



Monday, 12 July 8:00 am to 10:00 am EDT (2pm to 4:00 pm CEST)

Organising partners

- Government of Italy
- OECD

In collaboration with:

- European Commission - Joint Research Centre
- Government of Aruba
- UNEP (custodian agency for SDG17.14)
- Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)
- UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) [tbc]
- CONCORD European Confederation of Relief and Development NGOs

About

Sound public governance and policy coherence are prerequisites for ensuring a recovery from COVID-19 that does not undermine countries' ability to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. While not yet fully known, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is significant in a number of areas. This is particularly evident in SDG 1, where the pandemic-related economic downturn has pushed an additional 119 to 124 million people into extreme poverty in 2020, further compounding poverty eradication challenges such as conflict, climate change and natural disasters. The crisis is also exacerbating inequalities as well as negatively affecting the means of implementation required to support SDG transformation, with funding flows (e.g. FDI, remittances, trade) having fallen significantly¹.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also reminded us of the interconnectedness between our societies and economies, calling for increased government capacities to design and implement domestic policies that contribute to global sustainability, while avoiding negative economic, social and environmental externalities between sectors and beyond national borders. Moreover, the transmission channels for transboundary impacts are numerous – for example through financial flows, imports and exports of goods and services, migration or knowledge transfers – and countries' actions necessarily impact on one another.

¹ United Nations (2021), Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Report of the Secretary-General (advance unedited version).

The consideration of transboundary impacts, whether intended or unintended, is a key element of SDG governance (for example in the context international regulatory policy and impact assessments) and policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD). Disruptions of global supply chains and limited movement of people across borders during the pandemic have triggered negative transboundary impacts, in particular on countries that are heavily dependent on tourism, such as small island developing states (SIDS); inflows of remittances; or official development assistance, with a risk of reversing progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Multidimensional and cross-border assessments of policies have become even more urgent due to the wide range of impacts resulting from COVID-19 containment measures. Importantly, the recovery plans that many governments are putting in place need to complement national sustainable development strategies and steer whole-of-government transformations towards more resilient, inclusive and sustainable economies and societies. However, this is not easy in a global context where immediate economic and social pressures often crowd out longer term strategic policy initiatives and goals, and domestic interests often prevail over global aspirations and agendas. Governments need to navigate carefully between short- and long-term priorities and balance economic, social and environmental domestic policy objectives with obligations and efforts to reach international commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Climate Agreement. Tensions will inevitably arise and trade-offs will need to be negotiated.

Experience shows that a more systematic consideration of the global effects of domestic policies is dependent on the underlying governance processes through which those policies are designed and implemented. This requires strengthening capacities and institutional mechanisms for PCSD as well as data and tools for assessing, monitoring and evaluating the impacts of policies. It calls for more globally competent governments with increased capacity to identify and address transboundary impacts, whether intended or unintended.

Against this background, this side event will apply a policy coherence perspective to shed light on critical governance challenges and capacity constraints that governments are facing in ensuring a sustainable recovery. It will also provide an opportunity to discuss policy options for dealing with cross-sectoral interactions and transboundary issues in a way that will help reap the benefits of recovery processes to accelerate action in line with the 2030 Agenda.

Purpose

The side event will convene a panel of representatives and experts from governments, international organisations, civil society organisations and the business sector to:

- Identify the most pressing impacts caused by the pandemic itself or by the measures to contain it.
- Discuss ways to strengthen government capacities for addressing such impacts in a coherent and cost-effective manner.
- Learn from country experiences and practices, to address transboundary impacts of policies and ensure policy and institutional coherence in SDG implementation.

Thematic focus

The discussion will put particular attention to the interlinkages and transboundary issues among the set of SDGs to be reviewed by the HLPF this year. The COVID-19, as a zoonotic disease, has illustrated, for example, how the interaction between environmental and habitat changes induced by human activity (agricultural activity, deforestation, wildlife trade, and climate change) can lead to shifts in ecosystems, which in turn may intensify communicable disease transmission (SDGs 3, 13, 15 and SDG 2). However, habitat transformation has to be balanced, for example, against agricultural needs. This, in turn, raises the question of increasing agricultural productivity through ecological practices (SDG 2.4). It also highlights the importance of strengthening mechanisms and capacities for policy coherence.

Expected outcomes

The side event will contribute to the High-level Political Forum's theme by enabling an interactive discussion among key decision makers and stakeholders on country-level experiences and a concrete exchange of ideas and solutions to address the interconnections between the SDGs and engage effectively key actors to accelerate progress and recover from the COVID-19 crisis in a sustainable manner. Public and private actors are engaged in an unprecedented effort to recover from the impacts of COVID 19. In this context, strengthening policy coherence for sustainable development lies at the core of a successful outcome to achieve the future we want while respecting the vision, principles and goals enshrined in the 2030 Agenda.

At this Side Event, the OECD will launch an interactive self-assessment tool to support countries in enhancing policy coherence for sustainable development, and introduce the following report:



OECD/EC-JRC (2021), *Understanding the Spillovers and Transboundary Impacts of Public Policies: Implementing the 2030 Agenda for More Resilient Societies*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/862c0db7-en>.

Guiding questions for discussion:

- What are the main challenges and opportunities for aligning COVID-19 recovery packages with sustainable development commitments?
- What are the key enablers for strengthened governance capacities to ensure a sustainable recovery?
- Are existing government institutions and policy coherence mechanisms suitable for dealing with the crisis? Do they need to be adapted, and if so, how?
- Do civil servants possess the skills and leadership capabilities needed to deal with complex interactions and transboundary policy impacts?
- What should governments do today to build resilience and prevent new crises in the future?

Programme (time EDT tbc)

08:00 – 08:20 **OPENING**

- Italian Vice Minister for ecological transition (tbc)
- OECD Public Governance Director (tbc)
- European Commission – Secretariat General (tbc)

08:20 – 08:35 **SCENE SETTING PRESENTATIONS**

- European Commission – Joint Research Centre
- Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)
- OECD

08:35 – 09:45 **MODERATED PANEL:** **Building government capacities for addressing transboundary impacts and global challenges**

Panellists:

- Italy
- European Commission
- Government of Aruba
- UNEP
- CONCORD European Confederation of Relief and Development NGOs

Moderator: OECD

09:45 – 09:55 **Q&A AND INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION WITH ALL PARTICIPANTS (based on the three core questions for the session)**

- Interactive poll/voting on the three key questions to help gather insights

09:55 - 10:00 **WRAP UP / and/or closing remarks**
