



Think globally, act locally: Implementing the sustainable development goals in Montenegro



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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

SDGs
Indicators
Sustainable development strategy
Monitoring & Reporting
Montenegro

ABSTRACT

Following the UN adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015, the Government of Montenegro entered in the final phase of revising of National Strategy for Sustainable Development (*NSSD 2030*). Under the supervision of the National Council for Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Integrated Coastal Zone Management, an NSSD team of national and international experts was assembled under the coordination of the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism. To demonstrate commitment to the UN 2030 Agenda, Montenegro decided to center the *NSSD 2030* on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), targets and indicators. One of the first UN member countries to implement the UN 2030 Agenda within the national policy context, Montenegro adopted its *NSSD 2030* on July 7, 2016. As members of the NSSD team, here we 1) describe how the UN 2030 Agenda has been implemented within the policy context of Montenegro's *NSSD 2030*, and 2) focus on the identification of the *NSSD 2030* monitoring and reporting framework. Our key finding is that 26 institutions will be handling data for assessing 137 out of the 241 (56.8%) SDG indicators in the first reporting period scheduled for 2019. Although the paper deals with the implementation of the SDGs in Montenegro and its implications, we believe it will be useful in informing other countries in their process of national transposition and operationalization of the UN 2030 Agenda.

1. Introduction

The Government of Montenegro adopted its first National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSSD) in April 2007, together with an Action Plan for the period 2007–2012 (Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Protection, 2007). This national strategy was designed based on the guidelines and goals of then-current national strategic documents, the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) (UNEP, 2005), Agenda 21 recommendations (UN, 1992), the Johannesburg Plan for Implementation (UN WSSD, 2001), the Millennium Declaration (UN, 2000), and the conclusions and recommendations of the UN Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) (UN CSD, 2001).

Since then, many changes have taken place in Montenegro, particularly in terms of reforms related to EU accession (Đurović, 2017a,b) and harmonization of national legislation with the EU Acquis on environment and climate change (Government of Montenegro, 2016). Moreover, new sustainable development initiatives have been launched regionally (e.g., the revision of the Mediterranean Strategy for

Sustainable Development (UNEP, 2016)) and globally (Sachs, 2012), prompting the need for a thorough revision of the NSSD.

In September 2015, world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (hereafter UN 2030 Agenda) – including 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets – to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change (UN, 2015). This Agenda, built upon the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), was developed through a participatory process over a three-year period (Sachs, 2013).

Although not legally binding, the UN 2030 Agenda is intended as the reference point for international development, calling on governments to translate the global SDGs into national targets and policies, to formulate a clear, long-term vision of national development (Lucas et al., 2016) and to set country-specific goals, targets and priorities depending on national conditions and capabilities (Weitz et al., 2015).

In March 2016, a global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals – identified and proposed by the Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDG indicators (IEAG-SDGs) – was agreed by the 47th Session of the UN Statistical Commission (UN Statistical Commission,

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Table 1

Overview of the thematic areas and the strategic goals of the *NSSD 2030*. Further details on the *NSSD*'s measures and sub-measures to be achieved by 2030 are provided in the *NSSD 2030* (MSDT, 2016b) as well as in Table S1 of the Supplementary online material.

