision, the central question, therefore, is how to preserve the quality of life and meet the needs of present generations without compromising the needs of future generations and other people.⁸³

The vision stems from two main approaches – quality of life and sustainability. Quality of life cannot be measured exclusively by economic indicators such as GDP; on the contrary, evaluating it requires monitoring of other aspects of human life as well, such as health, balance between work life and personal life, education and skills, interpersonal relationships, etc. Sustainability must be monitored and evaluated also in terms of resource and energy intensity.⁸⁴ For example, GNP increases even when we are stuck in a traffic jam and consuming fuel – the contribution made to the quality of life is at least debatable. Apart from a macroeconomic perspective, there are also individuals, families and societies and various aspects of their mutual interactions, which needs to be taken into account. Quality of life presumes investments into human potential as a basis for development.⁸⁵

⁸² Representative of the Unit of Sustainable Development, Ministry of Environment of Czech Republic (2), interview by author, Prague, 12.06.2020.

⁸³ CZECH REPUBLIC, Ministry of the Environment. Rada vlády pro udržitelný rozvoj. Ministerstvo životního prostředí [online]. © 2008–2020 Ministerstvo životního prostředí [Accessed 2020-05-05]. Available from: https://www.mzp.cz/cz/rada_vlady_pro_udrzitelny_rozvoj

⁸⁴ CZECH REPUBLIC, Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, Department of Sustainable Development Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030. Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030 [online]. Praha: Polygrafie of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic in Prague. 2017, p. 12.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 8.

Furthermore, Czech Republic's perspective on SD emphasizes the role of good and effective governance. In order to achieve real sustainable development, it is necessary to create coherent public policies in all their forms (strategies, laws, financial instruments). This can be achieved through fact-based decision-making and by improving the conditions for public participation so that a meaningful social dialogue can be established.⁸⁶

CR 2030 emphasizes several key principles, which Czech Republic should follow to achieve the sustainable future:⁸⁷

“Let us keep in mind that sustainable development is a complex and dynamic system”: Integrated manner and respect the need to maintain a complex and dynamic balance in time and space (balance between the three pillars of sustainable development via strategic planning and management).

“Let us support and maintain diversity”: Not only in natural ecosystems, but in social, economic, political spheres. the principles of partnership, equal opportunities, inclusion, preventative caution, cohesion and global responsibility.

“Let us respect basic human rights”: Basic values of human society.

“Let us participate, discuss, be transparent and seek non-violent conflict resolution”: Participative and deliberative conversations. Decisions asserted by force are not sustainable in the long-term perspective.

“Let us learn”: Cooperation between the public administration and science institutions. A quality system of education.

“Let us think globally and long term, but act locally”: Long term and looking at the local conditions.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ CZECH REPUBLIC, Ministry of the Environment. Udržitelný rozvoj. Ministerstvo životního prostředí [online]. © 2008–2020 Ministerstvo životního prostředí [Accessed 2020-05-10]. Available from: https://www.mzp.cz/cz/udrzitelny_rozvoj

⁸⁷ All principles IN CZECH REPUBLIC, Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, Department of Sustainable Development Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030. Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030 [online]. Praha: Polygrafie of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic in Prague. 2017.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

2.5. Documents

In December 2004, when the first governmental agency which was dealing with sustainability, the Government Council for Sustainable Development, began to operate, the first National Sustainable Development Strategy was adopted by the Czech Government, which had to be implemented on a voluntary basis. Nevertheless, the form of implementation plan, which was intended to emerge, was not adopted as framework for other strategic documents on national, regional and local levels areas that are decisive for long-term and sustainable development of the Czech Republic.⁸⁹ However, after the introduction of the SDGs by UN to the world, the government of Czech Republic reached a decision to update the Strategic Framework aligning it with the 2030 Agenda. During preparations of the new strategic document, the international community also adopted a new Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, with ambitious goals.⁹⁰

At the moment there are two main documents, upon which the SD is defined and is being implemented in Czech Republic – which are the Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030 and the Implementation plan of the Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030. The two documents combine two approaches to the implementation process. CR 2030 implies the procedural coverage, complemented by various other documents. The second approach considers material coverage, for which the Implementation plan is in charge.

2.5.1. CR 2030

CR 2030 itself does not replace the documents of individual ministries but rather goes hand-in-hand with other strategies and documents, defining areas that are crucial for long-term development of the country. The implementation of the goals of CR 2030 is dependent on the individual ministries. The Goals should be taken in consideration in regional and municipal policies. All national strategy papers, regional development strategies, concepts, programs which

⁸⁹ Czech Republic. European Sustainable Development Network | ESDN [online]. © BMNT 2020 [Accessed 2020-05-10]. Available from: <https://www.sd-network.eu/?k=country%20profiles&s=single%20country%20profile&country=Czech%20Republic#basic>

⁹⁰ CZECH REPUBLIC, Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, Department of Sustainable Development Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030. Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030 [online]. Praha: Polygrafie of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic in Prague, 2017, p. 9

regulate the daily life of Czech citizens and measures that have a structural impact on the long-term development of the Czech Republic. The compliance with the strategic and specific objectives of the CR 2030 claimed to be assessed. The result is declared to ensure the linkage between the comprehensive strategic document through sectoral and ministerial strategies at national and regional levels. The tool for tracking the compatibility of strategic goals at each level of government is the Strategy Database. The Strategy Database should be interconnected with data sources for monitoring indicators.⁹¹ However, during the interview with the representative of SD Unit, he confirmed, that incompleteness of SDGs on the ministries cannot be penalized. The SD Unit rather motivates and inspires them to fulfil the CR 2030 within their agenda.

The document is a Czech version of global SDGs benchmark, which is Agenda 2030. However, since Czech Republic is a developed country, the document is not converted one to one from the global agenda to Czech conditions. Thus, according to the CR 2030, from 169 global sub-goals, 114 are relevant internally and 55 are not. For the external support 135 sub-goals are relevant, 34 are not. It sets out 27 strategic goals and 97 targets intended to improve people's quality of life, that is wellbeing, with respect to the principles of sustainable development. There are 192 indicators.⁹² In six key areas it puts together the general goals. The areas contain the development achievement (what the country has accomplished), the current status (mentioning some challenges and risks, the country faces) and the future possibilities of further development in such areas as people and society, economic area, resilient ecosystems, life in regions and municipalities, global development and good governance.

1. People and society.

Currently, for the successfully working is considered the universal system of social protection, which serves as a contemporary "safety net", availability of public education system. There is also a low general income inequality and low unemployment rate. However, the rate of long-term unemployed within the total unemployment rate is growing. The current challenges are following. Certain population groups, such as the elderly or single-parent families, are endangered to be impoverished. There are gender inequalities in Czech society. One negative trend which is

⁹¹ Ibid, p. 112.

⁹² MARES, Jan. Strategické plány ČR a udržitelný rozvoj (Strategic plans CR and sustainable development) [prezentace] Praha: Poslanecká sněmovna, 19. únor 2019. [2019-02-19].

increasing is a trend of demographic ageing. To tackle this problem and other problems mentioned above further modern trends need to be developed such as progressive robotization and job market digitalization.⁹³ The goal of people and society policies must improve the quality of life of all citizens. The policies should go hand-in-hand with support for the family, environment and community development, improvement of quality of labour market, ability to eliminate inequalities, culture, delivery of education, and especially education on sustainability – there is a need to educate not only children, but also (and primary) the educators. Furthermore, the role of the quality of health care is emphasized, focusing on the preventive measures in health system, rather than the health problems solving within the society.

2. Economic model.

21st century economic growth is undoubtedly connected with modern trends as robotics and digitization. Albeit effective growth in these areas still depends on cooperation between the public, private and non-profit sectors. Structural changes in five areas are key to future growth - economic institutions, innovation, resource management, infrastructure and the public finance system.⁹⁴ The economy must grow without increasing consumption of resources and energy at the same pace. The policies in the economic model are aimed to cut the dependence of the societal growth on the growth of economic production.⁹⁵ To ensure the structural changes society needs to shift in value chains from materialistic economic perspective to the sustainable economic model with better management of resources: Energy efficiency, support for circular management, waste reduction and innovation, sustainable finances, sustainable traveling and infrastructure.

3. Resilient ecosystems

⁹³ CZECH REPUBLIC, Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, Department of Sustainable Development Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030. Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030 [online]. Praha: Polygrafie of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic in Prague, 2017, p. 13.

⁹⁴ CZECH REPUBLIC, Ministry of the Environment. Česká republika 2030, Ministerstvo životního prostředí [online]. © 2008–2020 Ministerstvo životního prostředí [Accessed 2020-05-12]. Available from: https://www.mzp.cz/cz/udrzitelny_rozvoj

⁹⁵ CZECH REPUBLIC, Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, Department of Sustainable Development Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030. Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030 [online]. Praha: Polygrafie of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic in Prague. 2017, p. 13.

Presently, the Czech landscape has to cope with the negative historical heritage of the 20th century⁹⁶, ecosystems are in the threatened state due to the intensive agriculture and forestry which lead to the soil degradation and decrease its ability to retain water. The landscape is more fragmented and less biologically diverse. Further problems are accelerated water runoff, increased erosion, the fact that substantial part of the surface water is contaminated by discharge from fields and by wastewater.⁹⁷ Another challenge is adaptation to climate change. The key steps for improvement are to advance the structure of the landscape with the ecosystem services focusing on water, soil, prevention of erosion; stimulate biodiversity and enhance more appropriate farming methods.⁹⁸

4. Municipalities and regions

Inequalities between municipalities and regions are currently growing. Suburbanization effects smaller settlements and villages. This leads to poorer availability of public services, forced mobility, increase in traffic in the urban areas etc. There are also various further problems at place such as an unclear situation in terms of competence between the national administration and municipal administration. To tackle the mentioned challenges in municipalities and regions there must be a network of services in the territory and cooperation among municipalities developed. The preference should be given to the emission-free transport to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions. In general, the cities and city-centres should be reurbanized in favour of greenery in cities. There have to be mitigation measures, e.g. in the form of passive energy civil engineering.⁹⁹ When it comes to the local governance, measures should reflect the support of regional and municipal public administration, but also the further development of competences of public administration. Another key area is the adaptation to climate change. Mentioned above measures would create conditions for the harmonious development of cities and municipalities.

⁹⁶ CZECH REPUBLIC, Ministry of the Environment. Česká republika 2030, Ministerstvo životního prostředí [online]. © 2008–2020 Ministerstvo životního prostředí [Accessed 2020-05-12]. Available from: https://www.mzp.cz/cz/udrzitelny_rozvoj

⁹⁷ CZECH REPUBLIC, Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, Department of Sustainable Development Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030. Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030 [online]. Praha: Polygrafie of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic in Prague. 2017, p. 13.

⁹⁸ CZECH REPUBLIC, Ministry of the Environment. Česká republika 2030, Ministerstvo životního prostředí [online]. © 2008–2020 Ministerstvo životního prostředí [Accessed 2020-05-12]. Available from: https://www.mzp.cz/cz/udrzitelny_rozvoj

⁹⁹ CZECH REPUBLIC, Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, Department of Sustainable Development Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030. Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030 [online]. Praha: Polygrafie of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic in Prague. 2017, p. 14.

5. Global development

In global development section Czech Republic is considered as an international actor, the goals are externally directed. The international dimension of the Strategic Framework CR 2030 aims to promote the values and principles of sustainable development in the European Union and in the world. The Czech Republic coordinates its progress in the field of sustainability with other EU states, uses the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the UN Sustainable Development Goals internationally, and promotes national priorities for sustainable development at the global level.¹⁰⁰

6. Good governance

Last but not least is the section which is focused mainly on democracy, legitimacy and participation. Currently Czech Republic faces several crucial challenges such as decreasing the extent of political participation via traditional channels (political parties and elections), weak ability of horizontal coordination of the public administration, limited ability to work when making decisions with long-term perspective, poor involvement with contemporary international debate and severely limited ability to innovate the governance.¹⁰¹ This must be challenged with the enhancement of the public participation in the field of political and citizen activity, of the legitimacy and democratic values. The vision of the CR 2030 is a country where it is governed democratically and at the same time effectively in the long run. The decision-making structure is resilient, flexible and inclusive. People are actively involved in decision-making on public affairs and the state creates suitable conditions for them to do so.¹⁰²

2.5.2. Implementation plan

An Implementation plan for the Strategic Framework of the Czech Republic 2030 was published in 2018. It is a more detailed document, based on the analysis of the relevance of global 169 targets,

¹⁰⁰ CZECH REPUBLIC, Ministry of the Environment. Česká republika 2030, Ministerstvo životního prostředí [online]. © 2008–2020 Ministerstvo životního prostředí [Accessed 2020-05-12]. Available from: https://www.mzp.cz/cz/udrzitelny_rozvoj

¹⁰¹ CZECH REPUBLIC, Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, Department of Sustainable Development Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030. Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030 [online]. Praha: Polygrafie of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic in Prague. 2017, p. 14.

¹⁰² CZECH REPUBLIC, Ministry of the Environment. Česká republika 2030, Ministerstvo životního prostředí [online]. © 2008–2020 Ministerstvo životního prostředí [Accessed 2020-05-12]. Available from: https://www.mzp.cz/cz/udrzitelny_rozvoj

which sets out principles for filling basic goals including the components of implementation. For each 27 specific objective there are 5-7 points (measures and recommendations), what should the Czech Republic do in relation to SDGs. The implementation plan was approved by the Government Council for Sustainable Development. The plan was established reflecting the national implementation plan, based on the mechanisms of vertical integration. The aim of the document is to ensure the coherence of the goals of the Czech Republic 2030 with other strategic and conceptual materials and to present a set of measures and recommendations through which its vision will be put into practice.¹⁰³

Both Strategic Framework CR 2030 and Implementation plan being a type of government document – “strategic framework”, stand in the hierarchy of strategic materials over departmental or sectoral strategies.¹⁰⁴ This means that two main documents should be in coherence with other policies. The goals of the CR 2030 will be achieved through public policies. Policy coherence is a key prerequisite for meeting the CR 2030 targets. It is therefore essential to ensure not only compliance between strategies, laws or grant programs with each other, but also compliance between strategies or laws and everyday organizational practice.¹⁰⁵

Within the preparation of the implementation plan, a policy gap analysis was performed according to the individual specific objectives of the CR 2030. In the objective cards the identified policy gaps are marked as barriers to implementation.¹⁰⁶

The implementation of the CR 2030 is under the auspices of the Minister of the Environment Mr. Brabec (who was a Deputy Prime Minister at the point of the document establishment), who coordinates the process - in cooperation with the responsible ministries and other actors - through the MoE. His/her main responsibility is the preparation and regular review both documents. The head of the MoE maintains the control function. The respective ministries are primarily responsible for sector implementation. They carry the executive function.

