



1<sup>ST</sup> ESDN  
PEER LEARNING  
PLATFORM

Policy coherence and cooperation for the  
2030 Agenda and SDGs implementation

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**Platform  
Report**

Brussels

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## Introduction

This ESDN Peer Learning Platform Report provides information on the inputs, discussions and outcomes of the **1<sup>st</sup> ESDN Peer Learning Platform**, entitled “**Policy coherence and cooperation for the 2030 Agenda and SDGs implementation**”, which took place in **Brussels on 13 October 2016**, in cooperation with the Belgian Federal Institute for Sustainable Development.

This first ESDN Peer Learning Platform was intended to offer policy-makers, from all European countries, experts and selected stakeholders the chance to exchange experiences and learn from implementation practice on how to realize the 2030 Agenda and SDGs in their respective national environments.

The **key objectives of the platform** were:

- To provide the **opportunity to exchange and discuss the needs of national policy-making regarding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for SD**;
- To **share experiences and perspectives on how to design policies and processes, and how to link them to national sustainable development strategies**;
- To **test the ESDN peer learning approach for future fine-tuning of this new mechanism for peer learning**.

In total, **35 participants from 16 countries** took part in the Platform that was moderated by Gerald Berger (ESDN Office). The Platform was kicked-off by a Welcome and Orientation Session, followed by four main sessions:

- **Space for Exchange 1:** Experiences and lessons learned from the 2016 HLPF National Voluntary Reviews;
- **Space for Exchange 2:** Policy coherence – How to overcome ‘silo’ thinking when implementing the 2030 Agenda and SDGs;
- **Space for Exchange 3:** How to design good cooperation between the different policy levels (EU, Member States, sub-national levels);
- **Space for Exchange 4:** How to bring these ideas back home?

## Welcome and orientation session

The opening and orientation session included several welcome addresses and provided an overview of the workshop objectives.

Firstly, the main objectives and approach of **ESDN Peer Learning Platform**, which was primarily built upon the [outcomes of 14<sup>th</sup> ESDN Workshop held in Berlin in June 2016](#) were outlined. Then, the concept of 'peer learning' as *learning from each other* was introduced. Since the SDGs need to be implemented at all levels, not only at the national and European level, the new ESDN mechanism of Peer Learning (PL) Platforms was introduced which is intended to foster not only **learning from one another, but also encouraging one another**.

With the intention to increase openness and discussion, the Platform was based on the '[Chatham House Rule](#)'.

It was underlined that an increasing number of EU Member States were beginning to implement the 2030 Agenda. Because of this, there was a clear need to overcome challenges by sharing experiences and approaches. It was pointed out that the ESDN PL Platform was reserved to policymakers responsible for SD policies and strategies only in order to share experiences among this peer group on strategic policy implementation efforts for the 2030 Agenda and SDGs.

The participants also discussed in this session the preparation of the European Commission Communication on the SDGs, which is expected to be published on 22 November 2016. This communication is intended as a mapping exercise for future EU policy, but also as a way to create opportunities for implementation, follow-up, and monitoring regarding the 2030 Agenda and SDGs.

In the following discussion, some important topics were mentioned: The issue of coordination at the EU level of the 2030 Agenda/SDGs implementation was touched upon, and the roles of SecGen, DG Environment and several Commissioners were discussed, as well as their cooperation. The SDG on climate was discussed as the main responsibility of DG CLIMATE, especially after COP21. A few questions were raised on the Directive on Plastic, on the Circular Economy, and on the EESC proposal on the creation of a stakeholder forum.

## Space for Exchange 1: Experiences and lessons learned from the 2016 HLPF National Voluntary Reviews

In the first part of Space for Exchange 1, a panel discussion was held, in which representatives of five European countries (Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, and Switzerland) presented their experiences with the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) they prepared for the 2016 High-level Political Forum (HLPF) in New York.

Panellists shared their views and reported **difficulties in terms of timing and process** in the preparation of the VNRs. A tight schedule, and the requirement to deliver the summary

before the whole report, were felt as challenging issues. Although with **different levels of ambition**, the main motivations behind their participation in the VNRs were (a) the will to **share their experiences with other countries**, (b) the opportunity to **speed up or kick-off the implementation** within their own countries, and (c) the chance to **raise awareness in other national ministries** and **engage stakeholders**. Countries also used the preparation of their reports to **produce a gap analysis and a mapping of SDGs and national policies**. In general, **consultations with stakeholders** were activated and **pre-existing mechanisms of collaboration among ministries** were used.

