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Follow-up and review of sustainable development in Finland

Secretariat of the National Commission on Sustainable Development



**PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE
FINLAND**



1 Introduction

Finland has measured the state and trends of sustainable development with a set of indicators since year 2000. The set of indicators was last updated in 2013, and consists of 39 indicators. The indicators have been anchored in the eight objectives of the **national SD strategy, called the Society's Commitment** to Sustainable Development.

Despite this long tradition, the information provided by the indicators has not been utilised to its full potential in public dialogue and political decision-making concerning sustainable development. One key reason for this has been the lack of established practices for the interpretation of changes in the indicator values, and public discussion on these interpretations from the perspective of sustainable development.

In the national implementation plan for the 2030 Agenda "Sustainable Development in Finland – Long-term, Coherent and Inclusive Action" the Government has decided to reinforce national indicator-based discussion on the state of sustainable development by establishing ***a follow-up and review system that enables shared learning, increased understanding and multi-voiced interpretation of indicator data.***

The task to develop this new follow-up and review system was given to the national SD indicator and follow-up -network, which is composed of Finnish experts on sustainable development representing the administration, civil society, private sector, and research and academic community. The work was conducted during the winter 2017.

2 Background for the follow-up and review system

The realization of the 2030 Agenda's 17 goals and 169 targets in Finland is monitored by using the 230 global indicators. The UN uses this data to compile the annual SDG Progress Report for the purposes of global follow-up and review at the HLPF. However, the global indicators alone do not provide sufficient information to address Finland's national sustainable development challenges. This is why an additional set of national sustainable development indicators is needed.

The national implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Finland is based on Society's Commitment's vision, principles and goals, which constitute the long-term strategies for the work on sustainable development in Finland. This means that also the follow-up and review of the state and progress of sustainable development in Finland is constructed around the Society's Commitment and its eight objectives.

The Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development was updated in 2016 to bring it in line with the 2030 Agenda.

Objectives of the Society's Commitment:

Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda:



Figure 1: Correspondence between the objectives of the Society's Commitment and the goals of the 2030 Agenda (SDGs)

3 National follow-up and review system

The national SD indicator and follow-up -network completed its work in May 2017, when the follow-up system was presented to the National Commission on Sustainable Development. The follow-up system aims to a) produce systematically collected and objective indicator data on matters that are relevant for the objectives of the Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development, b) create multi-voiced dialogue on the interpretations of changes in the indicator values from the perspective of sustainable development, and c) produce data and views on the linkages between policies and sustainable development issues that are relevant from the perspective of political decision-making.

The **national follow-up and review system** is anchored in the **eight objectives of the Society's Commitment**. As the objectives of the Commitment are distant in time and partly quite abstract, it is difficult to use them directly to derive indicators that would support everyday policy-making.

In the follow-up system everyday policy-making is linked to the eight objectives of the Commitment via **ten indicator baskets**. All indicator baskets, each composed of 4 - 5 indicators, are connected to more than one objective. The baskets draw attention to entities that are relevant in terms of political decision-making. The baskets also serve as the framework for discussions on interpretations.

