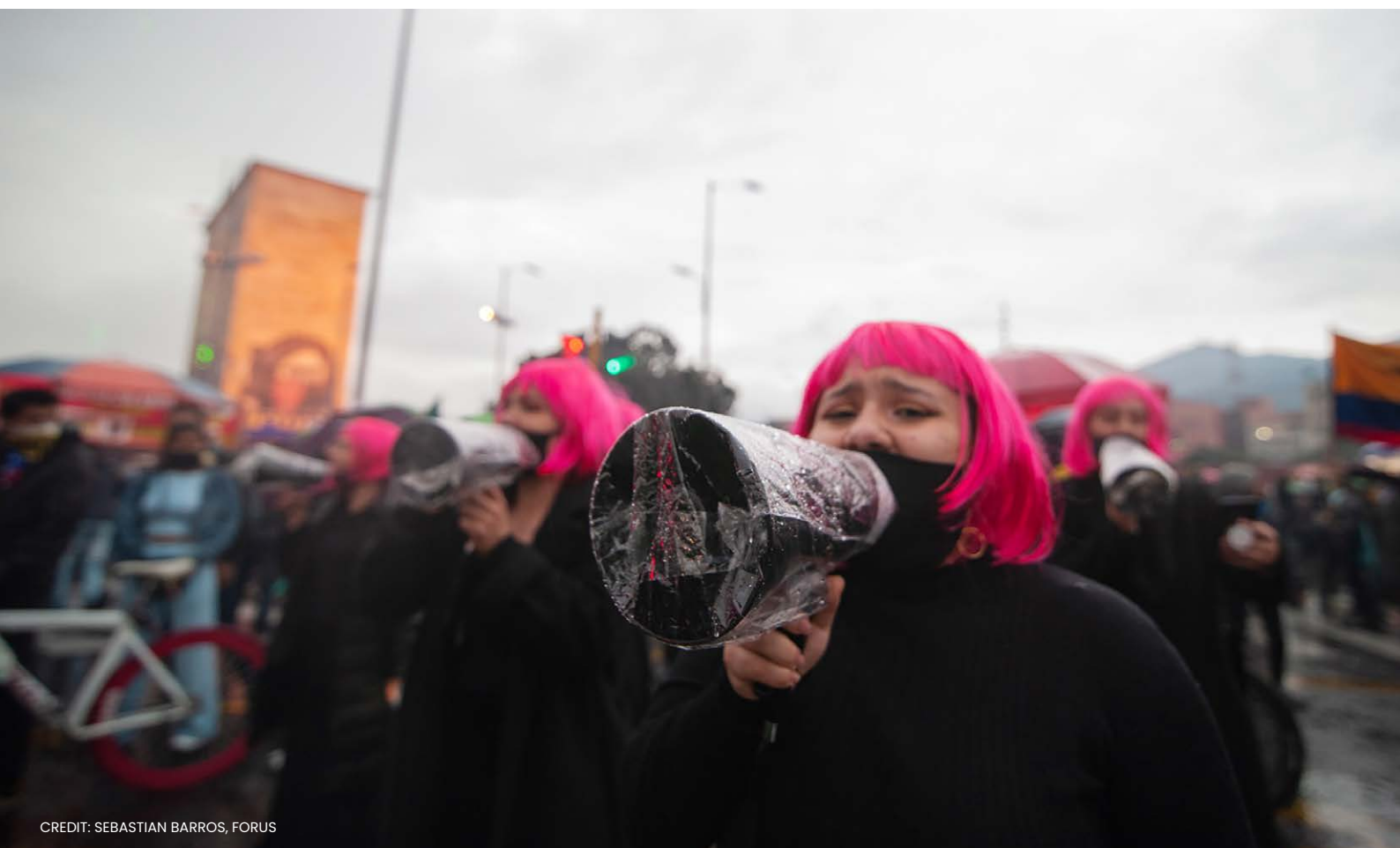


# PROGRESSING NATIONAL SDG IMPLEMENTATION REPORT 2023

## III. IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA IN PARTNERSHIP

### Chapter 8: Partnerships for SDG Delivery



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## Chapter 8: Partnerships for SDG Delivery

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### Introduction

Implementing a broad and multi-layered framework like the 2030 Agenda implies tapping into the knowledge and expertise of different societal stakeholders to breathe life into tangible transformative efforts on the ground. The 2023 Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) record many types of partnerships, as well as many generalized references to the involvement of civil society, other non-state actors and parliaments in SDG planning, implementation, and monitoring and review. In this section, we outline how countries approach implementation partnerships with specific stakeholder groups as presented in the VNR reports. A number of CSO fact checks are also highlighted.

