



# SDG Monitoring in Other Countries

## Finland

Finland is considered a global role model both in implementing and monitoring the SDGs. The country has already achieved four of the 17 goals. According to the Sustainable Development Report, Finland is the the global front-runner in implementing the SDGs<sup>1</sup>. Despite these positive developments, Finland faces major challenges, especially in the areas of sustainable consumption and production as well as climate protection.

# The Launch of the 2030 Agenda in Finland

Finland has a long history of national sustainability policies. As one of the first countries in the world, Finland established a national sustainability strategy back in 1987 and began to develop its sustainability architecture. Thus, following the launch of the 2030 Agenda, Finland faced different, lesser, challenges than many other countries. For the adaptation of the previous sustainability policy to the SDGs, Finland was able to draw on extensive experience and already established processes due to its decades of sustainable orientation.

In 2013, Finland converted its national sustainability strategy into a comprehensive self-commitment "The Finland We Want by 2030" and also adopted a national implementation plan. With the introduction of the 2030 Agenda, these strategies were updated and adapted to the SDGs, so that they now act as central implementation tools for the SDGs. The national monitoring system was also revised in this context. Before the introduction of the SDGs, Finland used 39 indicators to measure national sustainability policies.

# Various National Indicators

Since only two of these indicators matched the international SDG indicators, a new set of indicators was defined in 2017 by the "National Follow-Up Network", which consists of representatives of the ministries, the Finnish statistical authority, research institutions and other experts. The new set of indicators includes 45 indicators, of which two thirds are still national indicators and one third are international SDG indicators.

## National and International Indicators in Finland

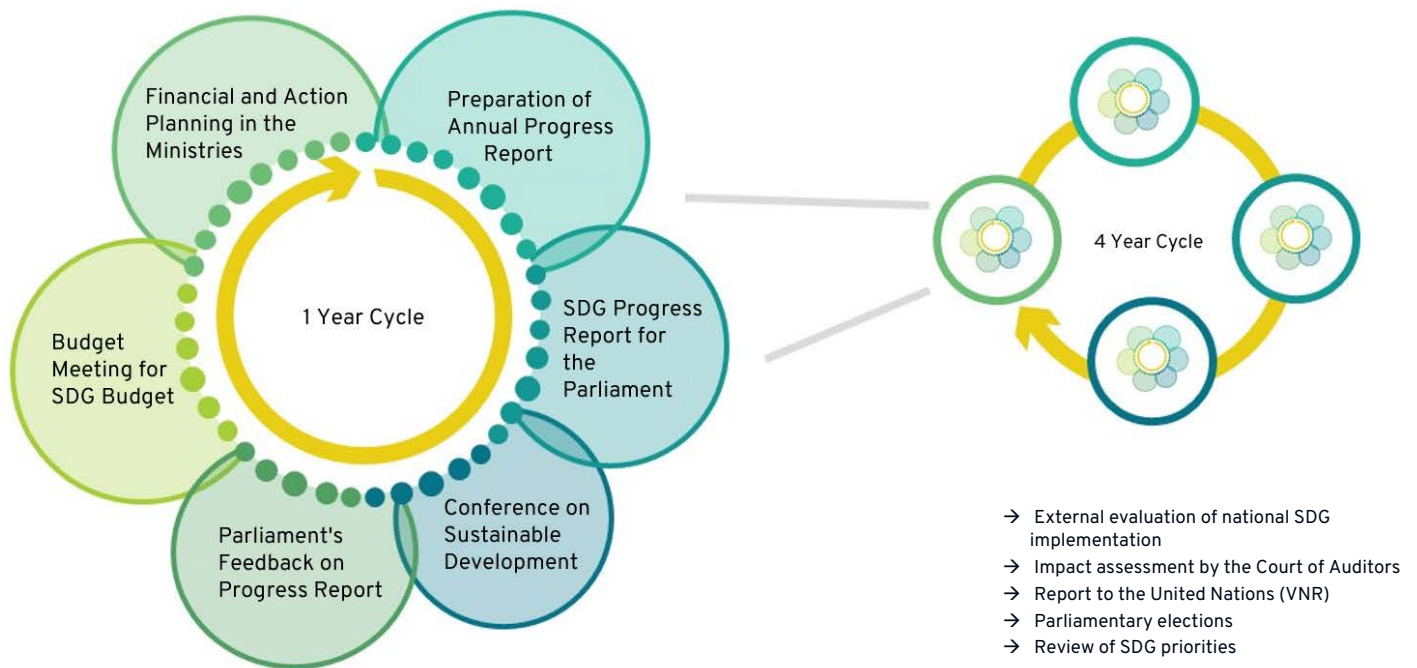
An independent study on sustainable development in Finland comes to the conclusion that the exclusive use of international SDG indicators for Finnish monitoring does not make sense, since many of the indicators are not adapted to national circumstances and therefore have no political relevance. The study also shows that the national indicators chosen by Finland evaluate the implementation status of the SDGs much more critically than the international indicators.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, Finland also provides data for 158 of the 231 international SDG indicators and is currently working on collecting data for 47 of the missing indicators. The status of the global indicators can be viewed online [here](#). However, these indicators are irrelevant for national monitoring and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.