In the following Q&A session, participants particularly engaged in issues about **lessons learned from the process**, especially considering those countries that will participate in the 2017 HLPF. Several interesting points were raised, and suggestions on the process were given: (i) to **start the work on the report as soon as possible**; (ii) to **include the subnational and local level**; (iii) to **use the political momentum and attention in the national context**; (iv) to **plan and coordinate with all ministries as much as possible**; v) to **use the same symbols of the SDGs**; and (vi) to **involve stakeholders**.

## **Space for Exchange 2: Policy coherence – How to overcome ‘silo’ thinking when implementing the 2030 Agenda and SDGs?**

With the aim to stimulate **interactive dialogue** among participants on the theme ‘**Practical examples, opportunities and challenges to improve policy coherence in European countries**’ (i.e. assigning responsibilities at the national level; cooperation between ministries and cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms; and moving from policy coherence for development to policy coherence for SD), participants were split into 5 working groups. Participants were then asked to find **critical challenges of horizontal policy integration in their own country/region** and **explain and share with the group**. Then, participants were required to select, as a group, the **2-3 most critical challenges** by **using practical examples for each one**. The results can be found in the following pictures taken at the platform.



Critical Challenges	Address/Solve Critical Challenges
<p>① POLITICAL LEADERSHIP: ENSURE OWNERSHIP BY THE WHOLE GOVERNMENT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GOVERNMENT DECISION ON IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS</li> <li>• CLEAR ROLES &amp; RESPONSIBILITIES</li> <li>• GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY → REPORTING TO PARLIAMENT.</li> </ul>
<p>② COHERENCE &amp; CO-OPERATION BETWEEN S. D. COMMUNITY AND DEVELOPMENT COMM. / DOMESTIC &amp; FOREIGN POLICY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JOINT MEETINGS, COMMITTEES, WORKING &amp; STEERING GROUPS</li> <li>• S.D. ADVISORY COUNCIL'S ROLES (POLICY COHERENCE)</li> <li>• COORDINATION IN POLITICAL CENTRE (WHERE POSSIBLE)</li> </ul>
<p>③ ENSURE THAT MINISTRIES ARE INTEGRATING 2030 A INTO THEIR SECTORAL POLICIES, BUILDING OWNERSHIP → INSPIRING, CONVINCING, SHOWING ADDED VALUE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BUSINESS LUNCHES &amp; "BEER LEARNING"</li> <li>• COMMON PLATFORMS &amp; COMMUNICATE ON RESULTS ELSEWHERE (E.G. HLPF).</li> <li>• VISIBILITY OF SECTORAL POLICIES CONTRIBUTING</li> </ul>

Critical Challenges	Address/Solve Critical Challenges
<p>① FOCUS ON OWN AIMS OF ADM. UNIT (SILO-THINKING)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CREATE INTER-MIN. UG TO IDENTIFY + SOLVE COMMON AIM (IMPLEMENTATION) WITH A MANDATE FOR THE MEMBERS</li> <li>• CONSEQUENTLY APPLY SD IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR REGULATION (EX-ANTE)</li> </ul>
<p>② STAKEHOLDER ARE LOBBYING FOR THEIR OWN AIMS IN SILOS FOLLOWED BY PRESSURE ON POLICY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• USE THE SIGS AS ARGUMENT FOR BRINGING STAKEHOLDERS TOGETHER</li> <li>• WITH A FOCUS ON A COMMON VISION (LONG-TERM)</li> </ul>
<p>③ NO CENTRAL ORGANIZATION UNIT WITH ENOUGH POWER TO INTEGRATE ALL POLICY AREAS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CONFRONT <sup>TRAD.</sup> STAKEHOLDERS + ADMINISTRATIONS WITH FRONT-RUNNERS (ECON)</li> </ul>

Critical Challenges	Address/Solve Critical Challenges
<p>① Political approach needs to be holistic and aware/agree on transition → coordination mechanisms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "They" (Governments) have to take mechanisms etc <b>SERIOUS!</b></li> </ul>
<p>② We need a narrative + communicate to citizens → not only through governments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ministries, organisations, business etc need their own narrative / statement</li> </ul>
<p>③ Policy coherence! esp ministries of finance have to accept the holistic approach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>