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# 1. Engaging with Parliaments

As the principal law-making body, parliament has an important role in ensuring that voluntary international policy frameworks like the 2030 Agenda are embedded into national legislative frameworks and that legislative initiatives are based on sustainable development principles to guide implementation and compliance. Roughly 68% of reporting countries (significantly up from 34% in 2022), and the EU, provided specific examples of the different ways parliaments contribute to SDG implementation and monitoring.

One approach is through regular reporting by various government institutions to parliament (see sidebar.) Countries that have instituted a further layer of mandatory reporting directly linked to the SDGs include **Liechtenstein**, which requires that draft legislation and international treaties undergo a “SDG analysis.” In **Belgium’s** German-speaking region, the Court of Audit has recommended a more planned approach to policy preparation and the involvement of citizens and stakeholders, as well as clearer coordination and follow-up of strategic plans and policies to allow for periodic reporting to parliament. **Vietnam’s** National Assembly organizes the annual ‘Conference on the Role of the National Assembly in the implementation of the SDGs.’

Several countries, including **Tanzania, Ireland, Romania, Uzbekistan** and **Zambia** have established parliamentary committees for sustainable development tasked with, *inter alia*: raising public awareness about the 2030 Agenda; monitoring integration of the SDGs in budgetary processes and other national policy frameworks; and ensuring synergy with other stakeholders in SDG planning, implementation and review.

For some countries (including **Lithuania, Mongolia** and **Rwanda**) the role of parliament is more implicit, mentioned only in the context of its overarching role in assessing proposed budgets as well as other policy and strategic planning frameworks. **Vietnam’s** National Assembly organizes an annual conference on the role of the national assembly in the implementation of the SDGs. Another generalized approach is including parliament as one of the stakeholder groups represented on national SDG coordinating bodies (**Iceland**).

Some reports outline parliamentary initiatives that contribute to the 2030 Agenda principle of leaving no one behind. **St. Kitts and Nevis** highlights legislation to safeguard Rastafarian rights, while **Singapore** reports on the unanimous adoption of a landmark White Paper on Women’s Development, setting out 25 action plans in such areas as enabling women to participate more fully in the workplace, ensuring better protection for women from violence, and enhancing caregiver support. By initiating the Inter-Parliamentary Forum and Dialogue of Women from Central Asia and the Russian Federation, **Turkmenistan** aims to give a new impetus to regional cooperation while also strengthening international cooperation towards gender equality.

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*Political debate in a democracy is diversified: there is no [single] way to reduce inequality or to eradicate poverty, there are various ways and these are public policies, which derive from ideologies, programmes, analyses [and] wishes.*

[President of Portugal’s National Assembly]

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## VLR SIDE BAR: Why a proactive parliament matters

*And what does Parliament have to do with this?* Augusto Santos Silva, President of **Portugal's** National Assembly, proceeded to answer his own somewhat rhetorical question with three observations:

- The best known, but least important, is the need to monitor the way in which governments carry out the tasks that they have assigned themselves, and whether or not they are moving closer to the goals within the time limits they have set.
- The second, more important, is the nature of the goals to define points of arrival and commitments.... How we do it, how we put resources and means into practice, how we define horizons is plural. There is a place for public policy and there is a place for political debate in all of this.
- Lastly, the third and most important reason: there is no development without territory. In order to achieve the SDGs, you need to localize the policies[...] The territory is in the parliament, because the members of parliament are elected by the territories and they not only represent political diversity, but also territorial diversity.

The **European Parliament** (EP) actively promotes the 2030 Agenda through its informal SDGs Alliance. It directly contributed to the process of developing the first EU Voluntary Review (EUVR), showcasing how legislative bodies can drive SDG implementation. In 2022 and 2023, two EP resolutions focused on EUVR preparations, and a Parliament-commissioned study in 2022 addressed global crises and barriers to SDG implementation.

Countries that have established parliamentary oversight of SDG implementation include:

**Belgium:** Since 2021, all federal government members are required to indicate how they will contribute to the SDGs in their policy notes to parliament for the preparation of the annual budget.