# The Finnish SDG-Monitoring

A special feature of Finnish SDG monitoring is the annual control cycle: once a year, the indicators are updated and the progress is analyzed by experts. The results are included in the annual progress report "State of Sustainable Development Report", which the government submits to the Parliament.<sup>3</sup> The analyzes of progress and the updated indicators are furthermore published online. There is an opportunity for the public to comment on the indicators and analyses.<sup>4</sup> This opportunity serves to stimulate discussion between different interest groups about the progress made and to create new inputs for political decision-making. The Finnish National Commission for Sustainable Development and the Prime Minister also present the results at an annual conference on sustainable development and discuss challenges for the coming years with stakeholders and experts.<sup>5</sup>

With annual checks, Finland can quickly spot adverse developments and put them back on track. After parliament has given feedback to the government on its progress report, a budget session will plan how the SDGs can be taken into account financially. This is an important step that is also repeatedly called for in Germany: the implementation of the SDGs requires SDG budgets. The planned activities are developed and carried out in the ministries. In addition to the one-year monitoring cycle, a comprehensive review of the SDG implementation is carried out every four years. This includes, among other things, an external evaluation of the sustainability policy and an review by the Court of Auditors. The latter examines the extent to which the government has made the SDGs the basis of its actions.<sup>6</sup> At the end of its legislative period, the Finnish government must present a comprehensive report on the implementation of the SDGs during its term of office, in which it discusses all the measures it has taken and assesses their impact. At the international level, Finland reports on the implementation status of the SDGs at the High Level Political Forum every four years (2016, 2020). This comprehensive monitoring system is also praised by civil society, especially the external evaluation that is planned every four years.<sup>7</sup>



## Path2030: Finland's External Evaluation

In its implementation plan for the 2030 Agenda, the Finnish government has committed itself to having an external evaluation of the implementation of the SDGs carried out once every election period. The Path2030 project made such an assessment of Finnish politics and formulated concrete recommendations for the future. The assessment is based on multidisciplinary methods and broad and varied material in the form of indicators, documents and expert opinions collected through surveys, interviews and workshops. The first report was issued in March 2019. Among other things, it was emphasized that Finland, with its good education system, strong public institutions and social stability, has created good conditions for strengthening sustainable development.