Critical Challenges	Address/Solve Critical Challenges
<p>① LACK OF PRACTICAL APPROACHES TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• using <del>data</del> existing <sup>through</sup> resources (OECD, etc) and sharing experience (share)</li> </ul>
<p>② LACK OF POLITICAL COMMITMENT &amp; OWNERSHIP (NOT ON TOP POLITICAL AGENDA)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU commitment as means of raising the profile of the agenda</li> <li>• not losing initiative, formulate positive examples + create supporting networks</li> </ul>
<p>③ MAKE VISIBLE THE ADVANTAGES / POLITICAL SOCIETAL WINS (SHOW SYNERGIES &amp; TRADE OFFS)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• - SD work on local level to build momentum</li> <li>• making SD tangible + link it to politically relevant/hot issues - demonstrate impact on well-being</li> </ul>



## Critical Challenges

- ① Political level:  
Ownership - Top of Agenda  
Whole of gov  
all themes - social-env. - econ  
- national-local-international  
- all stakeholders

- Administrative level lack of awareness around  
on national level but not on local level  
② different cultures + "languages"  
Contribute to the agenda of ministries  
No new silos "SDG-silos"

## Instrument level:

- ③ Indicators...  
tools to assess impact in other  
policies  
impact assessment } ex. but lacks support  
Policy coherence }

## Address/Solve Critical Challenges

- involve CSO, business, public level (government)
- Coordination by P77
- public debate + report
- inter-agency coordination  
with mandate for the members
- No new "SDG" silos  
→  
• Project lead from different  
ministries
- ex. Finland Charter of Contribution  
Finnish Commitment of Society
- tools to assess impacts  
evaluation
- Choice of indicators to address  
all dimensions



## Space for Exchange 3: How to design good cooperation between the different policy levels (EU, Member States, sub-national levels?)

Space for Exchange 3 aimed to foster exchange and learning among participants on the theme '**Necessary initiatives and institutional arrangements to foster cooperation between the EU, Member States, and sub-national levels,**' including the sharing of competencies between EU and MS level, using existing forums, mechanisms, and institutions at EU level to support the 2030 Agenda implementation, new cooperation mechanisms between EU and Member States, etc. Firstly, participants were asked to split into pairs, and then **visit and discuss among themselves over five 'stations' represented by five questions** that were previously prepared by the ESDN Office. The participants' main task was to **collect answers and inputs on moderation cards to each of the questions**:

1. How can the EU facilitate 2030 Agenda implementation at the Member State level?
2. What is the best use of the HLPF 2016 outcomes?
3. What are the main challenges in the cooperation between the national and the sub-national level?
4. How can we best use sub-national activities for the national implementation of the 2030 Agenda?
5. What is the best way to translate and coordinate the 17 SDGs at all levels?

After this first part, which was purposefully organised for collecting inputs on flipcharts, **participants were divided into five working groups**, where each group worked on one of the five questions. In this setting, each working group had the task to first **cluster and rank the inputs found on the assigned question sheet**, and then **select 2-3 issues from the clusters and rank them as "main results"**. Finally, each group was asked to define, for each of the three main results, some practical next steps to realize them, or to suggest good examples.

Results are shown in the following pictures.

## Results of Question 1

How can the EU facilitate 2030 Agenda implementation at the Member State level?

**1: How can the EU facilitate 2030 Agenda implementation at the Member State level?**

EUROSTAT - MONITORING GUIDELINES + INDICATORS  
**YES!**

ENGAGE EUROSTAT IN SDG'S MONITORING ①

EU has to have a high level of ambition as good example

clear commitment and communication engaging citizens

Subsidiarity: Which aspect EU-level (sub)national

EU-strategy

General Council (EU-maritime etc.)

REVISION OF THE EUROPE 2020 AS A PLATFORM FOR SDG'S IMPLEMENTATION ①

Develop EU 2030 Strategic with participation of Members + Stakeholders

CREATE A COORDINATION MECHANISM AT EU LEVEL FOR THE DOMESTIC EU ACTION (GAC?) ①

EU ACTION TO STRENGTHEN Policy Coherence + capacity of MS ①

C<sup>o</sup> of Regions  
EU Parliament  
EU Council conclusions

Provide set of suggestions to design national frameworks: Directives, Taxation, Regulation, ...

