

# PROGRESSING NATIONAL SDG IMPLEMENTATION REPORT 2023

## II. POLICIES FOR 2030 AGENDA IMPLEMENTATION

### Chapter 5: Measurement and Reporting



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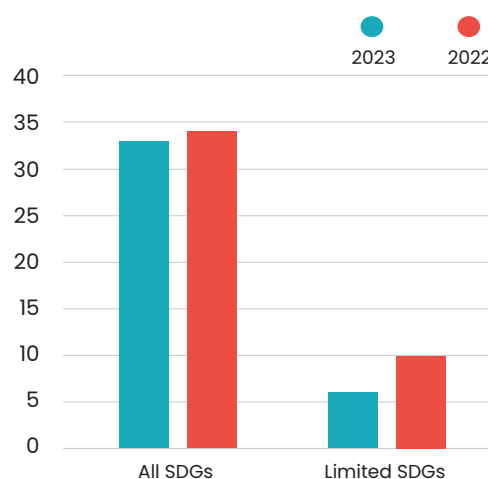
## Introduction

Although no country has achieved 100% coverage of SDG indicators in their national data system, almost all Voluntary National Review (VNR) reports indicate continuing efforts to fully integrate the 2030 Agenda within national – and in some cases local – monitoring and reporting mechanisms. This chapter provides a snapshot of how countries presented their monitoring data, with a focus on efforts to address some of the key gaps identified for tracking SDG progress. Following some highlights of key data trends in the first section, a second section provides an overview of country efforts to improve their monitoring and reporting frameworks. A concluding section draws some insights on approaches for the cumulative improvement of SDG reviews and reporting over time.

### 1. Status of country SDG monitoring: Highlights from the 2023 gap analyses

Approximately 82% of the 2023 reports indicate that VNRs were based on an assessment of all SDGs, up from approximately 77% of reports in 2022 (See Figure. 4). In addition, many countries provide insights on both their best-performing indicators, as well as areas where substantial efforts need to be made (see highlights on page 4).

Figure 4: SDG coverage of VNRs





Among the few countries providing data on the percentage of the UN (248 UN SDG indicators) covered in their reviews, **Cambodia, Guyana, Iceland, Mongolia** and **Portugal** reported their coverage stood between 70% and 90%, with Iceland reporting that its data coverage rose from 30% in 2019 to 70% in 2023. Ireland is the country that has reported the highest percentage of data availability, claiming that the country is able to generate data for 91% of SDG indicators.

However, the availability of disaggregated data was much more modest, less than 20% of countries indicating they had access to disaggregated data for most of the VNR sections (see LNOB chapter).

**Figure 5:** Data availability for global SDG indicators

%	Countries and Years						
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
11–20%	Guatemala	Paraguay	-	-	-	-	-
21–30%	Azerbaijan, the Maldives	Jamaica	Cambodia, Croatia, Eswatini, Fiji, Iceland, Iraq, Mauritius, New Zealand, Pakistan, Palau, Serbia, Tonga, Vanuatu	Honduras, Nigeria, Panama	-	Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau	Liechtenstein
31–40%	Japan, Panama, the Netherlands	Bahamas, Dominican Republic	Algeria, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Turkey	Gambia, Mozambique, Niger, Zambia	Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Iraq, Paraguay	Botswana, Somalia	Zambia
41–50%	Belgium, Italy, Nigeria, Peru	Benin, Egypt, State of Palestine	Côte d'Ivoire, Kuwait, Oman, Saint Lucia, Tunisia	Kyrgyz Republic, Morocco, Syria, Uzbekistan	Denmark, Dominican Republic, Zimbabwe	Cote d'Ivoire, El Salvador, São Tomé and Príncipe, Eswatini	Brunei, Saudi Arabia
51–60%	Denmark	Ecuador, Niger, Spain, Uruguay, Viet Nam	Lesotho, Mongolia, Philippines, Tanzania, Timor-Leste	Costa Rica	Malaysia, Spain	Djibouti, Gambia, Lesotho	Fiji, Tajikistan
61–70%	Indonesia	Bhutan, Cabo Verde, Lithuania, Senegal	Indonesia, Israel, Rwanda, South Africa	Finland	Guatemala, Niger	Jordan	Iceland, Portugal, Tanzania
71–80%	Bangladesh	Hungary, Mexico	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Guatemala, United Kingdom	Benin, Ecuador, Libya, Malawi, Moldova	Angola, Madagascar, Sweden, Tunisia	-	Cambodia, Guyana, Mongolia
81–90%	Malaysia	-	-	Austria, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya	-	The Netherlands	-
91–100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	Ireland