**Canada:** The SDGs are included in Departmental Plans, Results Reports, and other parliamentary reporting by federal departments and agencies. This serves to ensure consistent and transparent information on SDG progress across all of government.

**Ireland:** The report highlights a standing order requiring that each parliamentary committee's annual work programme include progress on the implementation of the SDGs.

**Liechtenstein:** In order to increase policy coherence, the government committed itself in 2022 to subject all new draft legislation and international treaties to an SDG analysis. The SDGs are thus a fixed component of all consultation reports as well as government reports and motions submitted to the Parliament.

**Romania's** Parliamentary Sub-Committee for Sustainable Development has three core responsibilities: developing reports on public sustainable development policies; organizing public debates and hearings on sustainable development issues; and promoting multistakeholder cooperation with other parliamentary structures and international organizations.







*In **Zambia**, different parliamentary committees collaborate on activities to foster SDG engagement in the inter-parliamentary context and with other legislative bodies, with input from civil society.*

According to the Zambian Council on Social Development (ZCSD) report on the state of civic space in the country, the democratization process has indeed expanded dialogue between government and societal actors around policymaking. Civil society is consulted in the context of legislative debates through the Law Development Commission, and many NGOs including the ZCSD have been consulted – although participation has mostly been limited to organizations based in the capital.

A specific example regarding the review of legislative proposals took place in November 2023. The National Budget and Planning Act was undergoing a review, to which the ZCSD and three other national NGOs were invited to provide submissions in a structured consultation process.

However, the ZCSD affirms that the involvement of NGOs in such processes should not be limited to organizations based in the capital or other urban areas, but should ensure inclusion of groups from all provinces and districts in order not to leave anyone behind.

Source: Adapted from ZCSD's Civic Space report

Other countries highlight the establishment of parliamentary oversight bodies without specifying their role in SDG implementation. The **DRC** states it has established a parliamentary commission on the SDGs that “regularly monitors progress and measures taken by the Government.” **France** reports that it adopted a resolution in 2020 calling for the integration of the SDGs into the legislative process without offering further details. **Guyana** similarly reports that its national SDG strategy (LDS 2030) was endorsed by Parliamentary Resolution on 8 August 2022. **Uzbekistan** highlights a “specially established” parliamentary commission for monitoring the SDGs.

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## 2. The Role of Civil Society in Implementation

Civil society organizations (CSOs), have an undisputed role in SDG implementation and monitoring. Maintaining a rising trend in recent years, the majority of VNR reports (approximately 87%, (up from 68% in 2022) either contain dedicated sections on civil society initiatives and/or views, while others highlight civil society contributions under specific SDGs. Several governments, including **Bahrain, Canada** (see box), provide dedicated funding for CSO-led activities to advance the 2030 Agenda.

The contribution of CSOs takes many forms and, as pointed out in several reports, ranges from awareness raising, implementing projects at the local level focusing on the most vulnerable groups, contributing monitoring data and offering solutions to address gaps in official policies and programmes, mobilizing resources, and facilitating tripartite relationships between state, civil society and the private sector to ensure greater synergies (see sidebar for some country examples).

One common approach identified in several reports is the ability of CSOs to work across sectors. A survey in **Liechtenstein** found that non-state actors simultaneously take several SDGs into account in their activities, showing that they view sustainability as a comprehensive concept. This is echoed in **Belgium's** report, which highlights CSO recommendations for greater coherence in monitoring SDG implementation at national, regional and global levels, "given the economic, ecological and social impact across borders."

### The many sides of CSO-led implementation

**Lithuania** highlights the role of NGOs in public education and participation in the implementation of the SDGs, as well as their awareness raising projects aimed at spreading the message about the implementation of the SDGs to the Lithuanian public, contributing to public education and creating a dialogue between NGOs and decision makers.

**Barbados** cites a campaign spearheaded by the Healthy Caribbean Coalition – bringing together local and international partners – that has mobilized public support for policies limiting the sale and marketing of foods full of sugar, fats and salt in and around schools, while increasing the availability of healthy foods and drinking water.

**Fiji** highlights the role of CSOs in budget monitoring processes through developing Citizen Budget Guides and, ultimately, Citizen Audit Guides.