Support ESDN!  
by using the ESDN  
Foster exchange and networking

```

    graph LR
      MSQ[MSQ] --> ESDN((ESDN))
      ESDN --> EU_Around[EU-level around]
      ESDN --> EU_Financial[EU-level financial]
      EU_Around --> EU_Financial
      EU_Around --> MSQ
  
```

### Main Results: Question 1

### Practical Steps/ Good Examples

① consistent EU strategy (incl. committee action, monitoring) + good coop. with other EU-govt. entities (Parl etc) + networking ⇒ helps vertical integ. but only govt dimension

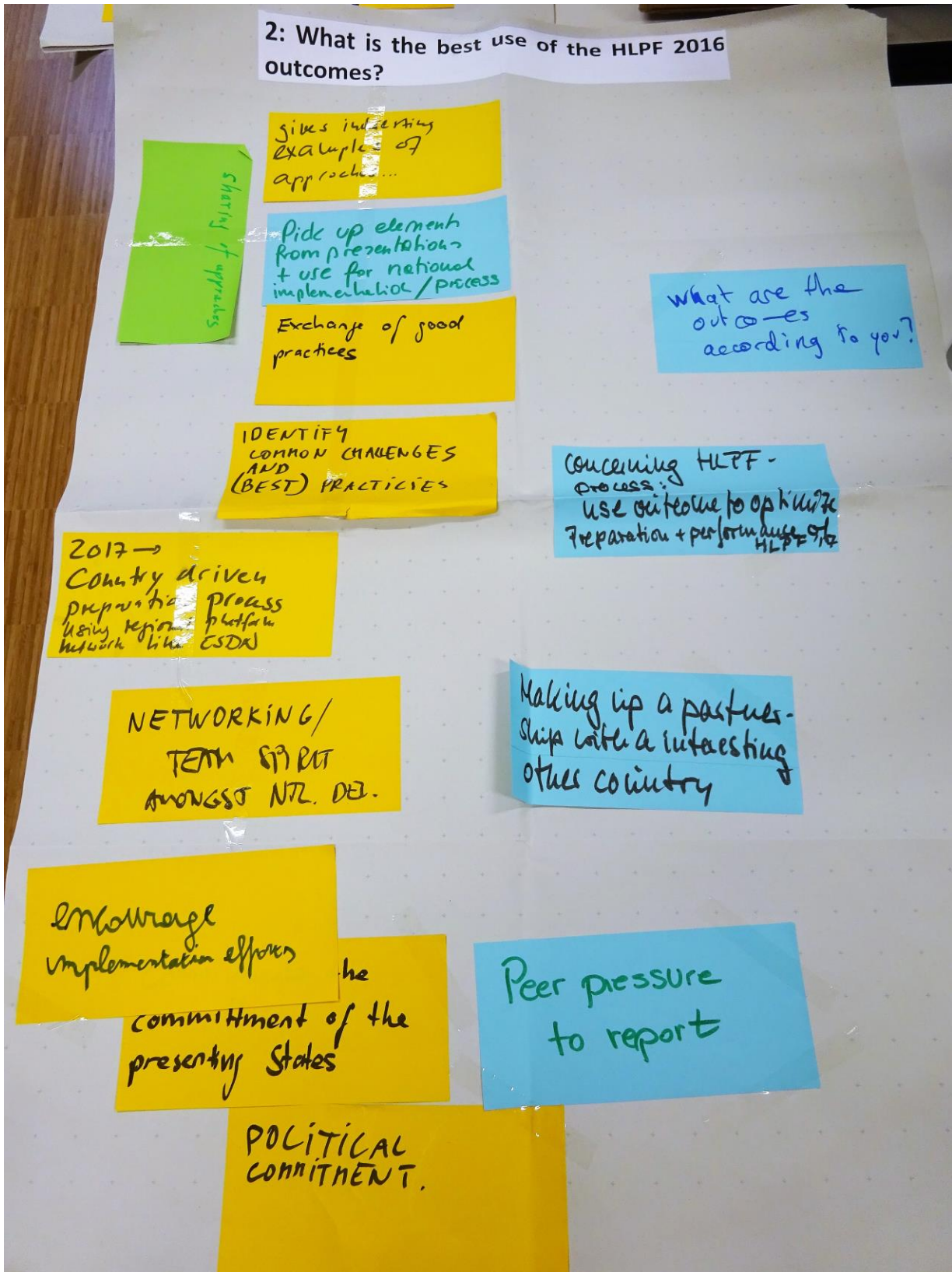
⇓  
② stakeholders missing: facilitate multi stakeholder-process on European level