## Country self assessments of SDG progress in 2023

**Brunei:** The VNR report notes some negative trends, including an urgent need to tackle “regressing” trends for Goal 12, due to a sharp fall in recycling rates from 25.2% in 2015 to 8.72% in 2021. Other negative trends noted are in the waste management, sustainable tourism, and sustainable use of marine resources areas.

**Cambodia:** The report identifies “impressive” progress on the five priority goals in 2023, with 25% of indicators and sub indicators performing on or above track.

**Canada:** Gaps identified especially around gender equality, indigenous people well-being, water pollution and carbon-emissions.

**Fiji:** The report notes progress on “most” SDGs, with two SDGs (6 and 10) on track, insufficient data for SDGs 5, 14 and 16, and regression on SDGs 3 and 14.

**Liechtenstein:** While 12 SDGs display a positive trend, the report highlights negative trends for three SDGs 9, 10 and 11, concluding that “sustainability is declining in these areas.”

**Portugal:** Reports that “more than 60% of the targets monitored have progressed positively,” with SDGs 1, 6, 7 and 8 having the highest percentage of targets with a positive evolution compared to 2015. On the other hand, SDG 9 is described as “the worst performer with 38% of the targets evolving in the opposite direction to what is desirable,” while for SDGs 5, 12 and 14 there is a lack of data for more than 60% of the established targets.

**Tajikistan:** Despite some progress, Tajikistan still lags slightly behind the average SDG data availability in the North and Central Asia subregion. Specifically, there are 78 indicators for which no data is available, compared to 28 in the subregion. On SDG 14, for example, the report notes the country “is moving in a wrong direction,” attributing this to a lack of frameworks to protect the access rights for small-scale fisheries.

**Timor-Leste:** The number of indicators with “sufficient” data increased from 89 to 123 since VNRI in 2019, with notable improvements in data availability for SDGs 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 15, and 17. However, the country still lags behind others in the Asia-Pacific region.

**Tanzania:** Report states that 240 of SDG indicators are considered to be “potentially relevant” for Tanzania, of which 167 are mapped and are being tracked by national development frameworks and 73 are unmapped.

**Viet Nam:** The report notes persistent challenges for some SDG targets, notably: addressing malnutrition among ethnic minority children (SDG 2); equitable access to quality education, especially for vulnerable groups (SDG 4) and combating harmful social norms on gender and gender-biased sex selection (SDG 5).

**EU:** Data gaps identified include digital skills and life-long learning for adults; gender equality especially in the labor market; levels of organic farming; lifting at least 5 million children out of risk of poverty or social exclusion; geographical inequalities; energy efficiency of buildings; total consumption footprint; plastic waste and recycling; greenhouse gas emissions reduction; net land take; official development assistance as a share of gross national income total and for least developed countries.