¹⁰³ CZECH REPUBLIC, Ministry of the Environment. Implementační plán Strategického rámce Česká republika 2030 (Implementation Plan of the Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030) [online]. Praha: Ministry of the Environment of Czech Republic. 2018, p 5.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p.58.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

2.6. Implementation process

In this section closer technical look at the implementation process is provided, based on how the implementation is presented in the document and carried out in the reality. The analysis is made based on the information about specific objectives. There are three main steps within the process:

1) In the first stage the specific goal is defined, given a name. Each goal has a precise information how the goal would be achieved. In this stage it is also defined, whether the goal can be fully achieved only with the effort of the Czech public administration within the country (for example, education of inequalities in public administration), or it is partly dependent on some other factors independent of Czech Republic efforts (for example, the policies to reduce global climate change).

2) In the second stage takes place an evaluation of already existing activities that can help to meet the goal and required measures (including an indication of their limits and barriers to the effectiveness of the measures in relation to the goal.

3) In the final stage specific measures that need to be taken to achieve the objective are identified (sometimes also complemented or replaced by recommendations that set out a more general direction of the procedure). The goal later falls under the responsible ministries, which will incorporate the measures of the goal into its policies. To each recommendation and measure there are one, or even several ministries responsible for the issue.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

There are 277 measures and 322 recommendations in total. Measures and recommendations are of different types and of different degrees of generality. The measures are focused on public administration. If the phenomenon or trend is desirable and known, the concrete measure can be implemented. The recommendations are targeted outside the state administration. If the phenomenon or trend is not known, the recommendation takes place. They are formulated as the desired principles of action and often serve as triggers for the opening of a public space for discussion.¹⁰⁸ Figure 3 shows the thematic distribution of measures and recommendations, which must be implemented (if not mentioned differently) is till the end of 2022.

Implementation Plan 2018

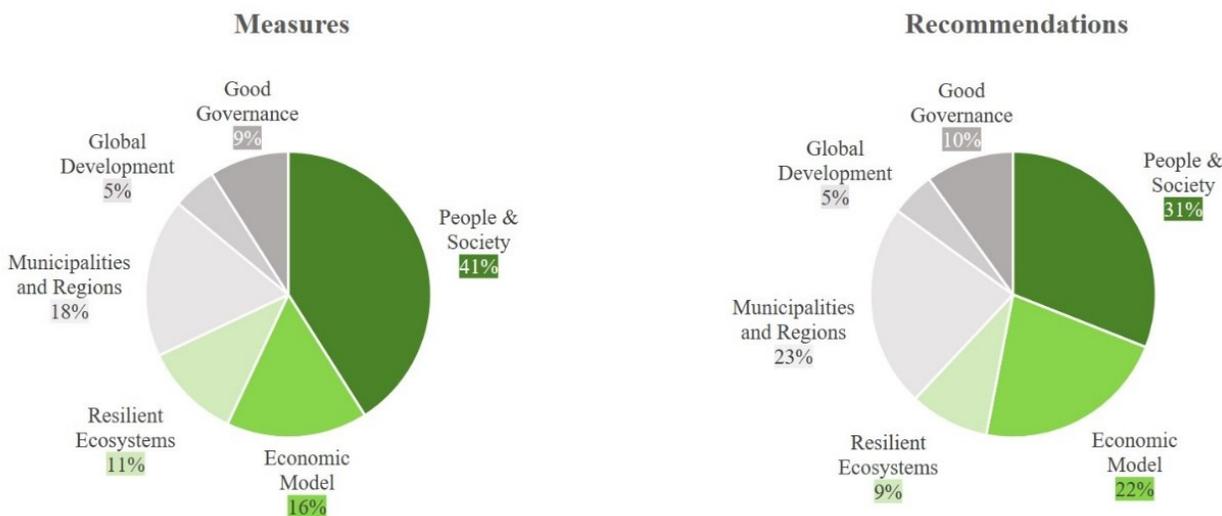


Figure 3 Measures and recommendations stated in the Implementation Plan 2018
 Source: Adapted by author from MARES, Jan. Strategické plány ČR a udržitelný rozvoj (Strategic plans CR and sustainable development) [prezentace] Praha: Poslanecká sněmovna, 19. únor 2019. [2019-02-19].

2.6.1. Local Agenda 21

Local Agenda 21 (further referred to as “LA21”) deserves attention within the separate section. This initiative is dealing with the local politicians, cities and municipalities for more than 15 years introducing them to the SD problematic, seeking to keep the politics at the local level coherent with the SD. LA 21 activities are of a main focus of the Working Group of the Government Council

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

for Sustainable Development for Local Agenda 21. It was established by the Government Council for Sustainable Development in 2004. Chair of the working group is Ing. arch. Marie Petrová (MoE). The working group is composed of representatives of central state administration bodies, organizations associating municipalities and regions, academia and non-governmental non-profit organizations. In addition to the official members of the Working Group, guests interested in the LA21 can also attend their meetings. The initiative is actively engaged in promoting SDGs at the local level and is driven by couple of engaged representatives of the MoE.

LA 21 seeks to put the principles of sustainable development into practice. They operate on a basis of a standardized process to achieving the SD in cities, regions. The process consists of several steps of evaluation of regions, municipalities, cities. The evaluation can also be understood as an examination of the municipality's contribution to the priorities and objectives of the 2030 Agenda, CR 2030 as well as other strategic documents that are linked to sustainable development.¹⁰⁹ The aim of this process is to make LA 21 a common tool of public administration and thus contribute to the implementation of the principles of sustainable development in practice.¹¹⁰ Please find the steps towards the SD on a figure 4.

The LA21 representative conveyed that they try to motivate regions, municipalities, cities to go through these steps of evaluation process by educating the local officials about the SD and providing them with the financing options.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ CZECH REPUBLIC, Ministry of the Environment. Metodika hodnocení udržitelných měst: Audit udržitelného rozvoje pro realizátory MA21 v ČR (Methodology of evaluation of sustainable cities: Audit of sustainable development for MA21 implementers in the Czech Republic) [online]. Praha: Místní agenda 21, Ministerstvo Životního prostředí, verze 11/2016. 2016, p. 12.

¹¹⁰ PS MA21 základní informace a seznam členů (WG LA21 basic information and list of members), místní Agenda 21 [online]. © 2017 CENIA [Accessed 2020-06-04] Available from: <https://ma21.cenia.cz/cs-cz/%c3%bavod/pro%c4%8dlenypsma21/psma21z%c3%a1kladn%c3%adinformaceseznam%c4%8dlen%c5%af.asp>

¹¹¹ Representative of the Working Group for Local Agenda 21, Government Council for Sustainable Development of the Czech Republic, Ministry of Environment of Czech Republic, interview by author, Prague, 01.07.2020.

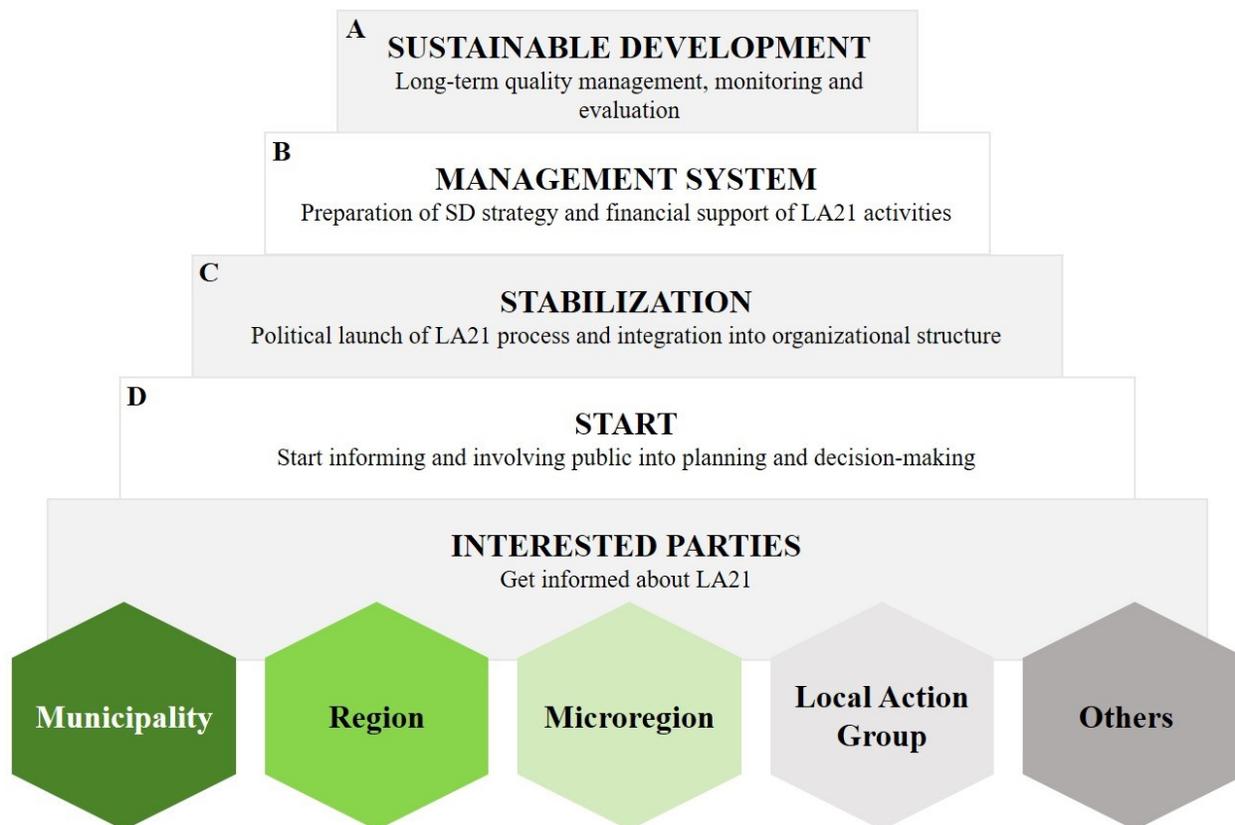


Figure 4. Local Agenda 21 evaluation process towards sustainable development.
 Source: Adapted by author from Pro veřejnost (For public), místní Agenda 21[online]. © 2017 CENIA [Accessed 2020-06-07]
 Available from: <https://ma21.cenia.cz/%C3%9Avod/Prove%C5%99ejnost.aspx>

However, the LA21 representative during the interview also highlighted several challenges, they face during the LA21 implementation. One of them is connected with the SD discourse in Czech Republic. Representative of the Working Group for Local Agenda 21 at the Government Council for Sustainable Development of the Czech Republic explained that historically, in the Czech Republic after the revolution 1989 the new government built the program on economic issues and growth; thus, ecological problems were left somewhat behind. People who were dealing with such topics were (and sometimes still) called “eco-terrorists”, who were preventing the country from economic development.¹¹² According to the representative of SD Unit at MoE the topic of SD is sensitive. The sensitivity depends on the discourse itself. The phrase *sustainable development* or

¹¹² Representative of the Working Group for Local Agenda 21, Government Council for Sustainable Development of the Czech Republic, Ministry of Environment of Czech Republic, interview by author, Prague, 01.07.2020.

green agenda can be affected by the discourse at the ministries or within political parties, how and in which correlation actors or interest groups use these phrases.¹¹³ Consequently, once used negatively the SD, SDGs, CR 2030 and Agenda 2030 will be seen negatively.

Therefore, LA21 trying to look for language to communicate on these topics. The language is different is due to the fact that not everyone embraces the SDGs. There is a lack of understanding, how the issue effects the local level. Nevertheless, the representative observed one useful tool how to approach the SDGs and SD at the local level. While showing the scientifically proved consequences of the climate change, such natural disasters, limited natural resources, migration etc. - the understanding of the problematic becomes clearer.

Another challenge was also addressed by the LA 21 representative. Another problem is a lack of awareness and education in the public sphere regarding these issues. SD and SDGs are not mainstream, as they supposed to be.¹¹⁴

2.7. Local participation

Local participation, partnership and engagement of various stakeholders play a crucial role within the implementation of CR 2030. Substantially the principle of participation is carried out in a frame of operating of the Government Council for Sustainable Development. There are the representatives from all the branches of the governments, academia, non-government sector within this platform. Significant part of participation process took place while the preparation of the main documents - CR 2030, Implementation Plan. The CR 2030 document preparation took around 2 years, it began in 2015 with many stakeholders involved and was finalized in 2017. For the document preparation the government called for the diverse consultation turnout with more than 100 organizations and institutions from the government, civil society, private sector and academia and 500 experts. Nine expert committees provided with significant support in this participatory preparation process. All in all, it involved stakeholders within the 6 round tables in Prague, 8 round

¹¹³ Representative of the Unit of Sustainable Development, Ministry of Environment of Czech Republic (2), interview by author, Prague, 12.06.2020.