**Rwanda** notes the establishment of the SDG5 forum coordinated by the Rwanda Women's Network – a collective of 30 CSOs working on diverse human rights and development issues – that facilitates engagement with government bodies, development partners and grassroots communities in order to leave no one behind.

**Slovakia** mentions the planting of 32 "Trees of Peace" across four continents in an initiative led by NGO Servare et Manere, which aims to promote international friendship by linking "the two important issues of our time: peace and climate".

## CSO View: Civil society participation in policy making in Croatia



**Croatia** notes in its report that CSO contributions are particularly valued, in order to include citizens' views into decision making processes, participating in expert groups, and carrying out research and studies that inform the drafting and implementation of public policies.

According to the Croatian Platform for International Citizen Solidarity CROSOL, there currently is an erosion of the enabling environment for civil society in Croatia, characterized by a decline in funding options from public sources and restricted entry to policy making mechanisms. In this context, interaction with institutions regarding advocacy, public consultations, and decision making is very limited and frequently symbolic. For instance, while Croatian civil society can engage in online public consultations for legislative acts, CSO comments and contributions are rarely incorporated into actual policy proposals.

Source: Adapted from email exchanges with CROSOL

## GOOD PRACTICE: Strengthening civil society through dedicated funding



In 2018, **Canada** committed CAN\$59.8 million over 13 years to the SDG Funding Program, an initiative focusing on local and community-driven projects. So far, CAN\$22 million has been allocated to 131 projects. Since 2020, three Indigenous organizations have received funding to include Indigenous perspectives in Canada's SDG efforts.

**Portugal** has developed a number of (co)financing instruments exclusively to support non-governmental development organization (NGDO)-led projects. Portugal earmarks, on average, EUR 12 million annually for all national, international and local NGOs, representing 6% of its gross bilateral official development assistance (ODA). The political recognition of the role of the Portuguese Platform of NGDOs is also acknowledged as an important vector in promoting the NGDOs' capacity to act.

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### 3. Children and Youth focused initiatives

Around 77% of countries specify initiatives by, or targeted at, children and youth organizations.

Several reports, including **Lithuania, Ireland** and **Turkmenistan** point to growing awareness of the SDGs among young people as evidenced by increased participation of youth representatives in various national and international processes related to the SDGs. A number of countries also highlight the role of UN Youth Ambassadors in popularizing the SDGs.

**Bosnia** cites a March 2023 survey conducted through the UNICEF U-Report portal in which respondents identified three priorities for young people: SDG 1 (31%); SDG 3 (19%); and SDG 4 (17%). A similar survey among youth organizations in **Poland** found education (SDG 4) to be the most important among respondents, while 42% of surveyed organizations indicated an interest in climate (SDG 13). Almost all respondents (93%) noted the importance of activities to promote greater environmental responsibility. Other priority issues identified were gender equality, and anti-discrimination in the employment sector.

Examples of youth-focused activities highlighted in the country reports include:


- **Canada's** Service Corps Program, which promotes civic engagement among youth aged 15 to 30 by removing barriers to accessing service opportunities. The Program provides funding to nearly 100 organizations, primarily not-for-profit organizations and those serving Indigenous and under-served populations, to deliver volunteer service opportunities to youth volunteers. Participants gain skills and leadership experience while making a difference in their communities.
- **Tanzania** has established several multi-stakeholder programmes prioritizing skills development and mentorship for youth, notably digital business clinics for young entrepreneurs linking them to digital platforms for business growth, and start-up funding from local councils.
- Youth organizations in **Brunei** are increasingly recognized for their leadership in promoting innovative green technologies and other sustainable practices in the country and broader ASEAN region. The ASEAN Prize 2022 was awarded to the founder of youth-led NGO Hand4Hand, Iqbal Damit, for his contributions towards humanitarian relief and advocating for volunteerism. Two sisters, Sarinah Zizumiza and Nursheila Ziziumiza, founders of Rumine Corporation, were awarded gold in the Digital Content category of the ASEAN ICT Awards 2021 for developing a Virtual Augmented Reality training application promoting sustainable farming.

#### The contribution of youth through volunteerism

The 2023 reports also highlight many examples of volunteerism to advance the SDGs, many of which are driven by young people. Some examples include:


Volunteers for My Community, a national youth volunteer programme in **Cambodia** that engages in-and-out-of-school youth to initiate and implement projects that benefit their local community. The young volunteers also build various skills such as knowledge on SDGs, basic digital skills, project management, and fundraising, administration, and planning.