⇓  
③ 1 action could be: <sup>(incorporated in EU-committee)</sup> Stakeholder forum or OECD or driven evaluation of SD in EU → shocking inputs for EU (analog PISA)



## Results of Question 2

### What is the best use of the HLPF 2016 outcomes?





## Main Results: Question 2

## Practical Steps/ Good Examples

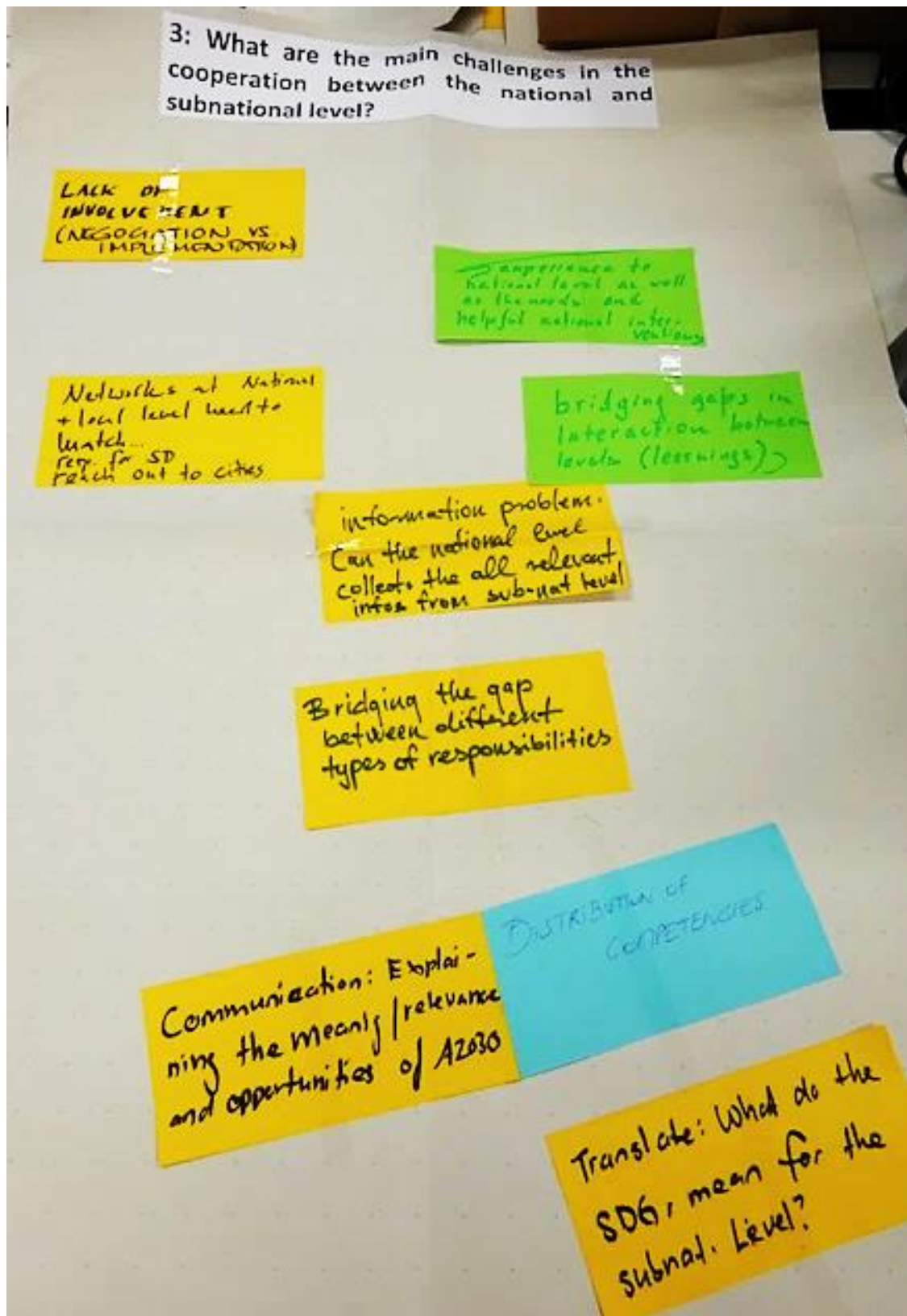
- ①
- INTERESTING EXAMPLES
  - GOOD PRACTICES
  - COMMON CHALLENGES

- ②
- POLITICAL COMMITMENT
  - PEER PRESSURE
  - BENCHMARKING
  - STAKEHOLDER PRESSURE

- ③
- NETWORKING
  - STRONGER TEAM SPIRIT  
IN & ACROSS DELEGATIONS
  - NEW PARTNERSHIPS

### Results of Question 3

What are the main challenges in the cooperation between the national and the sub-national level?



