The role of the Sustainable Development Goals in the EU Recovery in 2023
Integration of SDGs: overview

The EU gradually included the SDGs in the European Semester and the study found a better integration in the NRP 2023 than in previous years' documents. Some limitations:

- Lack of a **comprehensive strategy** addressing the gaps to the EU’s achievement of the SDGs;
- The **SDGs are not seen as a distinct framework** for guiding the elaboration of actions and policies for sustainable development uniformly across all Member States;
- Weaknesses of the SDG indicator set and **monitoring methodology**;
- Very **limited consideration for the territorial dimension** in the design of the NRPs;
- **Insufficient consideration for LRAs** in the implementation of the NRPs;
- The analysis of the NRP may be adequate to assess the level of implementation of the SDGs and the commitment shown by MSs to the 2030 Agenda. **Additional documents**, directly related to the SDGs (e.g. NVRs, LVRs and Eurostat publications) should be used to complement the analysis.
Integration of SDGs: key study findings, national level

- MSs report implementation progress of the SDGs in the NRPs, although not all SDGs are always mentioned and often not in sufficient details;
- The overall level of SDGs integration is rather good, with the highest score achieved in the economic SDGs and the lowest in the two political SDGs;
- The true measure of the SDGs' integration in the NRP 2023 is given by the level of detail presented. The most precise NRPs are those that extensively cover most or all of the SDGs, outlining actions for their effective implementation;
- The SDGs are beginning to be perceived in the NRPs as a coherent framework for sustainable recovery at the national level.
Quality of information on SDGs, all Member States
The planning of the NRPs seems to remain a centralised exercise, usually under the responsibility of the Ministries with little involvement of the lower level of government;

Very few NPRs report specific territorial challenges and disparities. Mostly are left implicit;

Lack of involvement of LRAs in the planning of the NRRPs which seems to include also subsequent revisions of the Plans;

Several MSs rely on the substantial allocation of funds from Cohesion Policy, which envisions a more direct involvement of LRAs, both in the planning and implementation of the programmes;

No NRP details a strategy for the ‘localisation’ of SDGs
**Recommendations**

- The EC should persist in formulating a **well-structured strategy** for implementing the SDGs, encompassing definitive, quantifiable, and time-bound targets at the EU level (**monitoring system should be improved**);

- More **concrete actions** are necessary to encourage MSs to actively involve LRAs in the implementation phases of the NRPs;

- The EU should provide new and more **clear guidelines on the content of the NRPs**, by explicitly requiring MSs to provide a greater level of detail regarding the SDGs implementation and the impact of the measures planned in the programme on the Agenda 2030. The MSs should also be encouraged to **provide information on LRAs’ consultation during the planning of the NRP**;

- The EC should renew the **High-level SDG multi-stakeholder Platform** or establish an alternative dialogue platform.

- The **CoR** and the EC should jointly encourage a **two-way dialogue** where European and national strategies would involve LRAs, while **local feedback** would allow higher levels of government to assess implementation obstacles and scale up best practices, including grassroots initiatives;

- LRAs should strive to ‘**localise the SDGs**’, by using the Agenda 2030 as a framework, encouraging each policy actor to identify how strategies and actions would benefit sustainability in other policy areas within the competence of the local government.