¹¹⁴ Representative of the Working Group for Local Agenda 21, Government Council for Sustainable Development of the Czech Republic, Ministry of Environment of Czech Republic, interview by author, Prague, 01.07.2020.

tables in regions (regional cities) for the implementation part, 2 public hearings on voluntary commitments, 2 consultations in both chambers of Parliament and one online session.¹¹⁵

Currently SD Unit calls for the participation from the public sphere and fulfil this through the *Forum for Sustainable Development* and the so-called *voluntary commitments system*. The Forum for Sustainable Development is a traditional meeting organized by the Government Council for Sustainable Development in order to create a public space for discussion on individual aspects, goals and principles of sustainable development and its implementation in the Czech Republic. The Forum connects the public, private and professional spheres and discusses current issues and challenges for the Czech Republic. “Voluntary commitments” is a concept inspired by the experience which was introduced in Finland previously. Companies, non-profit organizations or individuals can register on the website of the Czech Republic 2030 and thus publish their commitment to sustainable development, falling into one of the six areas of the Strategic Framework of the Czech Republic 2030.¹¹⁶ And other workshops, seminars, conferences, including the European Week for Sustainable Development.¹¹⁷

2.8. Monitoring

SDGs in Czech Republic are evaluated and monitored by the Czech Statistical Office. Its role further contains the assistance with the data and reporting on the implementation of the CR 2030. First, the data was assessed based on the global indicator set, where for the Czech Republic 123 indicators from 244 were relevant. Currently Czech Republic has a national indicator set, it consists of the 192 indicators.¹¹⁸

Recently there was a first pilot version of the evaluation report published. According to it, global and international reports have only limited usability for national policy-making, as they usually do

¹¹⁵ MARES, Jan. Strategické plány ČR a udržitelný rozvoj (Strategic plans CR and sustainable development) [prezentace] Praha: Poslanecká sněmovna, 19. únor 2019. [2019-02-19].

¹¹⁶ CZECH REPUBLIC, Ministry of the Environment. Udržitelný rozvoj. Ministerstvo životního prostředí [online]. © 2008–2020 Ministerstvo životního prostředí [Accessed 2020-05-05]. Available from: https://www.mzp.cz/cz/udrzitelny_rozvoj

¹¹⁷ Already traditional weekly event across the EU countries, which takes place every year from 30 May to 5 June. The events unusually organized by government institutions, non-profits and individuals. The events are conceptualized as conferences, exhibitions, workshops, seminars, film screenings, etc.

¹¹⁸ Czech Republic. European Sustainable Development Network | ESDN [online]. © BMNT 2020 [Accessed 2020-05-10]. Available from: <https://www.sd-network.eu/?k=country%20profiles&s=single%20country%20profile&country=Czech%20Republic#basic>

not assess the level of fulfilment of SDGs sub-objectives (or evaluate them only vaguely), use ad-hoc selected indicators from official and unofficial sources (non-profit data, sub-studies, etc.) or undervalue the national context (for example, target groups, regional disparities, etc.). Some of these problems are caused by a lack of data in the global set. National evaluations can compensate the lack of data at the global level by using other relevant indicators to map more nationally specific challenges and successes. The national evaluation also provides a better idea of the link between the fulfilment of objectives and specific activities. Therefore, the Czech experts believe, that because of more precise national data set, the national report shows a less positive picture, than the global measurement reports (such as the “Measuring Distance to SDG Targets”, “SDG Index and Dashboard” report etc.).¹¹⁹

3. Testing the neoliberal institutionalist theoretical explanation: Position of the Czech Republic government towards SDGs

The neoliberal institutionalist state centric perspective pays great attention to the structure of state interest and collective action problems. According to the neoliberal institutionalist theory, the states do not want the organizations to interfere into the state processes but determine the way and form of politics and specific policies themselves in accordance with the government interests. Therefore, in line with the theory and the suggested hypothesis H1, the Czech Republic would primarily follow the interests and priorities of the government in fulfilling and implementing the SDGs. The aim of this chapter is to test hypothesis H1: *The way of implementation of SDGs is determined mainly by the state government and its preferences. The IOs and their bureaucracies are in the implementation involved in a rather passive and indirect way (in particular by monitoring and information gathering). The way of implementation is, therefore, dependent mainly on the state.* Namely by investigating the Czech government interests in managing and controlling the SDGs politics; to check if SD is under the government’s priority and to compare the state interests with the principles of SDGs in Czech Republic.

¹¹⁹ CZECH REPUBLIC, Ministry of the Environment. Pilotní Zpráva o naplňování Agendy 2030 pro udržitelný rozvoj v České republice (Pilot Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Czech Republic), reg. č.: CZ.03.4.74/0.0/0.0/15_019/00014042. [online], 11. 6. 2020 [2020-06-11].

Czech Republic is a parliamentary representative democracy, where the Head of State is the President of the Republic and the Government is led by the Prime Minister. The government is the supreme body of executive power and it has national legislative responsibilities in all areas. The government consists of the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Ministers and Ministers.¹²⁰ The state interests and priorities - the direction of the country's development – are determined by the government.

During the interviews conducted with the representatives of ministries and NGOs there was a certain agreement that, in general, the government and its formation is one of the main factors, which does influence to what extent the SD policies are turned into the laws and policies.

3.1. The Government program and priorities

The current government is led by the Prime Minister Andrej Babiš¹²¹ since 27.6.2018.¹²² The present government is a minority government¹²³, consisting of a coalition of two parties – Prime Minister's party ANO¹²⁴ and CSSD¹²⁵. The government's interests and priorities can be found within the Policy Statement of the Government of the Czech Republic. The first Babiš cabinet, which was not supported by the Chamber of Deputies, also had a Policy Statement, which apart from the order of the six priorities, does not significantly differ from the current one. The current government document sets out the priorities for the next four years of the governing term. The plan is very concrete, it focuses on the implementation of the six main strategic directions of development of the country:

- Pension reform. State budget and the pension account should be separated for better overview of the finances of the account and the state budget.

¹²⁰ CZECH REPUBLIC. Constitution of the Czech Republic [Czech Republic], 16 December 1992, [1992-12-16], [online]. [Accessed 2020-07-10] Available from: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b52d0.html>

¹²¹ In Czech “Andrej Babiš”.

¹²² In addition to the present government, The Prime Minister also had the first Babiš cabinet from 13 December 2017 till 27 June 2018, which did not receive the support of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament; it served till the formation of the second Babiš cabinet, which was eventually supported by the Chamber of Deputies.

¹²³ The situation, when in the executive body – government - a political party or a party coalition does not have a majority of total seats in the legislative body – parliament.

¹²⁴ ANO, literally YES in English, is a centre party. Sometimes considered for a business firm party. For more details in HÁJEK, Lukáš. Dynamic roll call analysis of parties' ideological positions in the Czech Republic, *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 26:1, 133-157, 2020. DOI:10.1080/13572334.2020.1726645.

¹²⁵ CSSD (In Czech ČSSD), Czech Social Democratic Party, is a centre - left party.

- Digital Czech Republic. Digitalization should happen in all forms: Tax returns, electronic recipes, electronic highway stamp etc.
- Increased visibility of the country in Europe. Czech interests should be made even more clear to the partners in different aspects, including the fight against tax havens, tax evasion, rejection of the existing regulation of refugee quotas in the EU, etc.
- Strategic investment program in new constructions.
- State reform, allowing the balanced state budget with focus on income taxes.
- Security and protection of the country from various attacks from outside, defence and internal security.¹²⁶

The deeper analysis of these priorities unveiled that only in three peculiar fields the government claims to use sustainable methods. Specifically, in the farming there should be “...sustainable management of natural resources through precise procedures, sustainable agricultural production with reducing environmental and climate impacts and the production of quality and safe food.”¹²⁷ The second field is the area of inclusiveness in education, where the government pledges to use “more sustainable forms of the education”.¹²⁸ And finally, in so-called State Investment Fund, whose aim is – being a central system, implementation and control of public investments – to assure to use sustainable resources for the investments.¹²⁹ In regard to the international cooperation with the IOs, such as UN, EU, OECD etc., the Czech government positions itself as a continuous multilateral cooperation actor. It pledges to keep the peace and, therefore, to guarantee the international law compliance in frame of the United Nations, to keep the continuous economic cooperation within the EU and to remain a partner within the OECD functioning.¹³⁰

Apart from the six priority areas mentioned above, the policy statement is of a general nature. The areas such as economy, environment and social sector are deemed to be the sectors which should

¹²⁶ CZECH REPUBLIC, The Government of The Czech Republic. Policy Statement of the Government of the Czech Republic [online], Prague: June 2018 [2018-06]. [Accessed 2020-07-10] Available from: <https://www.vlada.cz/assets/jednani-vlady/Policy-statement.pdf>;

For the first Babis cabinet’s see CZECH REPUBLIC, The Government of The Czech Republic. Policy Statement of the Government of the Czech Republic [online], 8. 1. 2018, Prague: January 2018 [2018-01]. [Accessed 2020-07-10] Available from: <https://www.vlada.cz/en/media-centrum/dulezite-dokumenty/policy-statement-of-the-government-of-the-czech-republic-116171/>

¹²⁷ CZECH REPUBLIC, The Government of The Czech Republic. Policy Statement of the Government of the Czech Republic [online], Prague: June 2018 [2018-06]. 2018, p.36.

¹²⁸ Ibid, p. 14.

¹²⁹ Ibid, p. 33.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

be improved on their own without any consideration of the improvement of quality of life or the sustainable growth. In accordance to the SD principles they have to reflect the economic, social and environmental aspects and quality of human life, health status of citizens, work-life balance, education, quality of the environment or personal safety, etc. Without doubt, the SDGs agenda is a cross-sectional agenda, the goals are diverse and include different specific aspects, which do appear in the statement, such as digitalization, inclusion of education, balanced budget, etc. But we cannot therefore claim, that the Government statement clearly covers the SDGs agenda. The policy statement does not literally highlight the cooperation in terms of sustainable development in any form, neither in a form of the global SDGs cooperation, nor in a form of the domestically adopted agenda. The Agenda 2030 was adopted by the Czech government in the year 2017 by the overarching document CR 2030 defining long-term agenda and priorities to achieve the goals by 2030. Nevertheless, the current government does not consider the SD agenda as a priority.

3.2. The governing parties' programs and priorities

As mentioned above, the current government is a coalition of two governing parties, the winning ANO party and a coalition partner – CSSD. The two parties' programs and vision for the elections to the Chamber of Deputies in the year 2017 sustain an integral part of the state interests. Therefore, this sub-chapter will investigate to what extent the sustainability principle and the agenda related with the SDGs is reflected in their documents.

3.2.1. ANO

Due to the migration crisis and terrorist attacks in Europe, ANO in its program considers security as the main priority. This involves that an even stronger cooperation with NATO to strengthen the security is necessary on the EU level, according to the party. Another state interest is to become an efficient economic state by reducing debt and managing the surplus depending on investment opportunities. The goal is having lower taxes and higher salaries. Another priority is further investments in the constructions, including the roads, schools, renovation of administrative

buildings etc. And finally, the last priority is investing in education, health system and other major areas of state administration.¹³¹

The program, just like the government policy statement, does not approach the growth to be more sustainable, e.g. the economic growth should go hand-in-hand with the reflection of environmental and social aspects. Furthermore, the party does not mention the commitment to fulfil the approved Czech version of Agenda 2030 – CR 2030.

3.2.2. CSSD

The coalition partner CSSD sets out several key areas in its program as the priorities for the Czech state, proclaiming that primarily there should be fair labour conditions and labour laws; well-performing economy and the conditions, which would support small and medium-sized enterprises; a fair taxation system; families and seniors state support; a housing system granted to everyone; quality health system; quality education system; culture and security.¹³²

Social Democrats on the other hand argue that globally the world faces the persistency of inequalities, which are even increasing. According to them, this problem needs to be addressed in order to achieve a stable and sustainable system. Therefore, the party commits to meeting the UN SDGs, which aim to solve global problems.¹³³ CSSD makes it clear in the program, that SD and SDGs should be a part of the state interest, which should be also addressed through the foreign policies.

3.3. The former Government program and priorities

¹³¹ Hnutí ANO. TEĎ NEBO NIKDY: Program hnutí ANO pro volby do Poslanecké sněmovny 2017 (NOW OR NEVER: Program of the movement ANO for the elections to the Chamber of Deputies 2017) [online], 2017. [Accessed 2020-07-10] Available from: <https://www.anobudelip.cz/file/edee/2017/09/program-hnuti-ano-pro-volby-do-poslanecke-snemovny.pdf>

¹³² CSSD. Dobrá země pro život: Volební program ČSSD pro volby 2017 (Good country for life: CSSD election program for the 2017 elections) [online], 2017. [Accessed 2020-07-10] Available from: https://www.cssd.cz/ke-stazeni/volebni-programy/volebni-program-cssd-pro-volby-2017/?fbclid=IwAR2gfbku_goPt1_aTGSN-o9l6-HCZGSDQ2UmEHs4YnJlIiDl0ukVr9dnGA0

¹³³ Ibid.

The predecessor of the current government was the CSSD led Bohuslav Sobotka's cabinet from 29.01.2014 - 13.12.2017. During this time the government adopted the CR 2030 framework. It was precisely the Prime Minister Sobotka, who approved it, communicated it to the public and explained how important the document is, since it is "a more appropriate way than comparing traditional economic data, such as GDP, which is not able to describe the dimension of quality of human life, such as health status, work-life balance, education, quality of the environment or personal safety, etc."¹³⁴ Above all, he sought to ensure that the Government Council for Sustainable Development had a supra-ministerial importance and competence. That is why the former Prime Minister returned this topic from the MoE back to the Government Office. (See figure 3). According to him, sustainable development is the centre of global attention, hence it must be the priority in Czech Republic.¹³⁵ As chairman of the council, he attended all meetings of the Council.