**GOOD PRACTICE: Towards “total” data capture. Why multistakeholder collaboration matters**

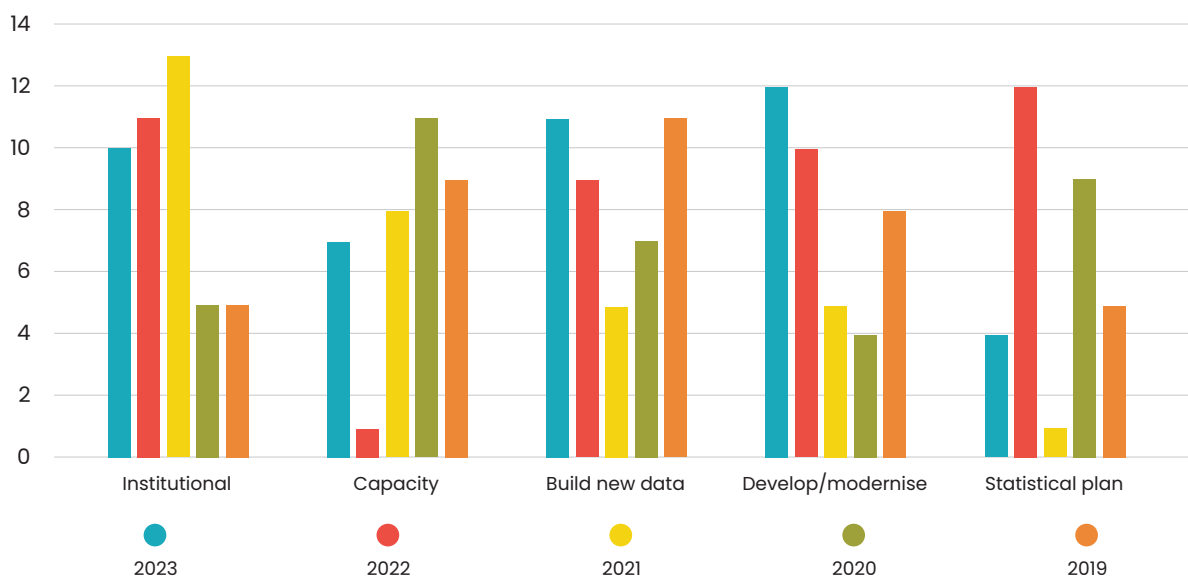


Ireland and Iceland highlight their success in crowdsourcing SDG information from a broad cross-section of societal actors. **Ireland** reports that its Central Statistics Office sourced data for 211 (91%) of the SDG indicators, with a separate report for each of the 17 SDGs as part of the UN SDGs Indicator series. The report notes that each publication provides disaggregated data on the relevant SDG indicators that includes geography, gender, age group and other categories, where applicable. **Iceland’s** SDG tracking system consists of two independent assessments: a government assessment made by specialists from the ministries and Statistics Iceland and a civil society assessment coordinated by the United Nations Association in Iceland. The report notes that data used in the VNR report is gathered from an online dashboard where any interested individual or organization can find a summary of the main achievements and challenges as well as detailed information about the government’s actions and planned next steps to achieve each SDG. In total, 55 organizations participated.

## 2. Efforts to improve data availability

Many countries (85%) discuss ongoing efforts to improve data analysis and reporting on the SDGs. Noting the close link between its national data ecosystem and the country’s ability to enhance coordination for the SDGs, Barbados reports that its official statistics “are not sufficiently current and unofficial data are not standardized such that they could be used to report on the SDG indicators.”

**Figure 6:** Efforts to improve data availability



Several countries underscore the importance of whole-of-government efforts to develop robust national statistical systems. Noting that its first VNR revealed weaknesses in several sectoral indicators, **Burkina Faso** highlights a collaborative national study to define a strategy to make missing data available with a view to filling statistical gaps in indicators for monitoring the SDGs in Burkina Faso. **Bahrain** highlights efforts to improve collaboration among government agencies to enhance access to accurate, timely, relevant and quality data. **Belgium** notes efforts towards the harmonization of local data to enrich the national indicators. **Fiji** highlights the addition of 40 SDG indicators between 2019 to 2022, as well as efforts to improve access to disaggregated data, through the development of the Fiji SDG Data Hub, an advanced online platform that will integrate statistical and geospatial information with other relevant SDG monitoring data. **Guyana** reports on the relaunch of the pandemic-delayed National Strategy for the Development of Statistics, “laying the foundation for the building of an integrated and streamlined national statistics system.”