The Young SDG Rapporteurs (JERODD) Programme in the **DRC** connects young people to diverse SDG-related initiatives undertaken by development partners and government programmes, which has helped strengthen local networks for the SDGs. The JERODD-supported “SDG Action Awards” recognizes the contribution of young people to sustainable development.

Between June 2020 and July 2021, youth volunteers in **Rwanda** constructed 5,647 latrines and 10,660 hand washing stations to expand access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services. In addition, young people conducted 27,312 WASH awareness campaigns in local communities.



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## 4. Engagement with the Private Sector

While 30 (77%) VNR reports mention the role of the private sector in SDG processes, very few provide details on actual implementation activities. Most reports mention in generic terms the role of the business and corporate sector in public-private partnerships, research and development (R&D) and the green economy.

**Viet Nam** reports that the proportion of investment capital from the non-state economic sector increased from 50.2% in 2015 to 59.5% in 2021 and accounted for the bulk of investment in social development. In addition to the increase in capital scale, from the end of 2021, the report notes improvements in the quality of projects based on more sustainable business models. Examples cited include Lego's first carbon neutralizing factories, and the shift to 100% renewable energy by Pandora corporation's factories.

**Zambia** established its Public-Private Dialogue Forum in 2022, with support from development partners. The aim of the Forum is to enhance engagement in order to identify bottlenecks to tapping the pivotal role of the private sector in attaining the SDGs. The launch of a **Tanzania** SDG Investor aims to generate market intelligence on priority sectors where private sector solutions "can address development needs at scale aligned to policy priorities," and offer the evidence, data and concrete recommendations on viable business models to inform the assessment and diagnostics phase and for application in the financing strategy.

**Saudi Arabia** reports that it is leveraging public-private partnerships to promote sustainable housing development and improve health and education outcomes. Some companies have developed comprehensive SDG-aligned sustainability plans; for example, SABIC's Sustainability Roadmap targets resource efficiency, climate change, circular economy, food security, sustainable infrastructure, and environmental preservation.

In October 2017, more than 80 companies, CSOs and government representatives signed the **Belgian SDG Charter for International Development**. As part of their partnerships with the private sector, the Flemish government agencies VLAIO and Flanders Circular facilitate research on circular business models and technologies and other tools to help companies become more sustainable. **Bosnia and Herzegovina** has established several private sector-focused projects on the SDGs, including the annual SDG Business Pioneers Award and the SDG Business Week, which attract a large number of stakeholders. Under **Croatia's** National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021 –2026, private companies have invested in diverse projects in green infrastructure, sustainable tourism, access to education, and R&D for sustainable development sectors. A key objective is to foster job creation and entrepreneurship in the value chain, especially for women and young people.

**Poland's** Partnership for the Implementation of the SDGs has attracted more than 150 stakeholders to date, making more than 170 commitments to advance implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Financial Stability Council of **Mongolia** approved Mongolia's Green Taxonomy in 2018 and the National Roadmap for Sustainable Finance Roadmap in 2022, allowing banks, financial institutions, investors and policymakers to use the classification, definition, and criteria of environmentally friendly activities in their operations. Several leading national enterprises, large commercial banks, and other major economic players have begun to issue regular sustainability reports.

Some ODA-source countries have created special funding windows and blended financing models to tap private investments for SDG programmes in partner countries. An example at EU level is the revamped NDICI-Global Europe, and its investment arm, the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus. **Iceland's** SDG fund encourages private investments in value and job creating projects and contributes to the development of the private sector in the Global South to attain the SDGs (see box). **Portugal** has strengthened its support for private investment in partner countries through the creation of the Development Financing Compact in the PALOP (Portuguese-speaking Compact). One of the objectives is to enhance partner countries' access to international financial institutions by integrating the private sector in SDG implementation programmes, coupled with interventions to improve the overall business environment in these countries.

#### **GOOD PRACTICE: Private sector Partnerships for SDG promotion in Iceland**



In 2018, the government's working group on the SDGs initiated the first partnership agreement with the Festa – Icelandic Center for Sustainability, a non-profit organization with almost 200 associated members that span Icelandic corporations, public organizations, pension funds, universities, the Central bank of Iceland, and several municipalities. Festa adopts various tools to promote the SDGs, including through conducting SDG workshops for the private sector, highlighting relevant SDGs in event advertising, and updating members informed new requirements in corporate sustainability reporting.