It is important to bear in mind that the SDGs as a global agenda did not exist in the year 2014, however despite this right in the beginning in the Sobotka's government policy statement it is clearly stressed that "...the government will lead the Czech Republic to prosperity on the basis of a socially and ecologically oriented market economy and will strive to maintain social cohesion in the country".¹³⁶ The starting point of the state priorities is the sustainable economic growth, with regard to those people living in material need, considering the balanced development of regions and municipalities. It is supplemented with the further large program, focusing on diverse aspects, such as subsidies and their transparent usage; state inventory and reconstructions; fight against

¹³⁴ CZECH REPUBLIC, The Government of Czech Republic. Vláda schválila strategii rozvoje České republiky do roku 2030 i koncepci ochrany proti teroristickým útokům (The government approved the strategy for the development of the Czech Republic until 2030 and the concept of protection against terrorist attacks) [online], 19. 4. 2017 [2017-04-19] Vláda ČR (c) 2009-2020. [Accessed 2020-07-10] Available from: <https://www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/aktualne/vlada-schvalila-strategii-rozvoje-ceske-republiky-do-roku-2030-i-koncepci-ochrany-proti-teroristickym-utokum-155428/tmplid-47/>

¹³⁵ ČTK. Sobotka: Rada vlády pro udržitelný rozvoj má nadresortní dimenzi. deník.cz [media portal]. 28.11.2014 [2014-11-28] Copyright © VLTAVA LABE MEDIA a.s. Accessed 2020-07-10] Available from:

https://www.denik.cz/z_domova/sobotka-rada-vlady-pro-udrzitelny-rozvoj-ma-nadresortni-dimenzi-20141128.html
¹³⁶ CZECH REPUBLIC, The Government of The Czech Republic. Policy Statement of the Government of the Czech Republic [online], 14. 2. 2014 [2014-02-14], Prague: February 2014. [Accessed 2020-07-10] Available from: <https://www.vlada.cz/en/media-centrum/dulezite-dokumenty/policy-statement-of-the-government-of-the-czech-republic-116171/>

corruption; development of quality and generally available public services in the field of education, health care, social system, transport and security etc.

The former government further highlights the priorities for the ministries. There are several key focuses, which go hands-in-hands with the SD principles, for instance, an emphasis on the sustainable energy in the Ministry of Industry and Trade or the preparation of a bill to reduce Czech Republic's dependence on fossil fuels in the MoE etc.¹³⁷

Indeed, the sustainability rhetoric appears in different contexts, especially regarding the growth, which should go hand-in-hand with the economic, social and environmental aspects, pointed out in the introduction of the policy statement.

During the interview with the representative of The Committee for Sustainable Development Indicators at the Council for Sustainable Development, it was stressed that many Czech government leaders from the former government formation¹³⁸ had interest and were literally involved in the process of preparation of the document CR 2030. He confirmed that currently the interest and willingness is less present at the government side.

In comparison to the previous government, right in the beginning of the functioning of the Babis government, the Prime Minister moved the Government Council for Sustainable Development from the Government Office to the MoE, so that the SD is no longer in the government competence. This fact was also confirmed during the interview on the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (further referred to as “MLSA”), the act of moving the SD issue itself is a shift in the government scaling-ladder lower.¹³⁹ This clearly shows that the new government does not see the SD as a priority.

3.4. The Parliament's engagement

Another challenge, unveiled during the interview with the representative of The Committee for Sustainable Development Indicators in the Council for Sustainable Development, lies in the lack of action at all levels of democratic governance. Namely, although the judiciary branch has no

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ On the Czech Government formations: current and former – see the sub-section below.

¹³⁹ Representative of the Section of European Funds and International Cooperation, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Czech Republic, interview by author, Prague, 01.07.2020.

decision-making role in the SD processes, the two other executive and legislative branches should ideally deal with the SD related issues proactively. According to him, however, the SD topics are covered only within executive power. The discussions on the level of legislation are missing. The same concern shared the representative of the Chamber of Deputies, the Chair of the Subcommittee on sustainable development¹⁴⁰ during the interview. According to her, the question of SDGs is barely discussed in the Parliament of Czech Republic. Furthermore, it was highlighted that from the beginning of the existence of the Subcommittee, in one and a half years, the members gathered just 3 times to discuss the legislation related to SD. The reason hides in the Government position, which is less inclined to SDGs.

3.5. IOs' effect within implementation process at the national level

Neoliberal institutionalism does not neglect the cooperation with IOs or within the IOs. According to the theory the cooperation and communication between the bureaucracies of IOs and the states remains little. To ensure the compliance the IOs can theoretically intervene in the domestic politics by integrating some expert views of the process, but rather in a way of soft power, such as such national reporting (where failure to report itself is indicated as improper behaviour), monitoring or technical assistance (where the critical enforcement is needed).¹⁴¹

Throughout the interviews, conducted with the government officials, there was a common agreement, that CR2030 implementation process in Czech Republic is mainly dependent on the SD Unit and the respective ministries. The government officials also confirmed that the communication and cooperation in regard to SDGs between the bureaucratic apparatus of the IOs and bureaucratic apparatus of the responsible ministries and regional representatives remains very poor. They evaluated the communication to be as “weak” or “minimal”. All three IOs: UN, EU and OECD communicate with the ministerial staff and SD Unit mainly regarding the

¹⁴⁰ In the Chamber of Deputies, the SD topic belongs to the Subcommittee on sustainable development, which is a part of the Committee on Environment.

¹⁴¹ ABBOTT, Kenneth W. and Duncan SNIDAL. Why States Act through Formal International Organizations [online]. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 1998, p.24-26.

questionnaires on the fulfilment of the SDGs related data.¹⁴² Cooperation is minimal upon ad-hoc basis.¹⁴³

Furthermore, during the interview, which took place at the UN Office in Prague, the representative of the UN assured, that specifically the UN does not incline to interfere within the process at the national level. It also has no aspiration to comment on the process or “even judge the countries” in regard to the SDGs policies. Moreover, the UN believes that state itself is the most important actor. According to the representative, “it does not matter how and if the IOs push the states to comply with the Agenda 2030, but what matters that the states declare themselves that they comply to implement the Agenda 2030”.¹⁴⁴

More detailed elaboration on the process of the IOs is in the following chapter about the International Organizations’ engagement towards SDGs (See chapter 4. Testing the constructivist theoretical explanation: International Organizations’ engagement towards SDGs).

3.6. Summary

The hypothesis H1 was partially confirmed. In conformity with the neoliberal institutionalist perspective, Czech state institutions implement the policy; Czech Republic government has a vision of the implementation of SDGs in a form of a strategic document – CR 2030; IOs carry out their function in a passive / informational way. However, development issue is not a priority for the current government.

For the implementation of SDGs and the CR2030 agenda to be met in Czech Republic, it is crucial, that it has the support at the highest political level, i.e. the support of the Prime Minister and the government. Currently, it is seen by many experts as a certain challenge in Czech Republic. As key problems are considered: The general lack of the interest from the current government, the act

¹⁴² Representative of the Unit of Sustainable Development, Ministry of Environment of Czech Republic (2), interview by author, Prague, 12.06.2020;

Representative of the Department of Urban Policy and Strategies, Department of Regional Policy, Ministry of Regional Development, interview by author, Prague, 17.06.2020;

Representative of the Section of European Funds and International Cooperation, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Czech Republic, interview by author, Prague, 01.07.2020.

¹⁴³ Representative of the Section of European Funds and International Cooperation, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Czech Republic, interview by author, Prague, 01.07.2020.

¹⁴⁴ Representative of the United Nations Information Centre Prague, United Nations, interview by author, Prague, 14.07.2020.

of moving the Government Council for Sustainable Development from the Government Office to the MoE by the current Prime Minister and the lack of debates within the legislative branch of the democratic governance.

The former government, evidently, approached SD agenda as a priority for the further development of Czech Republic. The former Prime Minister himself paid great attention to the SD topic, approached the former government policy statement – the main document of the government – also from the SD perspective moved the Government Council for Sustainable Development to the Government Office, where it obtained a supra-ministerial dimension and approved the Czech version of global SDGs – CR2030. The government tended to set up mechanisms for SD in the Czech Republic and fulfil the Goals. The hypothesis H1 could be fully confirmed to the past conditions.

Nowadays with the current government the SD is not a priority anymore. The current Prime Minister, according to the evidences, pays no government interest to the issue, the current policy statement does not approach SDGs agenda as a priority for the state. The current Prime Minister himself in comparison to the former one – does not attend the Government meeting. He moved the Government Council for Sustainable Development back to the MoE and does not attend the Council meetings. The hypothesis H1 cannot be fully confirmed to the present conditions.

4. Testing the constructivist theoretical explanation: International Organizations' engagement towards SDGs

While states negotiated and many of them ratified the SDGs, the agenda's expansiveness brings a great number of other actors under its remit, including the IOs.¹⁴⁵ Various IOs have a different degree of humanitarian and development mandates. The IOs' activities related to the Agenda 2030 are more and more proliferating and at the same time fragmenting. It is crucial to understand to

¹⁴⁵ CORMIER, Ben. Analyzing if and how international organizations contribute to the sustainable development goals: Combining power and behavior [online]. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*. 2018, p. 547.

what extent IOs have the autonomy to be actively involved in the SDGs processes globally and what effects they have on the politically defined goals such as SDGs.¹⁴⁶

The aim of this chapter is to find out whether the bureaucracies of the IOs such as UN, EU and OECD, have a vision how the SDGs should be implemented locally at the national level, examine to what extent they seek to enforce such vision, if they have one, and how actively they communicate with the states in this regard. Hypothesis H2, based on the constructivist theory, is as following: *The IOs and their bureaucracies tend to infer in the process of implementation of SDGs on the domestic level, primarily by setting the priorities, and actively communicating about the implementation of the SDG related policies with the affected states. The way of implementation is, therefore, dependent not only on the state, but also on the IOs and their bureaucracies.*

The following chapter will be primarily focusing on the mechanisms, activities and tools, which are carried out by the IOs within their members states and have a constitutive function – to affect the states’ behaviours and to influence the domestic politics. In this case to influence the implementation process of SDGs domestically. According to the theory, the IOs effect the domestic politics and interfere in it, when there is a need in accordance with the norms of the international society. This will be tested throughout this chapter on the example of the activities of three IOs in Czech Republic: UN, EU and OECD.

4.1. UN

UN can be deservedly considered as a main initiator and promoter of the SDGs. With the primary support of the UN the world has agreed upon the Agenda 2030 to meet SD. The goals were developed not just by a certain group of experts through an unprecedented global and participative priority-setting process, involving over a million people around the world through global surveys, reports and consultations in nearly 100 countries.¹⁴⁷

The previously largest UN development policy agenda from 2000 to 2015 was set out by the Millennium Declaration, entitled Millennium Development Goals (further referred to as “MDGs”).

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 553

¹⁴⁷ FRIEDMAN, Eric A. and Lawrence O. GOSTIN. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Achieving the Vision of Global Health with Justice [online]. Georgetown Law Faculty Publications and Other Works. 1777. 2016, p. 5.

This agenda focused mainly on the African region, where the largest number of world's population lives in extreme poverty. Over fifteen years of progress have been made in fighting poverty in the so-called global South - the number of extremely poor has fallen by more than 1.25 billion. While the Millennium Declaration confirmed the right to development and participation, it has translated into the practice of development cooperation in a way that is insufficient to meet the MDGs' goals of a narrower concept of human development.¹⁴⁸ This should be corrected by a new Agenda 2030 with Sustainable Development Goals.

The primary goal for the UN Development Programme (further referred to as “UNDP”) – the main UN agency dealing with the development issues in the world – today is that developing countries have access to resources and knowledge of how to meet the SDGs. The SDGs agenda is global, unlike the MDGs, which focused their policies on the African region. Also, bureaucracies of other organs and custodian agencies are involved into the SDGs promotion, such as the UN Economic and Social Council (further referred to as “ECOSOC”), the International Labour Organization (further referred to as “ILO”), the UNESCO and others. Currently with 16 agencies, the inter-agency mechanism is implementing joint programmes and advocacy initiatives.¹⁴⁹

4.1.1. Bureaucratic mechanisms

In Czech Republic the IO is represented by the UN Information Centre (further referred to as “UNIC”) Prague. During the interview the representative of UNIC informed me that he personally and the UNIC itself do not have a role of monitoring or control of the fulfilment of SDGs in Czech Republic. Globally, the UN has three main activities or tools, which do not have a direct impact on the implementation processes in the UN member states. These activities and tools will be presented in this section.

The primary UN activity is data monitoring. The Inter-Agency Expert Group for SDG Indicators (further referred to as “IAEG-SDG”) is one of the groups which serves UN and its member states

¹⁴⁸ HORKÝ, Ondřej. Rozvoj, participace a lidská práva (Development, participation and human rights) IN Waisová, Šárka. Chudoba a bohatství v současném světě. 2006, p. 10-11.

¹⁴⁹ UN Agencies, SDG Fund [online] © Copyright United Nations Development Programme.[Accessed 2020-07-13] Available from: <https://www.sdgfund.org/un-agencies>

to monitor the data about SDGs worldwide. This group was established in 2015 by the United Nations Statistical Commission. It is composed of member states, including regional and international agencies as observers.¹⁵⁰ In total there are 28 countries in the group. In Europe the representatives are France, Germany, Ireland and Sweden. The aim of IAEG-SDG is to prepare the global indicator framework for the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda. Czech Republic is not part of this group.

However, this goal of creating a global indicator is not yet achieved. The SD scholars and experts identify the gaps within the UN SDGs indicators dataset. The current indicators of the SDGs are not thorough nor conclusive. Moreover, there are certain target areas for the development which presently lack indicators. Some indicators¹⁵¹ are still weak in comprehensive methodology and must be improved.¹⁵² A three-tier system is created to indicate the readiness for the operationalization of the global indicators set. Tier 1 Indicators are conceptually developed, have a clearly established methodology and standards, which are available internationally, and the data is regularly provided by the countries. Tier 2 is fully developed as well as the Tier 1, except of the data from the countries which are not provided regularly. Tier 3 is the most problematic. It has no internationally established methodology or standards yet available for these indicators and the methodology and standards are being (or will be) developed or tested¹⁵³. The reason why the data is often not available is hidden in the national level tier classification, which may not necessarily align with the global one.¹⁵⁴

During the interview the representative of UNIC explained, why the creation of a complete global dataset is also time-consuming. In the beginning, in the years 2015-2016, the data (mostly indicators) were developed or determined as ad-hoc indicators, which had to be further developed and observed. It turned out to be very complicated to create the new more detailed indicators, because of the uniqueness of each country's conditions and the negotiation processes. The indicators are not prepared just by an expert team, but the global data set is a matter of what the

¹⁵⁰ IAEG-SDGs, SDG Indicators [online] © 2020 United Nations. [Accessed 2020-07-13] Available from: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/>

¹⁵¹ Tier II mainly.