The greatest challenges are seen in particular in the areas of climate change, consumption, the state of the environment and growing social inequality. In addition to the extensive evaluation, the study also gives recommendations for action for politicians and makes five concrete suggestions, which you can read [here](#).<sup>8</sup>

# Who is involved in the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs?

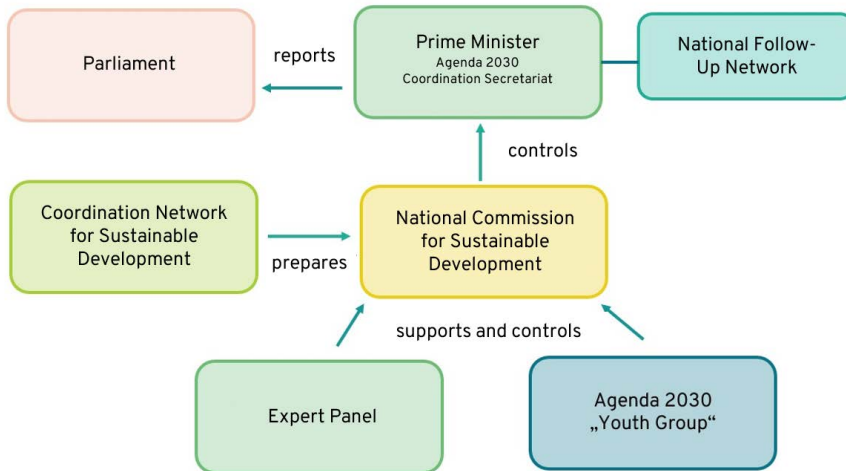


Responsibility for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda lies with the Office of the Prime Minister. Its work is overseen by the National Commission for Sustainable Development. It is made up of numerous representatives from civil society, industry, business, education, the indigenous Sámi people, local governments and organizations, and the churches. On the one hand, it serves as a forum that promotes cooperation and exchange between the many actors. On the other hand, it is involved in the further development of the national implementation plan and assumes a controlling and evaluating function. Their work is prepared by the Sustainable Development Coordination Network, which consists of representatives from all ministries. The task of the network is to ensure that all aspects of the SDGs are taken into account in the further development of the implementation plans.

The work of the Commission is supported and controlled by an Expert panel. It is made up of representatives from various research institutes and scientific disciplines and is considered a critical voice in Finnish sustainability policy. The interests of young people are represented in the Commission via the "Agenda 2030 Youth Group". It consists of 20 young people between the ages of 15 and 28, coming from different parts of Finland and with different backgrounds.

In the implementation of the SDGs, the Parliament is among others represented by the Finnish Development Policy Committee and the Finnish Parliament's Committee for the Future. The committees monitor the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and make proposals for the budget. Representatives of civil society are often invited to committee hearings. Furthermore, the government's annual report on the implementation status of the SDGs is discussed in parliament and feedback is given.

The well-functioning cooperation between different interest groups in Finland is exemplified by the preparation of the Voluntary National Report (VNR). In 2020, 57 Finnish civil society organizations took part and gave their assessment of the national implementation status of the 17 SDGs. In many cases, these assessments deviate from the government's assessments, but are published uncensored in the VNR, which means that Finnish civil society is also given a voice in international political processes. As an integral part of the HLPF delegation, Finnish civil society also has the opportunity to speak at the presentation of the VNR.



## How Citizens are Integrated into SDG Monitoring

Since 2019, citizens have been integrated into SDG monitoring via the annual Citizens' Panel on Sustainable Development. It is made up of 500 Finnish volunteers who can register through an open application process. Their task is to evaluate the status of each SDG using an online questionnaire. The results and recommendations are included in the annual government report on the implementation status of the SDGs and in the voluntary national state report for the UN. In 2021, the panel's assessment was somewhat more negative than in previous years. The participants were particularly worried about the situation of young people and the state of the environment. According to the panel, more targeted measures are needed here. However, the assessment was positive in many areas, for example in the areas of freedom of the press, lifelong learning or general quality of life.