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## 5. Partnerships with Academia

Compared to other stakeholder groups, a much smaller number of reports (around 20%) highlight specific contributions from technical experts and the academic sector in SDG implementation. And for the most part, such references are limited to individual research projects or consultative processes. Among the few countries that provides a broader analysis, **Lithuania** highlights partnerships between the academic and private sectors aiming to, *inter alia*: develop a more sustainable, efficient and innovative business environment; promote closer international and local cooperation and clustering between science, business and government; commercialize R&D results; mobilize private capital; and promote the supply of, and demand for, innovation in the public sector. The report notes, however, that initiatives undertaken so far “are not sufficient to make significant progress in achieving the SDGs.”

A 2023 study in **Ireland** revealed that at least 50 academics and career researchers were involved in over 100 activities that inform the country’s SDG policies. Contributions included performing research and organizing events that directly contributed to policy development, (co)authoring White or Green Papers, and participating on EU and International Policy Committees.

Some country reports focus on the sustainability profile of academic institutions. A 2021 survey by the Sustainable Campus Network initiative in **Portugal** revealed that while higher education institutions (HEIs) are not obligated to focus on sustainability, the leaders of these institutions are beginning to show some sensitivity to the subject, in particular, observable at the level of the institutions’ governing bodies, as well as through initiatives of the academic community. In terms of education and curricula, it was found that most of the responding HEIs offer formal and lifelong learning courses exclusively devoted to sustainability issues and often in an integrated manner, while also promoting sustainability in teaching practices.

A similar study in **Brunei** found that between 2019 and 2022, a total of 2,012 SDG-related research publications were released, with SDGs 3 and 9 accounting for highest number of publications (at 19% and 9.8% respectively). The study noted opportunities to enhance research partnerships between government departments and academia that underpinned much of these outcomes, through increased funding for R&D, and closer consultative partnerships between research academies and relevant implementing agencies. A 2018 EU study found that about 40% of the 169 indicators underpinning the 17 SDGs are reliant on the use of space-based science and technology. Examples of space technology applications by the EU’s Copernicus programme include tailored climate information services and other near-real-time observations under the Copernicus programme to help predict the location and intensity of active wildfires, pollutant emissions, and other threats to human life and biodiversity. The report also highlights a digital platform with real-life testimonies from scientists and users across the world about innovative ways to contribute to the achievement of a given SDG.

### **GOOD PRACTICE: Partnerships with academia in Iceland**



Since its establishment, the government's working group on the SDGs has worked closely with the Sustainability Institute at the University of Iceland for both data evaluation and advice on how to prioritize the SDG targets in Iceland. The first result of this collaboration was the publication of a status report and 65 priority targets in 2018. Subsequently, the university committed to incorporate the SDGs and sustainability in its strategy for 2021-2026, starting with a mapping of the work of its academics in relation to the SDGs. This led to a series of events – one for each SDG – convened in collaboration with the government's working group at which outstanding academics from all academic fields debated the goals and the problems associated with them from as many angles as possible. The university recently published its first sustainability report with the results of an extensive mapping of its work on the SDGs in five main areas: research, teaching and learning, community outreach and partnerships, operations, and student initiatives.



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## 6. International development cooperation

Only about 53% of reports provide information on international partnerships in SDG implementation. A few high-income countries (notably **Liechtenstein, Ireland and the EU**) note that such partnerships are addressed under the external action sections for specific SDGs.

Countries that provide some information under this section (including **Zambia, Viet Nam, Tanzania, DRC, Comoros, Central African Republic, Cambodia** and **Burkin Faso**) primarily focus on the role of ODA and other financial and technical support in their national planning processes. Many countries acknowledge the support of UN institutions and bilateral and multilateral partners for their VNR processes.

### GOOD PRACTICE: International partnerships in Guyana



**Guyana's** Programme on Low Carbon Development and Carbon Finance aims to create a model for other forest countries to benefit from payments for ecosystem services. In 2009, Guyana and Norway started a partnership to create a global market-based mechanism for REDD+. Payments for Guyana's ART Trees Credits will create part of the funding stream for Guyana's new ecosystem services economy – a global model for how low carbon activity can become more valuable than high carbon activity, creating good jobs, better livelihoods and local economic opportunities.