¹⁵² SANER, Raymond, Lichia YIU and Christian KINGOMBE. The 2030 Agenda compared with six related international agreements: valuable resources for SDG implementation [online]. Sustainability Science. 2019, p. 1691

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 1706.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

states must agree on. It has to go through the governments. Therefore, the process is not finalized yet.¹⁵⁵

Another data-focused UN agency is the Sustainable Development Solutions Network¹⁵⁶, which provides the annually published *Sustainable Development Report* (formerly the SDG Index & Dashboards). The report is claimed to be the first worldwide study to assess where each country stands with regard to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Governments and civil society alike can utilize the Sustainable Development Report to identify priorities for action, understand key implementation challenges, track progress, ensure accountability, and identify gaps that must be closed in order to achieve the SDGs by 2030.¹⁵⁷ The purpose of the SDG Index and Dashboards is to assist countries to identify priorities for action to achieve the 17 SDGs. The indicators and dashboards should help, and the overall index permits an assessment of progress towards the goals and a comparison with peer countries. The SDG Index and Dashboards are complementary to official SDG monitoring.¹⁵⁸

Czech Republic is nowadays ranked as 8th most sustainable and developed country in the world, according to the *2020 Sustainable Development Report* (formerly the SDG Index & Dashboards)¹⁵⁹, which is a global assessment of countries' progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The ranking is viewed as one of the most prominent SDGs rankings. It is a complement to the official SDG indicators and the voluntary national reviews.¹⁶⁰ Albeit, last year the country was still on the 7th position. In 2020 the Czech Republic fully succeeded in 3 goals, has 4 goals with remaining challenges that are moderately improving, 7 goals

¹⁵⁵ Representative of the United Nations Information Centre Prague, United Nations, interview by author, Prague, 14.07.2020.

¹⁵⁶ SDSN. © June 2018. [Accessed 2020-07-13] Available from: <https://www.unsdsn.org/>

¹⁵⁷ SDSN. About, SDGIndex. © June 2018. [Accessed 2020-07-13] Available from: <https://www.sdgindex.org/about/>

¹⁵⁸ SANER, Raymond, Lichia YIU and Christian KINGOMBE. The 2030 Agenda compared with six related international agreements: valuable resources for SDG implementation [online]. *Sustainability Science*. 2019, p. 1696-1697.

¹⁵⁹ SACHS et al. The Sustainable Development Goals and Covid-19. *Sustainable Development Report 2020*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopment.report/2020/2020_sustainable_development_report.pdf

¹⁶⁰ SDSN. Rankings, SDGIndex. © June 2018. [Accessed 2020-07-13] Available from:

<https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/rankings>; The data available on the website are based on the publication SACHS et al. The Sustainable Development Goals and Covid-19. *Sustainable Development Report 2020* [online]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

with significant challenges remaining and 2 goals with major challenges remaining. On the last SDG 14 “Life below water” the information is unavailable.¹⁶¹ Please find the details in table 3.

The progress of Czech Republic	SDGs
<i>Met fully</i>	SDG 1 “No Poverty”, SDG 6 “Clean water and sanitation”, SDG 8 “Decent work and economic growth”
<i>Challenges remaining but moderately improving</i>	SDG 10 “Reduced inequalities”, SDG 11 “Sustainable cities and communities”, SDG 15 “Life on land” and SDG 16 “Peace, justice and strong institutions”
<i>Significant challenges remaining</i>	SDG 2 “Zero hunger”, SDG 3 “Good health and well-being”, SDG 4 “Quality education”, SDG 7 “Affordable and clean energy”, SDG 9 “Industry, innovation and infrastructure”, SDG 12 “Responsible consumption and production”
<i>Major challenges remaining</i>	SDG 13 “Climate action” and SDG 17 “Partnerships for the goals”

Table 3. Progress of Czech Republic based on the 2020 Sustainable Development Report.
Source: SACHS, Jeffrey et al. The Sustainable Development Goals and Covid-19. Sustainable Development Report 2020. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2020.

In general, the UN considers the indicators for being one of the most important mechanisms of the fulfilment of SDGs. According to the representative of UNIC, the respective bureaucratic staff of UNDP and the relevant agencies are daily working on it to support member states in this regard. However, the setting of the mechanisms itself is upon the governments and member states themselves.¹⁶²

Another significant UN tool or activity is the so called High-Level Political Forum (further referred to as “HLPF”). This is a mechanism which takes place annually under the auspices of the ECOSOC for more than a week, including a three-day ministerial segment. Every four years at the level of Heads of State and Government under the auspices of the General Assembly for two days. It carries out a form of an annual overview of self-evaluation of states through the Voluntary National Reports (further referred to as “VNR”), which members states prepare by themselves. In most cases the reports reflect on the current status, the progress and some specific activities that

¹⁶¹ More detailed overview with trends and indicators of the SDGs in Czech Republic can be found in SACHS et al. The Sustainable Development Goals and Covid-19. Sustainable Development Report 2020 [online]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

¹⁶² Representative of the United Nations Information Centre Prague, United Nations, interview by author, Prague, 14.07.2020.

worked out well. The whole procedure is aimed to boost the debate and inspire the SDGs leaders of other countries.

In the year 2019 the HLPF the European Commission and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs convened leaders from the member states, UN bodies, academia and civil society within a review to assess the first cycle of the HLPF under the auspices of the UN ECOSOC (2016-2019). What was noted by the participants, is the general contribution of HLPF to the improvement of the reports on SDGs implementation and that VNRs had improved some national mechanisms. They also imposed to focus more on interlinkages between the SDGs and on cross-cutting and cross-regional issues. According to the respondents, the final ministerial declarations lack ambition and fail to provide strong leadership and guidance on the actions that need to be taken.¹⁶³

Finally, the fundamental activity of the UN is to promote the SDGs globally. The UN strongly focuses on partnerships, stakeholder cooperation etc. and call for broader engagement globally. As citizens and others helped shape the 2030 Agenda, they also need to support the implementation.¹⁶⁴ According to the UN, each and every one can and ought to contribute individually to implement the 2030 Agenda. According to the representative of the SD Unit in Czech Republic, UN and OECD work closely to create an SDG HUB to cooperate even closer in the future.¹⁶⁵

As indicated above in this section, the UN is actively involved in the SDGs cooperation worldwide. However, throughout the analysis and mainly based on the interview, the research suggests that the communication regarding SDGs between the bureaucratic apparat of the UN bodies and bureaucratic apparat of the responsible ministries and regional representatives remains very poor. Without doubt, the communication is running mainly at the diplomatic level, such as the HLPF meetings, however on the daily basis most of the respondents evaluated the communication as “weak” or “minimal”. That means that UN communicates with SD Unit or the ministries only in

¹⁶³ PICHON, Eric. Reporting on SDG implementation: UN mechanisms and the EU approach [online]. EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service, PE 644.218 – December 2019 [2019-12-20].

¹⁶⁴ SANER, Raymond, Lichia YIU and Christian KINGOMBE. The 2030 Agenda compared with six related international agreements: valuable resources for SDG implementation [online]. Sustainability Science. 2019, p. 1706.

¹⁶⁵ Representative of the Unit of Sustainable Development, Ministry of Environment of Czech Republic (2), interview by author, Prague, 12.06.2020;

regard to the questionnaires on the fulfilment of the SDGs related data.¹⁶⁶ Cooperation is upon ad-hoc basis.¹⁶⁷

The representative of UNIC in Prague clarified that there is certainly a difference in communication. The difference lies in the classification of the country: The UN communicates and supports actively the least developed and developing countries – provides the trainings and webinars on SDGs and supports financially with the projects. However, the IO does not find it necessary to communicate on the active basis with the developed countries. Moreover, UN somewhat expects these countries to be proactive themselves – to be involved in the “know-how” exchange, support with the development aid etc.¹⁶⁸ This assumption was also supported at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Czech Republic. Namely that the UN puts pressure on developed countries through the programs to support them globally. But even supporting them, does not interfere to the domestic level.¹⁶⁹ This fact was further supported during the interview at the MLSA at the department of the international cooperation. The most relevant for the ministry agency is ILO. The representative from the MLSA assured that Czech Republic cooperates closely with the ILO, when it comes to the external aid, namely regarding projects abroad which are supported by Czech Republic (presently in Moldova). The communication in this case carries a diplomatic form. Apart from this, the standard form of communication between the ministerial staff and the staff from ILO is reporting, forms and questionnaires, comments on the ILO documents.¹⁷⁰

All in all, the UN recognizes the bottom-up country-driven mechanism of self-mobilization of the states, because it is claimed to be the most effective one. In addition, the UN does not have coercive mechanisms to drive the implementation process in the states, instruct them, etc. Only member

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

Representative of the Department of Urban Policy and Strategies, Department of Regional Policy, Ministry of Regional Development, interview by author, Prague, 17.06.2020;

Representative of the Section of European Funds and International Cooperation, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Czech Republic, interview by author, Prague, 01.07.2020.

¹⁶⁷ Representative of the Section of European Funds and International Cooperation, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Czech Republic, interview by author, Prague, 01.07.2020.

¹⁶⁸ Representative of the United Nations Information Centre Prague, United Nations, interview by author, Prague, 14.07.2020.

¹⁶⁹ Representative of the Department of Multilateral Economic Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Czech Republic, interview by author, Prague, 30.06.2020.

¹⁷⁰ Representative of the Section of European Funds and International Cooperation, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Czech Republic, interview by author, Prague, 01.07.2020.

states themselves have this right. According to the UNIC representative, this is meanwhile a disadvantage, because of which the progress of achieving the goals globally is so slow, since member states themselves must reach their own SD.¹⁷¹ Indeed, the UN does not have any enforcement mechanism to ensure that the national states once adopted the Agenda 2030, comply with it at the domestic level. As the representative of UNIC assured, UN does not even intend to do so, since the UN believes that the state itself is the most important actor. According to the UN representative, “it does not matter how and if the IOs push the states to comply with the Agenda 2030, but what matters is that the states declare themselves that they comply to implement the Agenda 2030”.¹⁷²

4.2. EU

The EU is an active player in the IR when it comes to the global environmental politics. The same way it also claims to be an active player in the SD politics. In 2016 the EU committed to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs within the EU. The formal adoption was followed by the European Parliament’s (further referred to as “the Parliament”) adoption of a resolution on the review of the Agenda 2030. Briefly after this the European Commission (further referred to as “the Commission”) presented three main activities to achieve the Agenda 2030: An “overarching” communication on “*Next steps for a sustainable European future. European action for sustainability*”¹⁷³, proposal for a new European Consensus on Development¹⁷⁴ and Eurostat report “*Sustainable development in the European Union — A statistical glance from the viewpoint of the UN Sustainable Development Goals*”.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ Representative of the United Nations Information Centre Prague, United Nations, interview by author, Prague, 14.07.2020.

¹⁷² Representative of the United Nations Information Centre Prague, United Nations, interview by author, Prague, 14.07.2020.

¹⁷³ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS *Next steps for a sustainable European future* [online]. Strasbourg, COM/2016/0739 final, 22.11.2016 [2016-11-22].

¹⁷⁴ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS *Proposal for a new European Consensus on Development Our World, our Dignity, our Future* [online]. Strasbourg, COM/2016/0740 final, 22.11.2016 [2016-11-22].

¹⁷⁵ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, Eurostat. *Sustainable development in the European Union — A statistical glance from the viewpoint of the UN Sustainable Development Goals*. 2016-12-08, 2016.

The main goal of the EU at that point was to “mainstream the SDGs into EU policies and initiatives with sustainable development as an essential guiding principle for all its policies”, including the reporting. Another goal was to reflect on a longer-term vision in a post 2020 perspective. The Communication officially launched a Multi-stakeholder platform on SDGs an advisory organ for the Commission on SDGs implementation.

In 2017 the Commission adopted the “Better Regulation Guidelines”, according to which the principles that “the Commission would follow when preparing new initiatives and proposals and when managing and evaluating existing legislation”.¹⁷⁶ However, the guideline documents do not mention SDGs as overarching policy framework. There is no mentioning of the policy coherence with the goals, neither the prerequisite to address the nexus approach. The EU institutions do seem to try to create an overarching document in a form of legislation, but the process towards this goal appears to be comprehensive. Also, in 2018 “the Working Party for the Agenda 2030” has appeared within the EU Council. This working group began to deal more and more with SDGs in the EU context. Indeed, each institution concurs with the various “conclusions”, “reflection papers”, “resolutions” and repeated calls from Council, Parliament, European Economic and Social Committee, The European Committee of the Regions and civil society. The Commission has not yet established any measurable result in a form of the SDGs implementation strategy.¹⁷⁷

There may be different reasons for the lack of a joint SDGs agenda in the EU. One of them is an ongoing debate whether it should be a joint EU strategy or only the Commission’s strategy.¹⁷⁸ Another reason may be hidden in the lack of a common agreement within the member states. Everybody has its own opinion how the process of the establishment of such joint policy should look like. For instance, Czech Republic insists that before the establishment of the strategy there must be a thorough policy analysis on the interconnection of SDGs, policy coherence, gaps analysis etc. to be carried out, which is currently missing. Another point of discussion is related to

¹⁷⁶ Better regulation: guidelines and toolbox, European Commission © European Union, 1995-2020 [Accessed 2020-07-13] Available from: https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation-why-and-how/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox_en#:~:text=General%20principles,of%20the%20law%2Dmaking%20cycle.

¹⁷⁷ DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EXTERNAL POLICIES, Policy department. Europe's approach to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals: Good practices and the way forward [online]. PE 603.473 - February 2019 [2019-02-01] 2019, p. 59- 68.