**Zambia** attributes its slow progress on SDG monitoring to, among other issues, “an apparent insufficiency in the demand for data and use of information,” and consequently, “a lack of an institutionalized culture of evidence-based policy making and planning.” The report pledges to accelerate the updating of the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics “to make it more responsive to the country’s data needs.”

**Poland** points to growing awareness and commitment to sustainable development in the country, with a resulting rise in demand for more diversified information among stakeholders, “frequently going beyond the standard practice of the official statistics.” Among new information products generated by the national statistical body, the report highlights digital SDG reports intended for a wide public, as well as specific trend analyses based on geospatial information and other innovative techniques. **Kuwait** reports on “sustained investments and capacity development programmes” since 2019 to tackle systemic, institutional, and technical dimensions of the country’s data limitations. Noting the resulting “quantum leap in meaningful and illustrative data and statistics” has helped improve the quality of the country’s second VNR.

Acknowledging that despite improvements in the data situation, “there are still too few indicators available for the systematic evaluation of the level of implementation and development of SDGs,” **Liechtenstein’s** report highlights efforts to revise the country’s statistical programme in 2023–2024. **Poland** notes that challenges and gaps identified in the 2023 VNR will be taken into account when drafting the National Roadmap for Sustainable Development 2030, in line with the challenge of the UN Secretary-General (UNSG) for the SDG Summit.

One of the innovative ways that countries are working to bridge data gaps is through the incorporation of unofficial data sources. Approximately 30% of reports mention the analysis drew on additional data sources and tools. **Canada**, for example, highlights the development of a new tool to evaluate the suitability of non-official data to fill existing data gaps. **Croatia** highlights publication of the first data set from a statistical survey on the amount of food waste, while **Mongolia** notes the incorporation of road network data and population statistics data to gain insights on SDG indicator 9.1.1 (access to road infrastructure).

### GOOD PRACTICE: Bridging data gaps (1) DRC



To respond effectively to identified data gaps in SDG indicators, the DRC's Observatoire Congolais du Développement Durable (OCDD) collaborated with the National Institute of Statistics on a cluster survey to update several SDG data sources, in particular those relating to poverty. By combining the results with data derived from a 2018 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) the report notes that the DRC was able to achieve "an appreciable basis" for compiling its second VNR. However, the report notes the challenge of continuing to derive high quality data for SDG monitoring through regular surveys and censuses, and investing in collection of administrative data. In addition, the report also emphasizes the need to ensure that the data collected "is widely accessible and disseminated to all parties and stakeholders." It is for this reason, the report notes, that the OCDD implements an open data platform for the management and publication of SDG-related data and statistics, and further intends to "work with all stakeholders to support them in research effective solutions, based on evidence, to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs."

### GOOD PRACTICE: Bridging data gaps (2) EU development cooperation



National statistical services are an important part of the SDG framework but they remain weak and underfunded. According to the EU research, global official development assistance (ODA) for data and statistics "has remained stagnant" in recent years, with only 0.3% of total ODA dedicated to this area. The report further notes that only four out of 46 EU partner countries reported having fully funded national statistical plans in 2020. Stressing that EU institutions, such as Eurostat, "are among the largest providers of funding for data and statistics," the report highlights the disbursement of EUR 110 million in 2018-20 to over 50 partner countries to strengthen their capacities to produce and disseminate statistics, "including for effective SDG monitoring, and thereby increasing accountability."

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### 3. Towards iterative VNR reporting

With almost all 2023 reporting countries conducting their second VNR, an important component of the review process is assessing how much has changed since the baseline year of reporting, three or four years prior. Approximately 90% of reporting countries mentioned that their report presents an assessment of progress since the first VNR, including by identifying remaining challenges and “ways forward.”