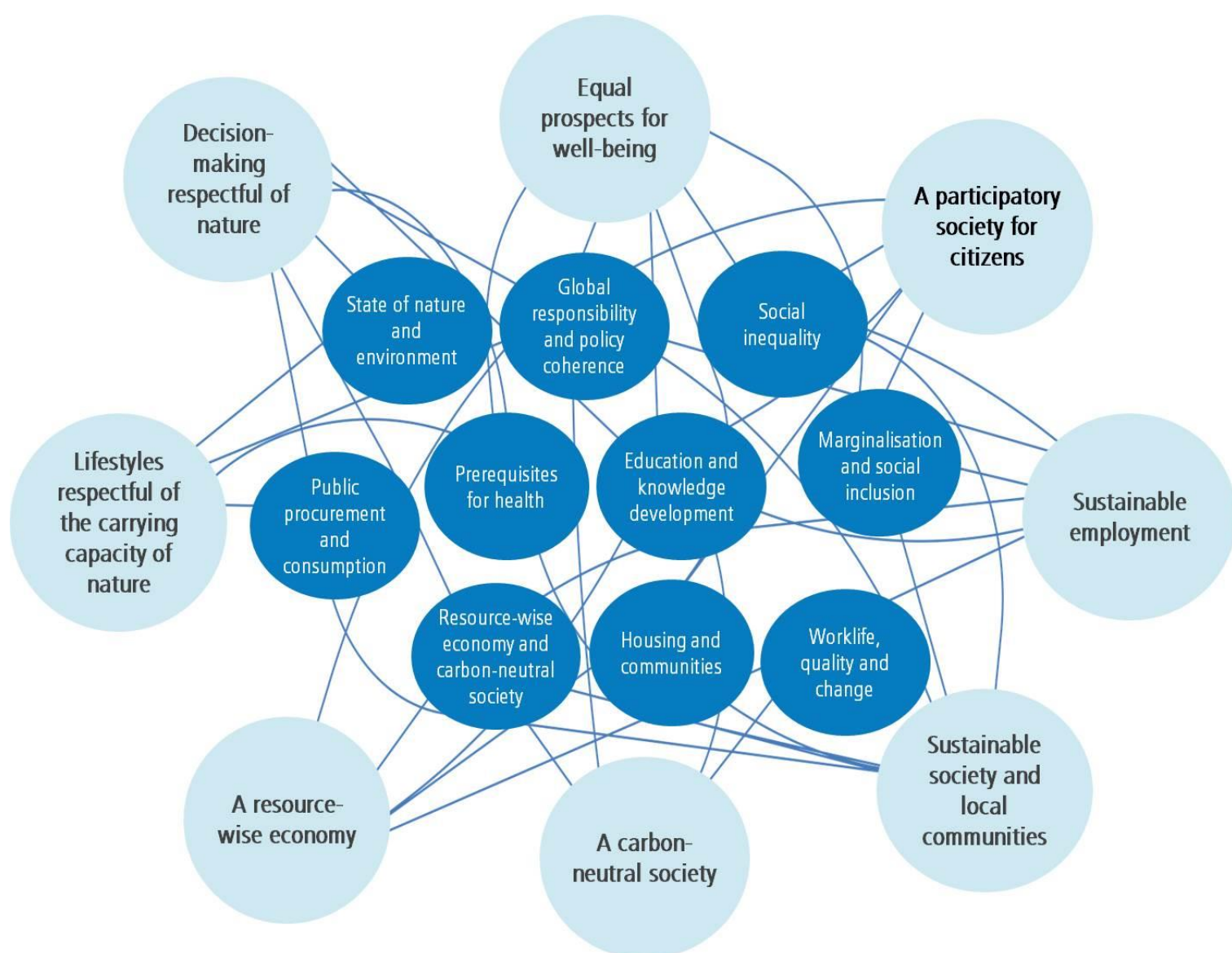


Figure 2: Objectives of the Society's Commitment and indicator baskets of the monitoring system

The indicators in each basket will be updated once a year. At the time of indicator update, also an initial interpretation will be made by relevant authorities. The purpose of this initial interpretation is to give an idea of the significance of the change in the indicator value from the perspective of sustainable development.

After indicator update and initial interpretation, a public dialogue will be launched where anyone can present interpretations of their own on the significance of the change in the indicator value, as well as introduce new supplementary information that could contribute to the discussion. The aim is an open and multi-voiced discussion on interpretations based on the indicator data. The aim is to create inputs for political decision-making.

The discussion on interpretations takes place on the monitoring platform to be made available at the sustainable development website of the Prime Minister's Office (kestavakehitys.fi). The discussion takes place on a rolling basis so that each month (except for the summer months) a discussion is launched on a certain basket. Thus all baskets will be updated once each year.