¹⁷⁸ Representative of the Unit of Sustainable Development, Ministry of Environment of Czech Republic (1), interview by author, Prague, 11.06.2020.

the members states' interests, priorities and states' coalitions. For example, Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary coalition, which tries to slow down a progress regarding the carbon taxes and eradicate such debates, in general, due to the coal-based energy politics. There is no political agreement at EU level.¹⁷⁹ It becomes a question of a spectrum of opinions. And because the agenda is comprehensive and cross-sectional, it is problematic to find a consensus for each party.¹⁸⁰

Europe's joint strategy on SDGs may perhaps appear under the new Commissioner Presidency, Ursula von der Leyen, who has committed to the objective of "making the SDGs a guiding principle for all EU policies."¹⁸¹

4.2.1. Bureaucratic mechanisms

The EU is an active bureaucratically functioning system, which communicates and attempts to coordinate the SDGs agenda.¹⁸² In comparison to other IOs the EU is a significant actor which can influence the national politics as one of the policy advisors at the SD Unit at the MoE affirmed. The EU seeks to be an important engine to integrate SDGs into its policies. The activities of the EU will be always reflected in policy at the domestic level. The EU has, therefore, a direct impact.¹⁸³ According to another representative of the SD Unit at the MoE, the goals are already partly included in the various strategies (for example, biodiversity strategies, Green Deal, etc.). The main activity, how the Union influences the domestic politics, is the establishment of guidelines. Thereby along with the documents emerge additional instructions, mandates, framework positions, meetings of various working groups. Generally speaking, the EU influences its member states' internal implementation process of SD. Indeed, the EU is an active actor in this

¹⁷⁹ Representative of the NGO Hnutí DUHA, NGO Association Green Circle, interview by author, Prague, 17.06.2020.

¹⁸⁰ Representative of the Unit of Sustainable Development, Ministry of Environment of Czech Republic (1), interview by author, Prague, 11.06.2020.

¹⁸¹ LATEK, Marta and Eric PICHON. Understanding the Sustainable Development Goals. EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service, Service PE 644.217, December 2019 [2019-12-13].

¹⁸² Representative of the Department of Urban Policy and Strategies, Department of Regional Policy, Ministry of Regional Development, interview by author, Prague, 17.06.2020.

¹⁸³ Representative of the Unit of Sustainable Development, Ministry of Environment of Czech Republic (1), interview by author, Prague, 11.06.2020.

regard, however, in these activities there is a lack of thorough relevance analysis of the policies, according to the Czech experts.¹⁸⁴

One of the tools to ensure that different policy objectives (initiatives which are likely to have substantial economic, social or environmental impacts) can be weighed, made compatible and – where conflicts arise – are reconciled is the Impact Assessment system. The EU's Impact Assessment system was introduced after the first EU Sustainable Development Strategy. However, currently the Impact Assessment Guidelines was not introduced to the SDGs even after the Commission's embrace of the SDGs in 2015, its pledge to mainstream the SDGs in its 2016 Communication, the 2017 revisions of the Better Regulation Guidelines. Therefore, the EU standards, through which environmental, social and economic sphere legislation goes and has a significant impact on the member states and their politics, do not reflect the sustainability concept. The EU does not interfere in the members states standards, when they might violate the SD principles, which are reflected in the SDGs.

Reporting is also one of the activities the bureaucratic apparatus of the EU does on a regular basis. Monitoring of the implementation of the SDGs is being done in frame of the Eurostat's annual indicator reports¹⁸⁵, deliberately framed and specifically named as “*Sustainable development in the European Union – Monitoring report of the progress towards the SDGs in an EU context*”.¹⁸⁶ The last one was published in the year 2020.¹⁸⁷ While the reports are being published, mentioning that SD initiatives are being supported by the EU, but according to the representative of the SD Unit at the MoE, there is a lack of the analysis. The thorough analysis is missing on, whether the policies are interconnected, which remains to be a crucial aspect of sustainability in general. Moreover, so far there was no report or official document, which would contain an information

¹⁸⁴ Representative of the Unit of Sustainable Development, Ministry of Environment of Czech Republic (2), interview by author, Prague, 12.06.2020.

¹⁸⁵ Eurostat is a statistical office of the European Union. It has its platform on SDGs.

¹⁸⁶ DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EXTERNAL POLICIES, Policy department. Europe's approach to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals: Good practices and the way forward [online]. PE 603.473 - February 2019 [2019-02-01] 2019, p. 68-75.

¹⁸⁷ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, Eurostat. Sustainable development in the European Union — Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context — 2020 edition. 2020-06-22, 2020.

about which targets out of 169 are under the responsibility of the common European policy and which are under the responsibility of the member states.¹⁸⁸

Another significant mechanism, which can potentially influence the further development of the SDGs policy at the EU level, is budget. The currently ongoing negotiation on the Multi-annual Financial Framework (further referred to as “MFF”) 2020-2027 will demonstrate if all actors who are involved in the process, including the Parliament, take into account the support of the SDGs within the future MFF. Noteworthy, by now the Parliament has not yet reflected the sustainability criteria to evaluate the EU budget.¹⁸⁹

The bureaucracy of the EU does not communicate actively with the responsible organ for SDGs – the SD Unit at MoE. When communication is needed, it goes through the Permanent Representation of Czech Republic to the EU and eventually at the state level through the Government office for European affairs to the further instances and other way round. There is a certain centralization in communicating. The EU does communicate with the SD Unit directly when it comes to questionnaires on the SDGs fulfilment.¹⁹⁰

However, during the interview with the focal point at MRD, the interviewed representative conveyed that there is an ongoing cooperation with the EU on new documents, currently prepared jointly, which refer to the Goals. Therefore, the communication regarding these documents’ preparation is in progress.¹⁹¹ Concrete content of the documents was not exposed.

Analysing to what extent the EU can influence the implementation of SDGs in Czech Republic, it is noteworthy that the EU has no enforcement mechanism. Firstly, because there is in principle no overarching document or guidelines of implementing the SDGs in the EU, no established organ or official institution which would be dedicated only to SDGs and potentially maintain the enforcing

¹⁸⁸ Representative of the Unit of Sustainable Development, Ministry of Environment of Czech Republic (2), interview by author, Prague, 12.06.2020.

¹⁸⁹ DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EXTERNAL POLICIES, Policy department. Europe's approach to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals: Good practices and the way forward [online]. PE 603.473 - February 2019 [2019-02-01]. 2019, p. 68-75.

¹⁹⁰ Representative of the Unit of Sustainable Development, Ministry of Environment of Czech Republic (2), interview by author, Prague, 12.06.2020.

¹⁹¹ Representative of the Department of Urban Policy and Strategies, Department of Regional Policy, Ministry of Regional Development, interview by author, Prague, 17.06.2020.

mechanisms. And secondly, the EU has no competence to enforce something as the SDGs implementation at the national level, unless it is a violation of the EU laws.¹⁹²

The representative of the SD Unit evaluates the efforts of the EU in mainstreaming and implementing the SDGs into EU politics as being overall positive, but without thorough analysis, the SDGs agenda can be inefficiently utilized.¹⁹³

4.3. OECD

In the year 2016 OECD adopted a 2030 Agenda and released the document “*Better Policies for 2030. An OECD Action Plan on the Sustainable Development Goals*”. The Action Plan provided to whole OECD a strategy to mainstream achieving of SDGs and implementation of 2030 Agenda in the daily work with the help of different bureaucratic mechanisms of the organization. The agenda is mainly under the Development Co-operation Directorate. It is also reflected within the work of the Development Centre, Committees, Global Fora and regional programmes.

The vision on SDGs is based on three main aspects. First, to support countries based on their identification of their current status and where they need to be by providing a SDGs-based pathway. Second, remain a “leading source of expertise, data, good practices and standards in economic, social and environmental areas of public policy. Third, to improve the policies helping to achieve the SDGs thanks to a bench of OECD tools and mechanism (e.g. peer reviews and learning; monitoring and statistical reporting; policy dialogue; soft law)¹⁹⁴.

Overall, OECD is an active global player in the SDGs issue. During the interviews, the experts from both Czech government and non-government side approved that OECD seeks for support in states, cooperating with them and communicating proactively.

4.3.1. Bureaucratic mechanisms

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Representative of the Unit of Sustainable Development, Ministry of Environment of Czech Republic (2), interview by author, Prague, 12.06.2020.

¹⁹⁴ OECD. *Better Policies for 2030 An OECD Action Plan on the Sustainable Development Goals* [online]. 13 December 2016 [C(2016)166/REV2] [2016-12-13]. 2016, p. 3.

Comparing with the other two IOs' analysed above, the OECD, according to the interviewed officials, has many progressive approaches towards SDGs. The organisation provides mainly policy recommendations and assessments, which are mostly useful, however, non-binding.

One of the action areas is the OECD's support for integrated planning and policymaking at the country level. The organization seeks to upgrade the national mechanisms to plan and implement the SDGs additionally with the help of multi-stakeholder engagement, but also provide space for governments to share experiences and good practices on governing the SDGs. In this the OECD focuses mainly on the policy coherence and expertise.¹⁹⁵

The OECD's approach towards tools and instruments for policy coherence for sustainable development is based on dealing with the linkages between the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. It is complimented with the establishing synergies among them through the policy-making processes and implementation of SDGs with respect to these principles.¹⁹⁶

However, this concept of Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development is criticized by the experts and scholars. Whereas it appears as one of the main political discourses of the organization, its added value for governing sustainable development remains disputable and uncertain because of the focus on rather addressing the concept and formulating policy strategies recommendations with regard to SDGs, instead of actually changing policy objectives or instruments. Both OECD and EU consider this concept of policy coherence for an innovative framework for better policy making. However, the scope of the concept remains very controversial.¹⁹⁷

Nevertheless, one of the mechanisms of enhancement of the SDGs policy coherence in the member states, according to OECD, is a so-called institutional scan. It remains to be an influential tool, used by the organisation to affect the policy making process at the national states level. The institutional scan must be requested by the national government or specific organ, which is

¹⁹⁵ OECD. Better Policies for 2030 An OECD Action Plan on the Sustainable Development Goals [online]. 13 December 2016 [C(2016)166/REV2] [2016-12-13]. 2016, p. 7-8.

¹⁹⁶ OECD. The Sustainable Development Goals: An overview of relevant OECD analysis, tools and approaches. [online] Dec 4, 2015 [2015-12-04]. 2015, p. 4.

¹⁹⁷ ZEIGERMANN, Ulrike. Governing Sustainable development through "Policy coherence"? The production and circulation of knowledge in the EU and the OECD [online]. European Journal of Sustainable Development. 2018, p. 145.

responsible for the SDGs implementation. One of the representatives of the SD Unit confirmed that such a request was proceeded and resulted into an institutional scan of the implementation process of SDGs in Czech Republic.¹⁹⁸ On 25 May 2020, the OECD published the final version of the review of the government's implementation of sustainable development goals (SDGs) in the Czech Republic under the 2030 Agenda. The review focused on the organization of implementation and coordination of the agenda in the Czech Republic. The main recommendations of the OECD are to maintain political commitment and increase the level of inter-ministerial coordination, to integrate SDGs into government budgeting, to strengthen communication and control mechanisms. With regard to progress in the implementation of SDGs, the analysis also shows that the Czech Republic has above-average results in combating poverty (SDG1), reducing inequalities (SDG10), providing clean water and sanitation (SDG6) and biodiversity (SDG15).¹⁹⁹ OECD approved policy recommendations are the OECD's highest “legal instrument”.²⁰⁰ This instrument is however not legally binding. The recommendations do not have to be fulfilled by any particular term and does not appear to be an enforcement mechanism. The organisation does not require the implementation of SDGs with consideration of the OECD’s recommendations; moreover, such a process is initiated by the state itself. As the representative from the indicators working group noticed, the influence of the organisation is, therefore, direct, but not formal. There is no hard order, but a soft version of it – a recommendation.²⁰¹

Another example of the OECD involvement was explained by the representative of MRD. OECD was requested by Czech Republic with regards to policy advisory about Circular economy: Its practices and policies. OECD assisted repetitive from the responsible ministries in the creation of the documents and policies in frame of the temporary Working Group for Circular Czechia, according to the MRD representative.²⁰² Such an assistance gave the OECD insight, inspiration and expert perspective, which was considered for helpful.

¹⁹⁸ Representative of the Unit of Sustainable Development, Ministry of Environment of Czech Republic (2), interview by author, Prague, 12.06.2020.

¹⁹⁹ OECD. Czech Republic, Institutional Scan [online], 2020.

²⁰⁰ Representative of the Unit of Sustainable Development, Ministry of Environment of Czech Republic (2), interview by author, Prague, 12.06.2020.

²⁰¹ Representative of the Committee for Sustainable Development Indicators, Government Council for Sustainable Development of the Czech Republic, Ministry of Environment of Czech Republic, interview by author, Prague, 22.06.2020.

²⁰² Representative of the Department of Urban Policy and Strategies, Department of Regional Policy, Ministry of Regional Development, interview by author, Prague, 17.06.2020.