### Main Results: Question 3

① Rise awareness of SDGs and create common understanding of national approach of implementation

② Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of different actors on all different levels.

③ Motivation and inspiration to take action (Leverage)

### Practical Steps/ Good Examples

- Create platforms for exchange (meeting, online) and communication
- Contextualization: meaning of SDGs for local level
- Match Match concrete action with SDGs

• Attribution of tasks:

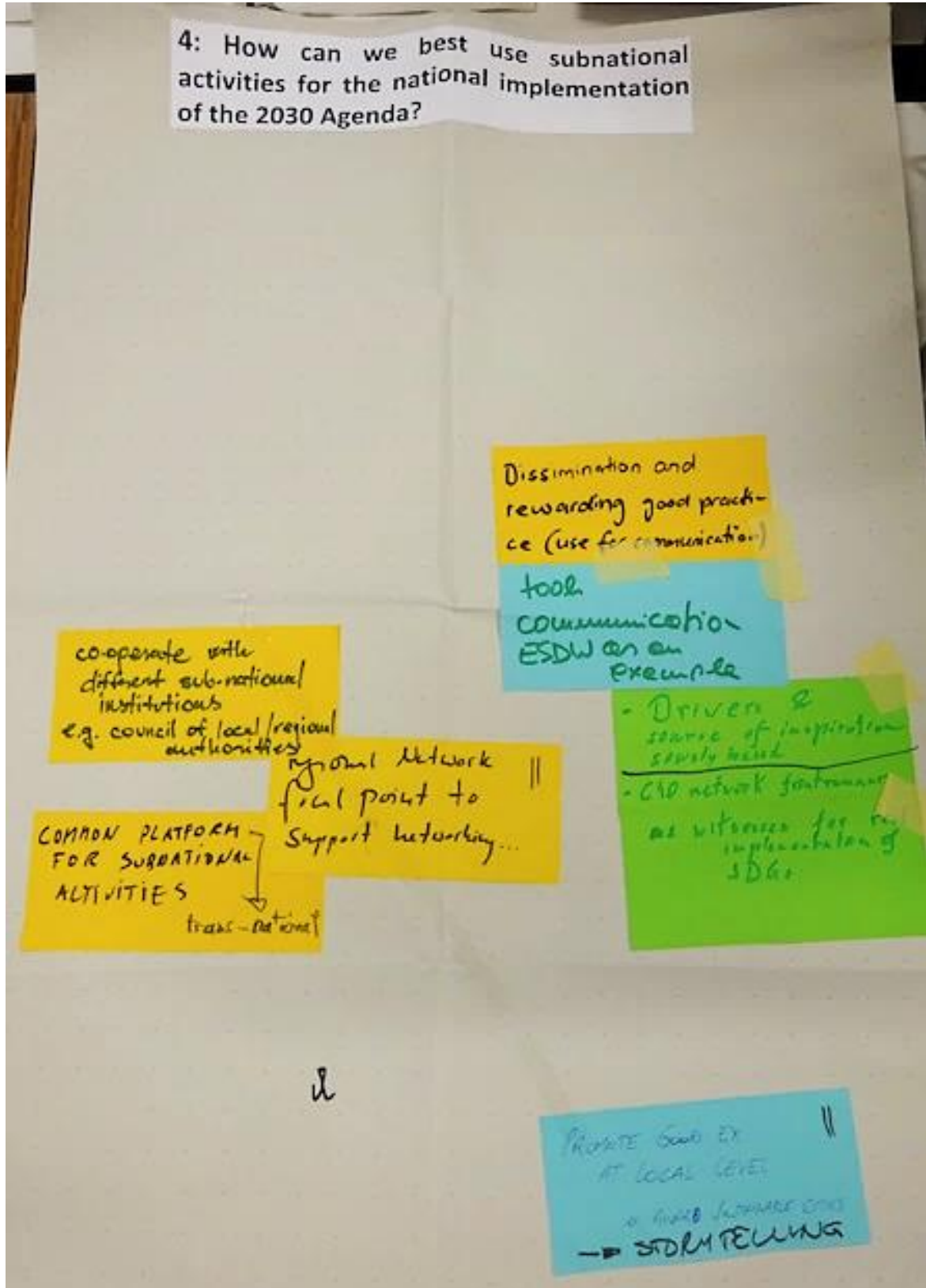
WHERE CAN PROGRESS BE BEST ACHIEVED?