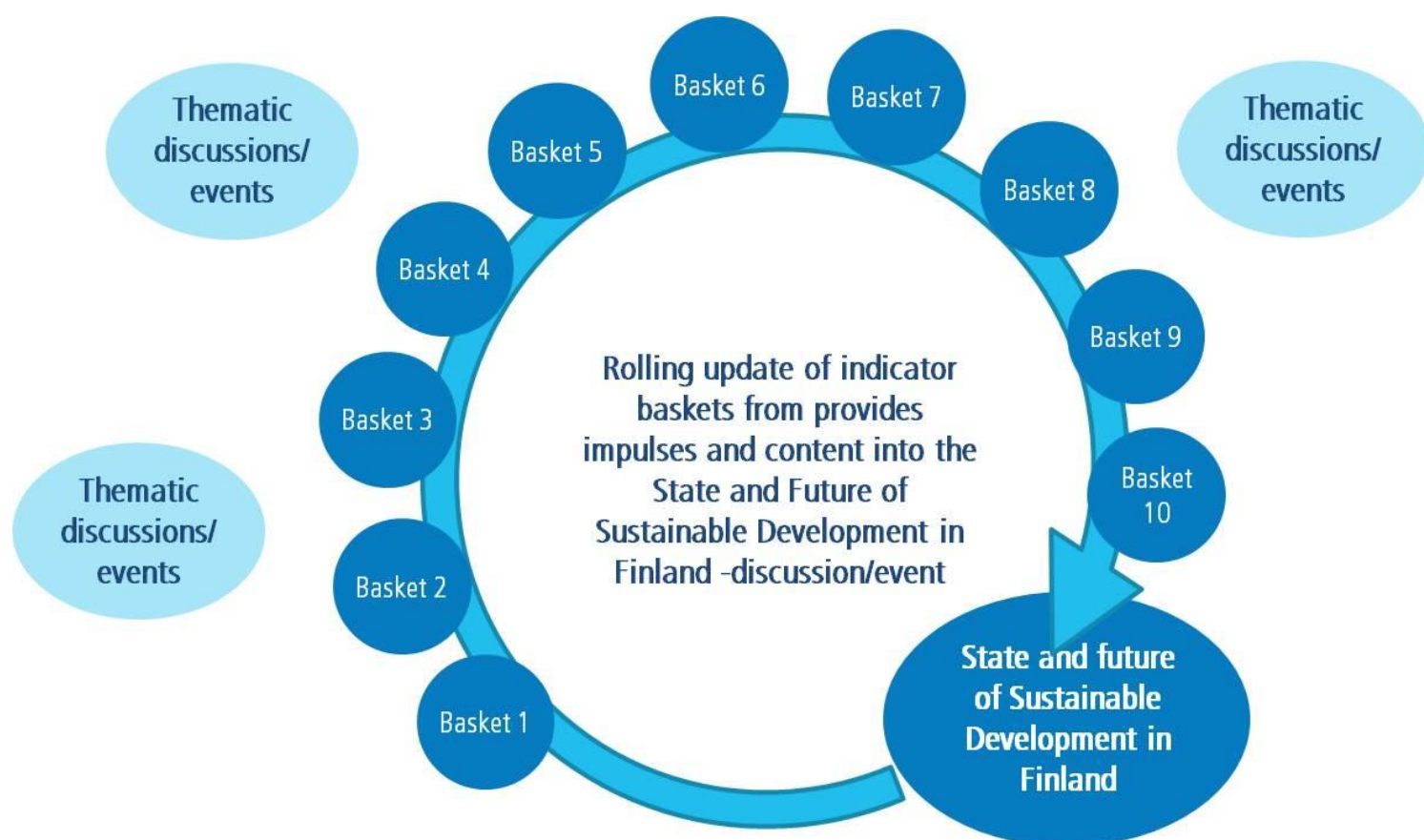


Figure 3: An annual timetable / rolling update of indicator baskets

Once a year, after the update of all baskets, an annual event on the state and future of sustainable development will be organised by the National Commission on Sustainable Development and the Prime Minister's Office. The purpose of the annual event is both to review the progress of sustainable development in the light of the indicator data and interpretations, and to reflect on the outlook for the future through the national foresight work. The event is held at the same time when the Parliament discusses the Government's Annual Report to the Parliament.

Besides the annual monitoring based on the indicators, a report on the state of sustainable development in Finland is drawn up every four years. This report gives a more long-term picture with a broader perspective of how Finland is proceeding with the implementation of sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda.

Every four years an external and independent evaluation is conducted on the progress made in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

4 Next steps

The use of the indicators and the interpretation platform will start in autumn 2017. The interpretation platform is available at the sustainable development website (kestavakehitys.fi) maintained by the Prime Minister's Office.