One of the main approaches, how the OECD operates, is the so-called *territorial approach to the SDG*. The core objectives of this approach are again guiding local policies and strategies; followed by the second objective - tracking and monitoring of the results, where the regional and local governments stand. The first one is focused on how the SDGs are used as means to reshape policies from ground up, manage the trade-offs, plan and allocate the budget. This objective is also supported by the multi-level governance principle. The second one is focused on the measurement of where the cities and regions stand. This objective includes the multi-stakeholder dialogue principle. The aim of such an approach is to direct the regions and cities from sectoral to multi – sectoral sustainable development. This approach addresses the SDGs as the policy- making tools.²⁰³ There are several OECD Working Parties that work on the territorial approach projects. By now one of the pilot projects has finished, mainly running in 9 cities and regions: City of Bonn (Germany), Province of Cordoba, (Argentina), Region of Flanders (Belgium), City of Kitakyushu (Japan), Municipality of Kópavogur (Iceland), City of Moscow (Russia), State of Parana (Brazil), Region of Southern Denmark (Denmark), County of Viken (Norway). For 2 years, together with local and OECD experts, they could follow the process of the policy making using SDGs, its targets and indicators as the means. The project demonstrated several key findings, which can be found in the synthesis report.²⁰⁴ One of the biggest results of this pilot project is the creation of a web-tool for cities and regions.²⁰⁵ Aim of this tool is to make the data intuitive for the end-user (mainly regions and cities) and to create the peer’s alike comparison to share the good practices and to self-improve. However, the representative from the MRD doubts whether this tool would be used by the authorities. She explained that the authorities would simply not find the time to browse the tool. Another result is data related. The Working Party on Territorial Indicators thanks to this project identified 105 relevant targets and 130 indicators for the sub-national area, which allow monitoring progress of regions and cities.²⁰⁶

“Approaching territorially, OECD further narrowly collaborates with the local and regional governments through other projects and has to certain extent direct impact on the policies at the

²⁰³ OECD. A Territorial Approach to the Sustainable Development Goals: Synthesis report [online]. Paris: OECD Publishing, OECD Urban Policy Reviews, 2020.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Please see the tool available from: <https://www.oecd-local-sdgs.org/>

²⁰⁶ OECD. A Territorial Approach to the Sustainable Development Goals: Synthesis report [online]. Paris: OECD Publishing, OECD Urban Policy Reviews, 2020.

national level. Indeed, OECD communicates pro-actively, in Czech Republic especially with the MRD in this regard. The respondent confirmed that in several departments of MRD which deal with SDGs they are part of the OECD's Working Party on Urban Policy and OECD's Working Party on Territorial Indicators. Mainly communication runs between them and the OECD bureaucratic apparatus, but also with the individual states and cities about the progress.

Furthermore, the representatives from the governments and bureaucratic staff come together twice a year within different thematical meetings (Working Parties, Committees) to discuss the principles of addressing the goals, improvement of the policies, present best practices and establish the network.²⁰⁷ Representatives from MRD and MLSA are often commenting on the documents and policies of OECD.

OECD also provides the educational workshops and webinars, which carry out informative sessions about the SDGs for the purpose of improving the policy-making process.²⁰⁸ This was also confirmed in the Chair of the Subcommittee on sustainable development in Chamber of Deputies. The respondent confirmed that together with one of the OECD Commission there was online consultation about the Goals in the form of a discussion. She further explained that OECD usually addresses the parties, which could potentially have interest from the government side. The Subcommittee on sustainable development showed interest, consequently the consultation took form as an acquaintance with the goals of SDGs.²⁰⁹

Monitoring is also one of the key action areas on which OECD closely collaborates and communicates with the stakeholders at the nation state level. A data focused approach is a main principle in this area. OECD is already holding huge amounts of information – both quantitative and qualitative – that can support with the SDGs follow-up actions. The member states can, therefore, examine their SDGs starting positions and progress using the OECD tools, reports and

²⁰⁷ Representative of the Department of Urban Policy and Strategies, Department of Regional Policy, Ministry of Regional Development, interview by author, Prague, 17.06.2020.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Representative of the Chamber of Deputies, the SD topic belongs to the Subcommittee on sustainable development, which is a part of the Committee on Environment, interview by author, Prague, 22.06.2020.

analyses.²¹⁰ One of the key outcomes of such approach is the regular report “Measuring Distance to the SDG Targets”²¹¹, which compares the countries’ progress and success.

Some scholars suggest that the OECD data is better, meaning that they are assumed to be of higher quality and consistency, than the data in the UN Global Database. The OECD data “meets more demanding international statistical standards, uses a more precise definition of productivity, is highly harmonised across OECD countries”.²¹² One of the reasons can be that OECD has proven its proactive data gathering communication. The MRD representative assured that OECD actively asks the MRD staff to fill in tables, questionnaires on indicators and general information about SDGs in Czech Republic. After processing, OECD staff sends back to the Czech ministerial bureaucracies the overall feedback with additional reports with the good practice.²¹³

The organisation has a huge impact on the countries also through financing the SDGs. Direct Official development assistance or investment promotion help to create opportunities for the development and manage own domestic resources through capacity building and sharing of good practice.²¹⁴ This is, however, not relevant for Czech Republic, since the financial support is aimed to support the developing countries.

4.4. Summary

According to the hypothesis H2, based on the constructivist theory, the bureaucracies of IOs have their own vision of the implementation of SDGs, they are actively involved in the implementation process at the domestic level in Czech Republic and they communicate with the actors proactively in this regard.

However, as this chapter has shown, this is not always the case. Hypothesis H2 is disproved based on the analysis provided in this chapter. IOs do not seem to have a significant direct influence over

²¹⁰ OECD. Better Policies for 2030 An OECD Action Plan on the Sustainable Development Goals [online]. 13 December 2016 [C(2016)166/REV2] [2016-12-13]. 2016, p. 6-7.

²¹¹ OECD. Measuring Distance to the SDG Targets 2019: An Assessment of Where OECD Countries Stand [online]. Paris: OECD Publishing, 2019. [Accessed 2020-07-16] Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1787/a8caf3fa-en>.

²¹² SHINWELL, Michal and Guillaume COHEN. Measuring countries’ progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: methodology and challenges [online]. *Evolutionary and Institutional Economics Review*. 2020, p.167-172.

²¹³ Representative of the Regional Development Strategy Management Department, Department of Regional Policy, Ministry of Regional Development, interview by author, Prague, 18.06.2020.

²¹⁴ OECD. The Sustainable Development Goals: An overview of relevant OECD analysis, tools and approaches. [online] Dec 4, 2015 [2015-12-04]. 2015, p.7.

the established priorities by national governments. There are several areas of the main activities of IOs. These are expertise (recommendations) of the ongoing progress on SDGs, creation of the global “norm” in a form of global data set of indicators as well as financial and technical assistance supporting the SDGs.

Nevertheless, the expertise and recommendations (mostly provided by UN and OECD) carry out a voluntary non-binding aspect. Moreover, the expertise is often being done upon a request from the interested party – a state. Mostly the tools or mechanisms are aimed to make the data intuitive for local authorities for the purposes of better policy coherence, self-improvement and inspiration by other good practises.

At the global and regional level all three organizations – UN, EU and OECD – measure regularly the distance to the SDG targets and provide data with regards to the implementation of the SDGs worldwide.²¹⁵ The organisations also contribute with specific information on each country, including Czech Republic. This is foremost the only reason, why the IOs’ bureaucracies communicate with their member states – to gather relevant data for further processing. Another goal of creating a global indicator, which can have potentially an impact on the states, is not yet achieved. The SD scholars and experts identify gaps within SDGs indicators dataset within all three organisations, the indicators seem to be weak not thorough nor conclusive.

The financial aid has proven to have an impact on the sustainable agenda within the country. For the Czech Republic it is not relevant, since it is regarded as a developed country. It is more likely that the degree of influence rises on the countries which are dependent on the external financial support. However, the developed countries are not influenced much by this fact, because the IOs have power over the countries, within which the resources and assistance is allocated.²¹⁶

Furthermore, the organisations have mostly no enforcement mechanisms to impose some specific framework of implementation of specifically SDGs related policies. Within three IOs, only EU

²¹⁵ OECD. Measuring Distance to the SDG Targets 2019: An Assessment of Where OECD Countries Stand [online]. Paris: OECD Publishing. 2019, p. 66.

²¹⁶ FORESTIER, Oana and Rakhyun E KIM. Cherry-picking the Sustainable Development Goals: Goal prioritization by national governments and implications for global governance [online]. Sustainable Development. 2020, p.7.

has an enforcement mechanism – creation of legislation – which is, however, not yet applied with regards to the SDGs agenda.

All in all, although all three IOs do promote SDGs and can shape some specific policies by inspiring national states with the good practices of other locations and non-binding expertise, IOs do not have a direct influence on the states policies. They did not prove to interfere within the domestic SDGs policy-making process in Czech Republic and be actively involved within the process at the domestic level. The bureaucracies of the IOs are actively involved in the process of meeting the SDGs by 2030 globally, but not with regards to the implementation process on the national level. The potential impact is therefore not direct and not formal. Therefore, hypothesis H2 cannot be confirmed with respect to the Czech Republic.

Conclusion

This master thesis research was dealing with the process of the implementation of SDGs in Czech Republic. The aim of the research was to map a process of the implementation of SDGs in the country and to analyse to what extent Czech Republic behaves independently of IOs, namely UN, EU and OECD, in the question of implementing the SDGs.

The first chapter provided two theoretical approaches: Neoliberal institutionalism and social constructivism. According to the former, the implementation is driven by the states, so that they decide on the means of implementation independently. The latter suggests that the implementation is somewhat affected or influenced by the IOs, thus, the process of the implementation is dependent on the IOs. Based on the two approaches two hypotheses H1 and H2 were developed.

The second chapter gave mainly an overview of the implementation process of SDGs in Czech Republic. From the institutional perspective, the performance and coordination of the sustainable development agenda is in the responsibility of the Ministry of Environment of Czech Republic. The head of the Ministry of Environment maintains the control function, while the responsible ministries are primarily accountable for sector implementation. They carry the executive function. The activities with regards to SD in the country are administratively and technically ensured by the Unit of Sustainable Development, which maintains the duties of communication and coordination of the agenda with focal points within the state governance and other responsible for

the SDGs players and bodies. The global Agenda 2030 has met in Czech Republic a form of the locally adapted agenda - Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030, which is supplemented by the concrete Implementation plan. The evaluation of the progress is provided by the Unit of Sustainable Development based on the national indicators that compensate the lack of data at the global level by using other locally based relevant indicators to map more nationally specific challenges and successes. Already throughout this chapter the reader can notice that the reality of the implementation process shows the tendency that the implementation is dependent mostly on the Czech state government institutions.

The aim of the third chapter was to test hypothesis H1, with the result that it can be partly confirmed. In accordance with the neoliberal institutionalist perspective, Czech state institutions implement the SDGs policy. The Goals are taken in consideration in regional and municipal policies and claimed to ensure the linkage between the comprehensive strategic document through sectoral and ministerial strategies at national and regional levels. Furthermore, Czech Republic government has its own vision of the implementation of SDGs in a form of a locally adapted document Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030. IOs carry out their function in a passive and informational way. In accordance with the conducted interviews, the bureaucracies of all three IOs communicate with the ministerial representatives mainly regarding the questionnaires on the fulfilment of the SDGs related data and progress in the country, occasionally also in regard to the IOs' SDGs related expertise, which is always requested by the Czech side. However, the hypothesis was not fully confirmed, because the current government does not take the development Agenda 2030 as a priority. While the former government approached SD agenda as a priority for the further development of Czech Republic – it tended to set up mechanisms for SD in the Czech Republic and fulfil the Goals – the current government lags behind in prioritizing it. The current Prime Minister and the current policy statement do not approach SDGs agenda as a priority for the state. The Government Council for Sustainable Development was moved from the Government Office to the Ministry of Environment, which shows somewhat the shift in priorities of the current government.

For the hypothesis H2 few evidences were found within the analysis provided in the fourth chapter. Throughout the analysis there were no indications of a clear specific IOs' vision of the implementation process of SDGs, as a “norm”, which they would consequently tend to enforce to

their members states. In fact, they do not. One of the hypothetical ways of creating such a global norm, however, can be seen in a tendency of creating a global set of indicators. When creating a set of global measurement of SD, IOs create an ontological reality with the norms of measurement, and consequently, norms of SD worldwide. This can be interpreted as an attempt of the IOs' effect on the states towards reaching the SDGs in accordance with the global SD norms. However, the scholars suggest that such means of collective action across the bigger territorial scope, for example the globe, demands extensive kinds of knowledge, which is extremely hard to gather.²¹⁷ Furthermore, during the analysis the certain gaps of such a global set were discovered. The current indicators of the SDGs are not thorough nor conclusive, some global indicators examined to be weak in comprehensive methodology and must be improved.²¹⁸ The global set of indicators is, thus, not finalized. Therefore, the Czech experts tend to use a national indicator set, which can compensate the lack of data at the global level by using other relevant indicators to map more nationally specific challenges and successes.²¹⁹ Clearly, the UN, EU and OECD has the actively engaged bureaucratic staff, which deals with the SDGs proactively by organizing the high-level events, summits, informal meetings to disseminate the good practices, specific cases and examples of “know-how” about the SD and SDGs in particular. However, these activities do not directly and formally influence the implementation process on the national level. Thus, the hypothesis H2 was not confirmed. It is also noteworthy that non-government sphere as well as business sphere in Czech Republic are barely in touch with the IOs regarding the SDGs. Therefore, one of the main points of reference throughout the research was the sphere of government.

The research also suggests further proposition. The government of Czech Republic needs to raise the awareness and give the Agenda 2030 – CR 2030 respectively – a higher priority. It is crucial, that such an important agenda, as development agenda CR 2030 has the support at the highest political level, i.e. the support of the Prime Minister and the government. Currently, it is seen by many experts as a certain challenge in Czech Republic.

²¹⁷ MALITO, Debora Valentina, Gaby UMBACH and Nehal BHUTA, ed. The Palgrave handbook of indicators in global governance [online]. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. 2017, p. 1-6.

²¹⁸ SANER, Raymond, Lichia YIU and Christian KINGOMBE. The 2030 Agenda compared with six related international agreements: valuable resources for SDG implementation [online]. Sustainability Science. 2019, p. 1691

²¹⁹ CZECH REPUBLIC, Ministry of the Environment. Pilotní Zpráva o naplňování Agendy 2030 pro udržitelný rozvoj v České republice (Pilot Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Czech Republic), reg. č.: CZ.03.4.74/0.0/0.0/15_019/00014042. [online], 11. 6. 2020 [2020-06-11].