• Enabling by:

provide tools and partnerships for communities + municipalities institutions + Information + Solutions

#### Results of Question 4

How can we best use sub-national activities for the national implementation of the 2030 Agenda?





### Main Results: Question 4

① Promote, reward & disseminate good practices and use them as drivers and source of inspiration, for society based solutions, at subnational and national level

② Strengthen subnational activities through common platforms (existing and new ones) eg. regional networking cooperation (formal & informal)

③ ↳ support best by national means to create visibility & pressure on waf/low

joint underpinning of indicators  
- activities defined at local level... still a lot to do.

### Practical Steps/ Good Examples

- use of existing and new communication tools (e.g. ESDW, C40, sust. cities awards, ...)

- use existing mechanisms e.g. Council of local and regional authorities or create new platforms (e.g. focal points)

- 
-

## Results of Question 5

What is the best way to translate and coordinate the 17 SDGs at all levels?

5. What is the best way to translate and coordinate the 17 SDGs at all levels?

- ① start bottom-up, not top-down:  
"Hello level x, how could you refer to SDG y?"
- ② establish dialogue formats to offer to the lower level, what a good translation would look like \* to tell the upper level !!

Not coordinate all SDGs at all levels!!  
Pragmatic approach  
identify key challenges, opportunities

political will  
translate into national reality  
eg by a strategy

let a 1000 flowers bloom

smart approach to maximize the return of efforts

show opportunities to different actors

DEFINE INTEGRATED AND INCLUSIVE PRIORITIES AND HAVE A MECHANISM FOR THEIR REVISION ③

Linking conceptual frameworks with concrete action and examples that it works

Formulate Targets in the language of actors (communities, business)

## Main Results: Question 5

① BOTTOM UP INSTEAD  
OF TOP DOWN

PRAGMATIC APPROACHES  
OWNERSHIP

② PARTNERSHIPS AMONG  
ALL ACTORS  
AT ALL LEVELS

③ COMMUNICATION  
ADAPT THE MESSAGE  
TO THE ACTORS — BUSINESS  
AUDIENCE — COMMUNITIES

## Practical Steps/ Good Examples

GUIDELINES SPECIFIC TO ACTORS  
BUSINESS, LOCAL LEVEL, UNIVERSITIES  
CITIES, NGOS

• DIALOGUE FORUMS

- SHOW OPPORTUNITIES
- DEMONSTRATE GOOD PRACTICE

• LET A 1000 FLOWERS BLOOM

## Space for Exchange 4: How to bring these ideas back home?

In the concluding session of the workshop, the final Space for Exchange, '**How to bring these ideas back home?**', was designed to collect **suggestions on how to spur change in practice**. Each participant was asked to write down **1-2 issues that they wanted to do as an immediate follow-up to this event**. This was followed by an interactive exchange in groups of three, and concluded in plenary discussions. Several ideas on how to spur change in practice were shared among the participants in the plenary discussions:

- need to provide good narratives for the 2030 Agenda and SDGs;
- raise awareness for 2030 Agenda and SDGs (i.e. communication and media education could create stories out of the SDGs);
- appoint SDG ambassadors, e.g. national celebrities or other eminent persons who could raise awareness for the SDGs;
- necessity to engage with colleagues from other ministries, e.g. through more informal meetings (i.e. 'beer learning'), but also with the local level;
- better coordination at the EU level, and between the EU and Member States level to develop a strategic implementation process;
- definition of clear roles and responsibilities in the planning and implementation of the 2030 Agenda/SDGs;
- increased engagement of the subnational level (i.e. find partners who can engage the subnational level);
- need of a format to better engage parliaments;
- exchange with other countries about their practical experiences and implementation mechanisms;
- link budgetary processes to SD processes in order to provide financial basis for the implementation process;
- involve stakeholders more actively and strategically;
- start working on the HLPF report for 2017 by contacting those countries who have already done HLPF VNRs reports.