The updating and development of the indicators takes place within the baskets, and the indicators included in each basket may also be changed. The needs for update observed in the first year will be discussed at the meeting of the National Commission on Sustainable Development in spring 2018. The functioning of the monitoring system will be evaluated in 2019 as part of the evaluation of the national implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

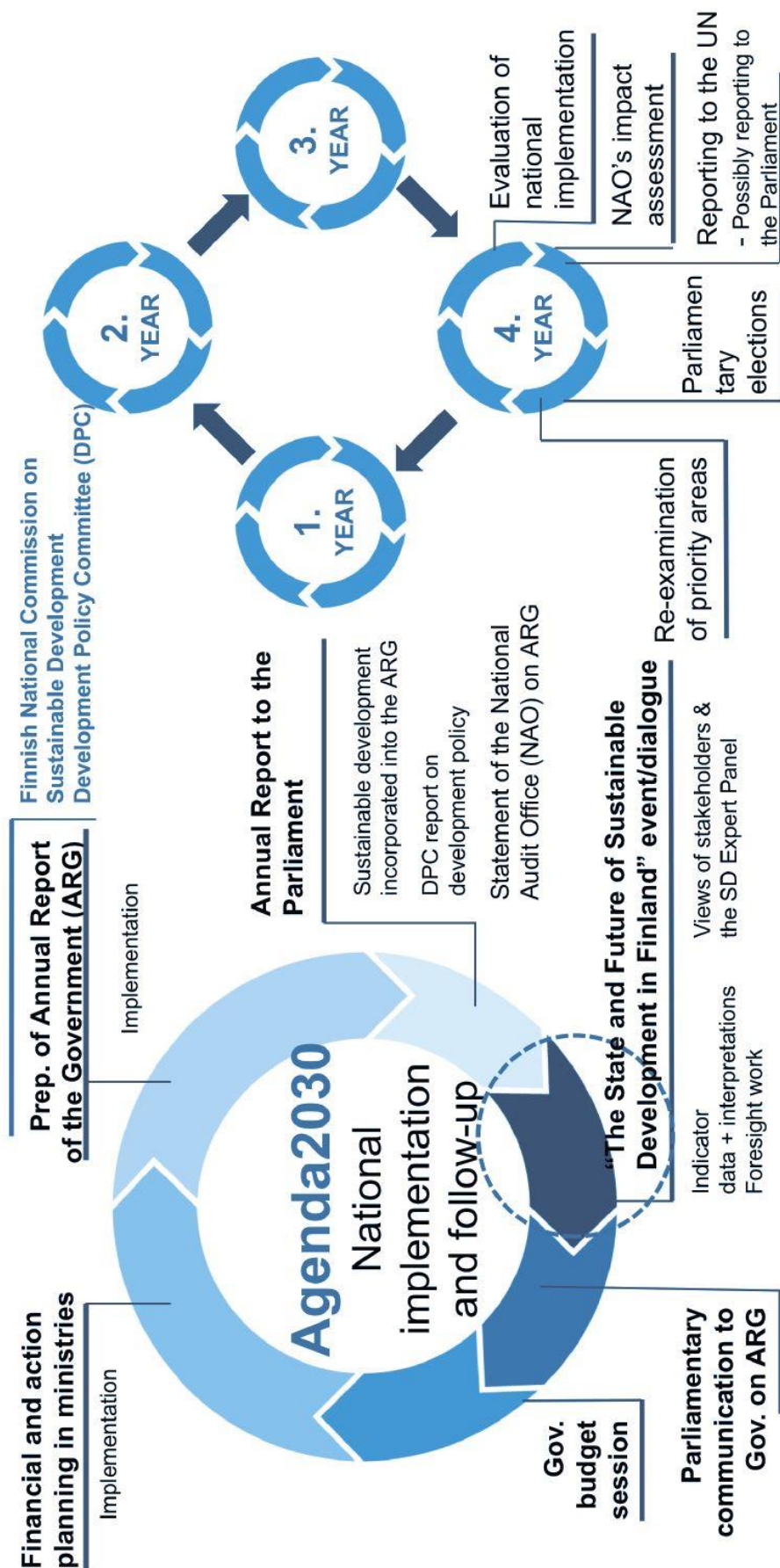


Figure 4: Annual timetable of the monitoring and evaluation of the national implementation and description of the four-year electoral cycle



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