Thematic Areas	NSSD Goals
Human Resources (improvement of the state of human resources and strengthening of social inclusion)	1. Improve demographic trends and reduce demographic deficit
Social Resources (support values, norms and behavioral patterns of importance for society's sustainability)	2. Improve health of citizens of all ages and reduce inequalities in health status 3. Ensure inclusive and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all 4. Stimulate active relationship between key actors and development sustainability
Natural Resources (Conservation of Natural Capital)	5. Develop a system of values in accordance with the community sustainable development goals 6. Develop the state as an efficient rule of law 7. Overcome the managerial deficit problems and strengthen socially responsible business 8. Stimulate employability and social inclusion 9. Improve the importance of culture as a fundamental value of spiritual, social and economic development which significantly improve citizens' life quality 10. Establish an efficient and modern system of integrated protection, management and sustainable use of cultural heritage and landscape 11. Achieve equal socio-economic development in all local self-government units and regions based on competitiveness, innovations and employment, with specific emphasis on the Northern region 12. Stop degradation of values of renewable energy sources: biodiversity, water, sea, air, soil 13. Improve the efficiency of renewable natural resource management 14. Enable symbiosis of effects of environmental performance improvement and protection of human health 15. Solve problems of unsustainable capacitating of space generated by unrealistic demand in terms of quantity and low quality of built-up areas 16. Enable resource-efficient use of metallic and non-metallic resources 17. Mitigate natural and anthropogenic hazard impacts
Economic Resources (Introduction of Green Economy)	18. Reduce level of greenhouse gasses emissions by 2030 by 30% compared to baseline 1990 19. Improve resource efficiency in key economic sectors 20. Improve waste management through circular economy approaches 21. Enable sustainable management of the coastal regional resources and encourage the blue economy 22. Support greening of economy through the development and implementation of operational instruments of sustainable consumption and production 23. Implement social responsibility in practice of all sectors in accordance with positive European and international experiences 24. Increase Montenegrin economy competitiveness level for sustainable development & green jobs
Governance for Sustainable Development (Improvement of the sustainable development governance system)	25. Strengthen governance system for sustainable development 26. Strengthen environmental management by improving 19. implementation of environmental protection instruments 27. Implement reform for institutional organization of governance system for sustainable development 28. Establish a system for monitoring of national sustainable development, including monitoring of sustainable development goals implementation
Financing for Sustainable Development (Establish a long-term financial system for sustainable development)	29. Establish the system for sustainable environmental financing and preservation of natural capital as a component of financing for sustainable development 30. Enable introduction of green economy by mobilizing funds for sustainable development financing

2016). This framework constitutes a key component of the implementing architecture of the UN 2030 Agenda and consists of 241 indicators for monitoring global progress towards the SDGs. To assess the framework's applicability at country level, voluntary national reviews were conducted by 22 pilot countries including Montenegro and presented at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2016 meeting (MSDT, 2016a). As the SDG indicators are intended for global follow-up and review of the UN 2030 Agenda, the national reviews necessarily consider different national realities, capacities and levels of development to ensure national ownership in achieving sustainable development (Sachs, 2013). The use of nationally-developed indicators was also envisioned to ease national monitoring (UN, 2016).

As such, transposing the global SDGs into national policy is a fundamental step to ensure national-level monitoring of countries' progress towards sustainable development. According to Allen et al., (2016), "Integrated, nationally-owned SDG strategies will be at the centre of national efforts to implement the new sustainable development agenda". Given the importance of country-level engagement and ownership in tracking SDG indicators, national review processes are a crucial step in validating and refining the global indicator framework.

The aims of this paper are to 1) provide an overview of the process of transposing the UN 2030 Agenda within the policy context of Montenegro, which is described in further details in the National Strategy for Sustainable Development (*NSSD 2030*) (MSDT, 2016b), 2) extensively describe the work conducted to set-up the suggested *NSSD 2030* monitoring and reporting framework, and 3) assess Montenegro's

capacity to measure SDG indicators, now and in the coming years, for tracking success in delivering on the SDGs by 2030. The paper concludes by recommending and discussing necessary steps for effective implementation of the *NSSD 2030* in Montenegro.

The research is presented in four segments: a) Montenegro's *NSSD* revision through the prism of setting-up an integrated monitoring system; b) results of mapping and content analysis for multiple indicators (SDG, national, international and proposed composite indicators); c) analysis of needs, importance, and main challenges of an integrated monitoring framework; and d) conclusions.

To our knowledge, this paper represents one of the first studies dealing with the national-level transposition of the global UN 2030 Agenda.

2. Methodology: Montenegro's *NSSD* revision

2.1. Setting the stage: steps, targets and timeline of the *NSSD* revision

The Government of Montenegro first initiated the revision of its *NSSD* after the Rio + 20 Conference. The process involved several steps: expert baseline assessments, literature review, analysis of related studies and best practices, secondary data collection, analysis and integration of national sectorial documents including the 2015 national document "Platform for Development of the *NSSD 2014–2020*" (CEED, 2015), and the development of the *NSSD* structure and compilation methodology.

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