Several countries offer a deeper analysis of remaining gaps and additional efforts made to bridge the gap in the final stretch to 2030. Acknowledging areas where it remains offtrack, **Slovakia’s** report also provides insights on interlinkages between SDGs and concludes that the indicators assessed “are reminding us of considerable gaps and the need to speed up implementation.” **Belgium** notes that this year’s assessment was based on “quantified objectives for better implementation of the SDGs” that emerged from two independent gap analyses conducted in 2017 and 2019.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina** highlights the development of alternative good governance indicators, emphasizing their importance in “evaluating the effectiveness of the accelerators identified within this pathway.” **Poland** states that one component of the second VNR was to “verify” some assumptions made previously, notably that focusing its interventions on a few select areas would increase the effectiveness of achieving the SDGs in the coming years. In this regard, the report highlights that “measurable effects” were achieved through its focus on, inter alia: increasing energy efficiency, increasing gross expenditure on R&D, and expanding sustainable agriculture. The report also notes the value of investing in education for sustainable development in both the formal and informal education system.

**Romania** reports that following the release of its first VNR in 2018, the country took a “comprehensive approach” to sustainable development, that included developing a 2030 roadmap, prioritizing strengthening and improving governance framework, and raising awareness through education and training. **Tanzania** highlights some of the ways it applied the previous VNR’s recommendations on bridging data gaps, including developing localized SDG metadata and implementing a capacity building trajectory to transform the National Statistical System.

In addition to looking back to assess progress made, iterative reporting also requires establishing common ground for future assessments. Almost all countries indicate that their second VNRs allow for future comparability, with many including a traffic light system to establish implementation trends over time.

To better identify implementation gaps, more granular and continuous monitoring and assessments processes are key. Through the regular publication of SDG progress reports other than the VNRs (ideally, on a yearly basis), countries can establish more robust monitoring processes and increase accountability. In 2023, 26 countries (around 66% of reports) included information on parallel or complementary reporting efforts, whether these are integrated within National Development Plan implementation reporting mechanisms, or stem from specific SDG-focused reporting mechanisms.

Examples include:



- **Belgium:** A 2021 federal requirement for all reporting entities to indicate in policy notes how they are contributing to the SDGs
- **Canada:** Taking Action Together—Canada’s Annual Report on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs that highlights initiatives across Canada by all levels of government, Indigenous Peoples, a wide range of CSOs, the private sector and academia that contribute to advancing the SDGs at home and abroad.
- **France:** Mandatory sustainable development reports for cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants
- **Poland:** Annual SDG monitoring reports published by the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology with contributions from regions and relevant stakeholders
- **Romania:** Annual report from the Department of Sustainable Development
- Portugal, St. Kitts and Nevis, Turkmenistan and Viet Nam: Annual SDG progress reports
- **Slovakia:** Two reports adopted so far based on the country’s biannual monitoring framework
- **EU:** EU-level reporting through Eurostat annual reports + thematic and sectoral reports

It is important to note that, similar to previous years, countries seldomly specify whether these reporting mechanisms are linked with broader oversight and accountability mechanisms (especially legislative). It is advisable for countries to institute explicit monitoring and reporting mandates, involving non-state actors, local authorities, and the parliament, through their national councils or committees. Regular progress presentations should subsequently be made to the legislative body, ideally on an annual or bi-annual basis.

Amongst 2023 VNRs, the formulation of annual SDG reports are mentioned by **Brunei, Canada** (without mentioning how these reports are developed and to whom they are presented) and **Poland** (elaborated by the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology with inputs from ‘Regions and stakeholders’). Others mention bi-annual reports (**Slovakia**), producing annual statistics-based reports (**Portugal, EU**), or annual progress reports produced by the SDG coordinating body and presented to the government (**Turkmenistan**). In countries where the SDG framework is embedded within National Development Plans (**Rwanda, Tanzania, Zambia**), regular reporting is implied, but not detailed. Only **Romania** mentions legislative oversight, through annual reports prepared by the government and presented to the Parliament (Sub-Committee for Sustainable Development of the Romanian Parliament).