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Appendix 1

English version

"Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals: the case of the Czech Republic"

Questions for the interviews

1. What is your role in the process of shaping the policies of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Czech Republic?
2. How is the implementation of SDGs different from those policies that have nothing to do with sustainability?
3. How exactly does the process of implementing policies related to SDGs function in Czech Republic? How exactly are these Goals met?
4. Who or what influences the creation and implementation of these policies the most?
5. Do you think that, in general, states behave independently in SDG policies? Resp. what influence do international organizations (IOs) have on the development of these policies at the national level within the business sphere?
6. I would now like to turn to a few questions concerning international institutions or organizations and their bureaucracies, meaning such players as the UN, EU, OECD, etc. Is there any active communication (or dialogue) between you and the apparatus of these mentioned organizations (e.g. communication with the EU Commission, UNDP, OECD Development Centre, WTO, etc.)?
7. Do you think that the bureaucracies of international organizations plays an active role?
8. Do you have any idea how specifically the IOs could influence the policymaking of SDGs, if at all?
9. In the last phase, I would ask about the un/successfulness of sustainable development policies in the Czech Republic. To what extent is it affected by the economic, political or international situation?

Appendix 2

Czech version

"Implementace Cílů udržitelného rozvoje: případ České republiky“

Otázky k rozhovorům

1. Jaká je Vaše role v procesu utváření politik Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) v ČR?
2. Čím se liší implementace SDGs politik od těch, které nemají s udržitelností nic společného?
3. Jak přesně funguje proces implementace v ČR? Jak se konkrétně tyto Cíle naplňují?
4. Kdo nebo co nejvíce ovlivňuje tvoření a implementaci těchto politik?
5. Myslíte si, že se státy v politikách SDGs chovají nezávisle? Jaký mají mezinárodní organizace (MO) vliv na tvorbu těchto politik na národní úrovni?
6. Nyní bych přešla na pár otázek, které se týkají mezinárodních institucí či organizací a jejich byrokratického aparátu. Jedná se o takové hráče jako OSN, EU, OECD apod. Probíhá vůbec aktivní komunikace nebo dialog mezi státy (konkrétně ČR) a aparáty těchto zmíněných organizací (probíhá např. komunikace s Komisí EU, UNDP, Rozvojovým centrem OECD)?
7. Myslíte si, že byrokratický aparát mezinárodních organizací plní aktivní roli?
8. Napadá Vás, jak konkrétně by MO mohli ovlivňovat tvoření politik SDGs, pokud se to vůbec děje?
9. V poslední fázi bych se zeptala na ne/úspěšnost politik udržitelného rozvoje v ČR. Do jaké míry je to ovlivněno ekonomickou, politickou či mezinárodní situací?

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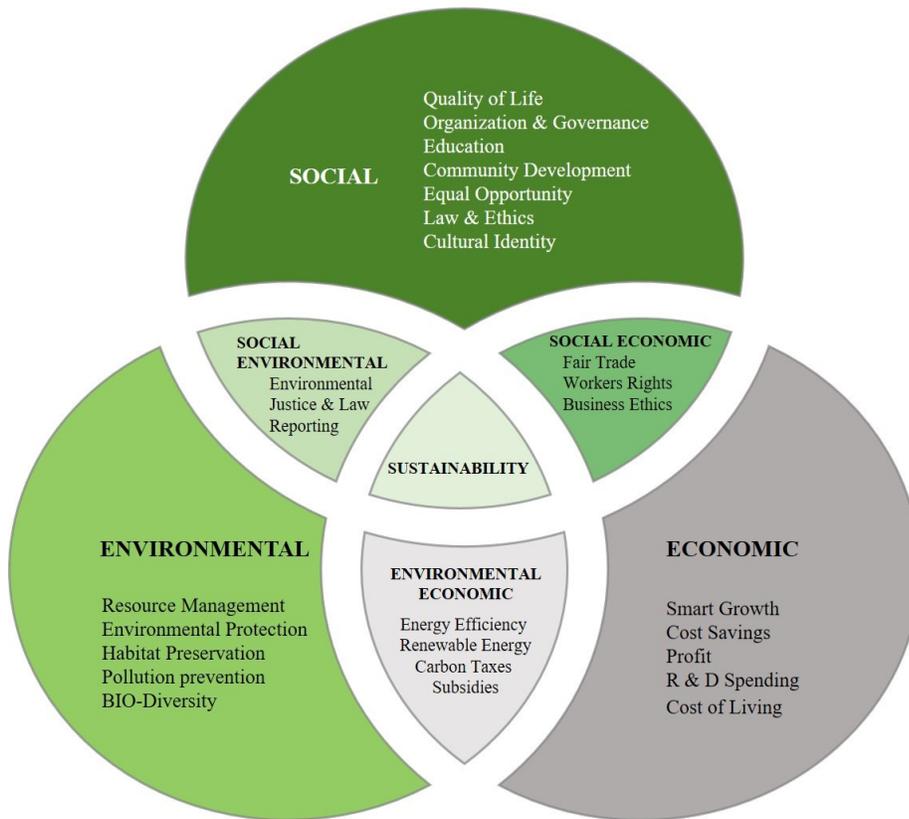


Figure 2. Three pillars of sustainable development.

Source: Adapted by author from AMINUDDIN, Adam Shariff Adli and NAWAWI, Mohd Kamal Mohd. Investigation of the Philosophy Practised in Green and Lean Manufacturing Management. 2013. International Journal of Customer Relationship Marketing and Management.

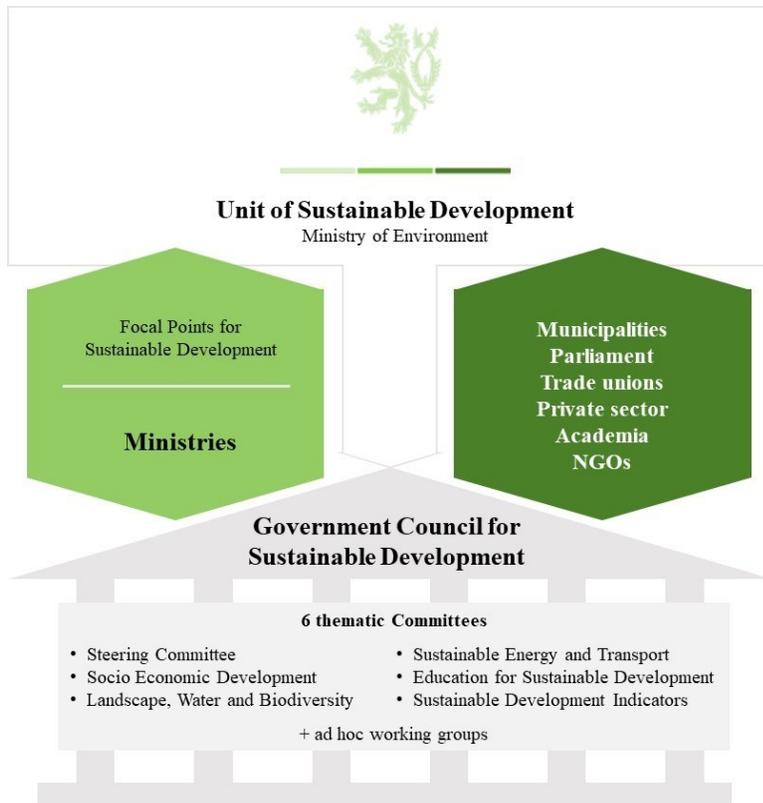


Figure 2. Sustainable development interaction model in Czech Republic.
Source: Created by author

Implementation Plan 2018

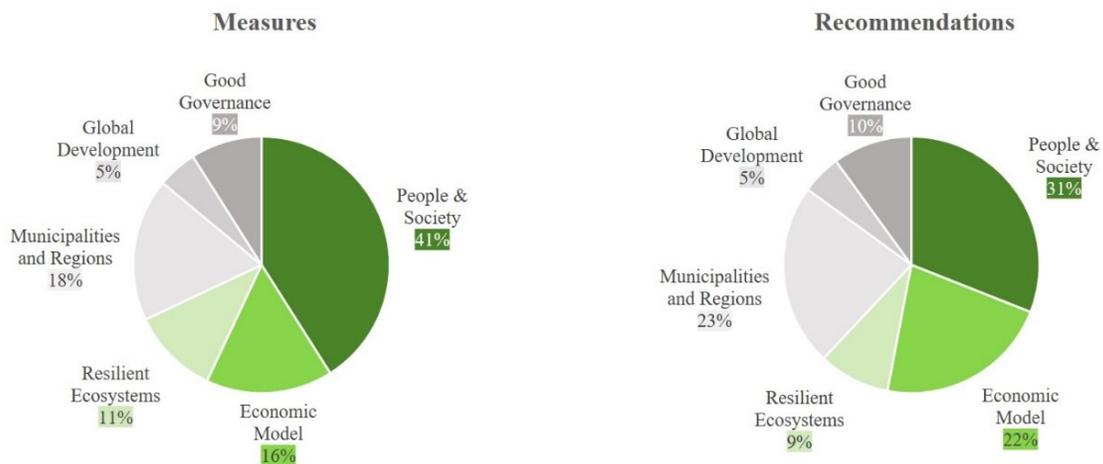


Figure 3 Measures and recommendations stated in the Implementation Plan 2018
Source: Adapted by author from MARES, Jan. Strategické plány ČR a udržitelný rozvoj (Strategic plans CR and sustainable development) [prezentace] Praha: Poslanecká sněmovna, 19. února 2019. [2019-02-19].

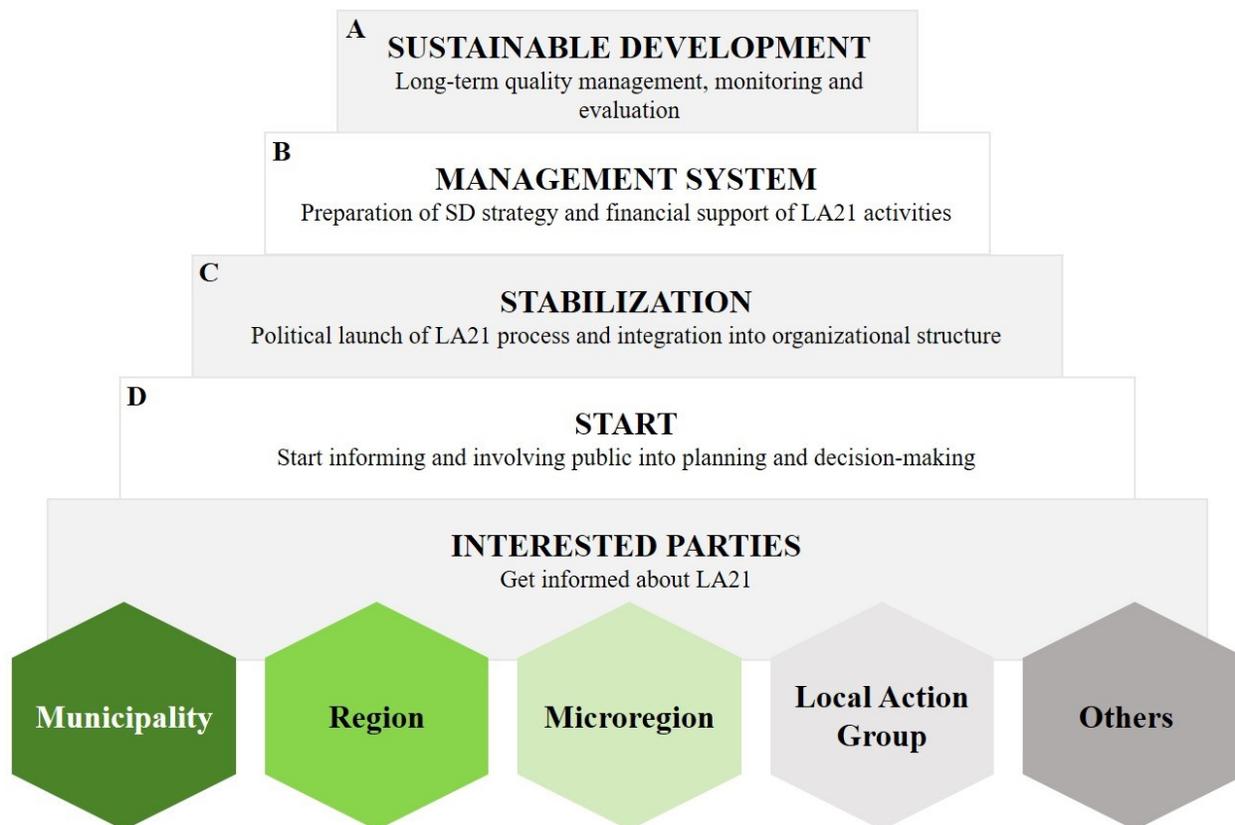


Figure 4. Local Agenda 21 evaluation process towards sustainable development.
 Source: Adapted by author from Pro veřejnost (For public), místní Agenda 21[online]. © 2017 CENIA [Accessed 2020-06-07]
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Sustainable Development Goals
Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries.
Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

Table 1. Sustainable Development Goals

Source: UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY. Transforming our world : the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 21 October 2015, A/RES/70/1.

Year	Institution
2003 - 2006	Government Office
2006 - 2014	Ministry of Environment
2014 - 2018	Government Office
2018 – till now	Ministry of Environment

Table 2. Institutional background of SD in Czech Republic.

Source: Created by author

The progress of Czech Republic	SDGs
<i>Met fully</i>	SDG 1 “No Poverty”, SDG 6 “Clean water and sanitation”, SDG 8 “Decent work and economic growth”
<i>Challenges remaining but moderately improving</i>	SDG 10 “Reduced inequalities”, SDG 11 “Sustainable cities and communities”, SDG 15 “Life on land” and SDG 16 “Peace, justice and strong institutions”
<i>Significant challenges remaining</i>	SDG 2 “Zero hunger”, SDG 3 “Good health and well-being”, SDG 4 “Quality education”, SDG 7 “Affordable and clean energy”, SDG 9 “Industry, innovation and infrastructure”, SDG 12 “Responsible consumption and production”
<i>Major challenges remaining</i>	SDG 13 “Climate action” and SDG 17 “Partnerships for the goals”

Table 3. Progress of Czech Republic based on the 2020 Sustainable Development Report.
Source: SACHS, Jeffrey et al. The Sustainable Development Goals and Covid-19. Sustainable Development Report 2020.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2020.