# Close Cooperation of Different Actors



What is special about Finnish SDG monitoring, in addition to the annual control cycle, the external evaluation and the integration of the SDGs into the budget, are the numerous voting and participation formats that are available to politics, business, science and civil society -including vulnerable groups such as children and young people, old people, indigenous people and people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds – that enable them to work together. The independent evaluation of the SDG monitoring carried out in Finland in 2019 rated these far-reaching opportunities for participation positively. However, the interests of young people in particular need to be taken into account more, and local authorities and cities need more state support.<sup>9</sup> The opportunities for participation are also praised by civil society. Nevertheless, it is criticized that the interests of business are often prioritized over the interests of civil society.

Finland has built up an extensive sustainability architecture and shows how close cooperation between the state and social groups can work. Due to the extensive monitoring, undesirable developments can be quickly identified and counteracted, which means that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is progressing faster. Despite these extensive efforts, FINGO, an association of Finnish NGOs, complains that political decisions continue to be made in favor of short-term economic advantages and thus at the expense of long-term sustainability.<sup>10</sup>

## The Multi-Stakeholder Tool "SITOUMOUS 2050"

The multi-stakeholder tool "SITOUMOUS 2050" With the SITOUMOUS 2050 platform (<https://sitoumous2050.fi/>), Finland has started a project to involve various actors in the implementation of the SDGs. The platform is aimed at companies (from small businesses to multinationals), municipalities, civil society actors, representatives of industrial sectors and individuals. There, companies and organizations undertake to do their part to achieve the defined goals. To do this, they define concrete measures or changes to their operating procedures that are to be implemented within 1-10 years. The goals must be measurable and organizations are required to report regularly on progress. Individuals can calculate their own carbon footprint on the platform and then create a personal plan to reduce it by half. In this way, the platform helps to track private engagement. In addition, several industry sectors - e.g. trade, finance, media, energy, shipping and forestry - have made comprehensive industry-wide commitments, the progress of which can be viewed on the platform.

<sup>1</sup> <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/profiles/finland>

<sup>2</sup> [https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/161601/VN\\_TEAS\\_23\\_Path%202030.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/161601/VN_TEAS_23_Path%202030.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y) p. 20-23.

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.esdn.eu/country-profiles/indicators/detail?tx\\_countryprofile\\_countrycategory%5Baction%5D=showcat&tx\\_countryprofile\\_countrycategory%5Bcontroller%5D=Country&tx\\_countryprofile\\_countrycategory%5Bcountry%5D=9&cHash=9f548cba02105dfec916c2d37a9ef246](https://www.esdn.eu/country-profiles/indicators/detail?tx_countryprofile_countrycategory%5Baction%5D=showcat&tx_countryprofile_countrycategory%5Bcontroller%5D=Country&tx_countryprofile_countrycategory%5Bcountry%5D=9&cHash=9f548cba02105dfec916c2d37a9ef246)

<sup>4</sup> [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2626SVNR\\_Report\\_Finland\\_2020.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2626SVNR_Report_Finland_2020.pdf) p. 97

<sup>5</sup> <https://kestavakehitys.fi/en/indicator-baskets>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.vtv.fi/en/press\\_releases/sustainable-development-is-given-more-weight-in-the-ministries-activities/](https://www.vtv.fi/en/press_releases/sustainable-development-is-given-more-weight-in-the-ministries-activities/)

<sup>7</sup> <https://fingo.fi/julkaisut/finland-and-the-2030-agenda-follow-up-report-2019/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://demoshelsinki.fi/julkaisut/policy-brief-path2030-evaluation-of-finlands-sustainable-development-policy/>

<sup>9</sup> [https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/161601/VN\\_TEAS\\_23\\_Path%202030.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/161601/VN_TEAS_23_Path%202030.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y), S.33

<sup>10</sup> [https://fingo.fi/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Finland-and-the-2030-Agenda-2030\\_follow-up-report-2019-web\\_0.pdf](https://fingo.fi/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Finland-and-the-2030-Agenda-2030_follow-up-report-2019-web_0.pdf)

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