Analyzing voluntary national reviews

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Structure

1. Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)
2. Preliminary results
   a) Leaving No One Behind in the VNRs
   b) Addressing trade-offs
   c) SDG 17
3. Way forward






Voluntary national reviews

Source: UNDESA, 2017 VNR Synthesis Report

- Key and popular element of the follow-up and review process of the 2030, within the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)
- Purpose
  - Sharing of experiences with a view to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda,
- Concept regarding effect:
  - not for peer review of performance, not for monitoring
  - not a source of objective information on policies and outcomes, but provides information on national approaches to SDG implementation adopted by government
  - why important - countries likely to showcase achievements
  - what can they achieve – healthy competition?

CDP role in VNR analysis

- DESA prepares annual synthesis reports providing overall assessment of the reports https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/17109Synthesis_Report_VNRs_2017.pdf
- Other organizations preparing assessments
- CDP – can be more independent of political/government pressures. More substantive. Could contribute to encouraging governments to address critical challenges in promoting ambitious, transformative agenda.
- 2017/18 exercise focused on key thematic challenges:
  - LNOB
  - Inter-sectoral trade offs in an integrated agenda
  - Partnerships/means of implementation (goal 17)

CDP analysis of VNRs: methodological approach

- Focus on key issue: e.g. how are VNRs interpreting ‘LNOB’; who has adopted proactive and creative policy approaches?
- Combine knowledge on key cross-cutting issues with iterative word search
- Define guiding questions
- Develop list of words and phrases
- Review documents, use only ‘meaningful’ instances
- Use observations during review for refining questions and words
- Using several reviewer reduces biases
- Focus on ‘context knowledge’ and ‘word search’ varies by issue

Leaving no one behind: is there political commitment? how is it interpreted?

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- Most countries mention LNOB, few have explicit strategies
- ➢ Awareness high, implementation lacking
  - Rhetorical reference or serious priority?
- There are some useful lessons from 'frontrunner' countries
- ➢ Information gaps
  - Few details on how strategies and policies are addressing LNOB
  - No answer on why strategies and policies are working
  - Very few information on 'failed policies'
- Attention to different groups varies but
  - emphasis on: Women, disabled, children, elderly, regions
  - neglect of racial and ethnic groups, LGBT, indigenous people...
- No attention to policy commitment to give priority to the most marginalized and vulnerable.

Addressing policy trade-offs in VNRs

	Number of countries: Yes	Number of countries: No
Institutional coordination mechanism	33	1
Specific tool to assess trade-offs ex-ante	3	31
Any reference to trade-offs	18	16
General reference to trade-offs	14	20
Reference to specific trade-offs	6	28

	Country	Specific trade-off/tool
Policy tools	Belgium	Legal requirement of ex-ante impact assessments of regulatory action
	Belize	Framework for prioritization in Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy assigns lower priority assigned to actions if they hinder progress in other policy objectives or cause damages to others
	Benin	Coordinating directorate and plenary of thematic groups identify and minimize trade-offs
Trade-off	Botswana	Income generation through diamond exploration led to limited employment and structural rigidities Government investments constrained private sector growth Rapid economic growth and inequality Construction of roads facilitated spreading of HIV/Aids
	Czech Republic	Strong sectoral focus by vertically organizing public management weakened ability to address complex and cross-sectoral issues
	Denmark	Profit-oriented agricultural sector reduced food insecurity (SDG2), heath for many (SDG 3) and economic growth (SDG 8), but had negative impacts on quality of life on land (SDG 14) and oceans (SDG 15), climate stability (SDG 13) and, in some regions, access to water (SDG 6).
	Italy	Globalization, trade, financial integration, technological transformation, labour market, demographic trends and migration created both winners and losers, leading to increased inequality due to lack of appropriate responses
	Maldives	Increasing electricity through imported fossil fuels increased vulnerability to global markets and impacted balance of payments
	Sweden	Sustainability labelling to promote sustainable consumption patterns can create trade barriers for developing countries

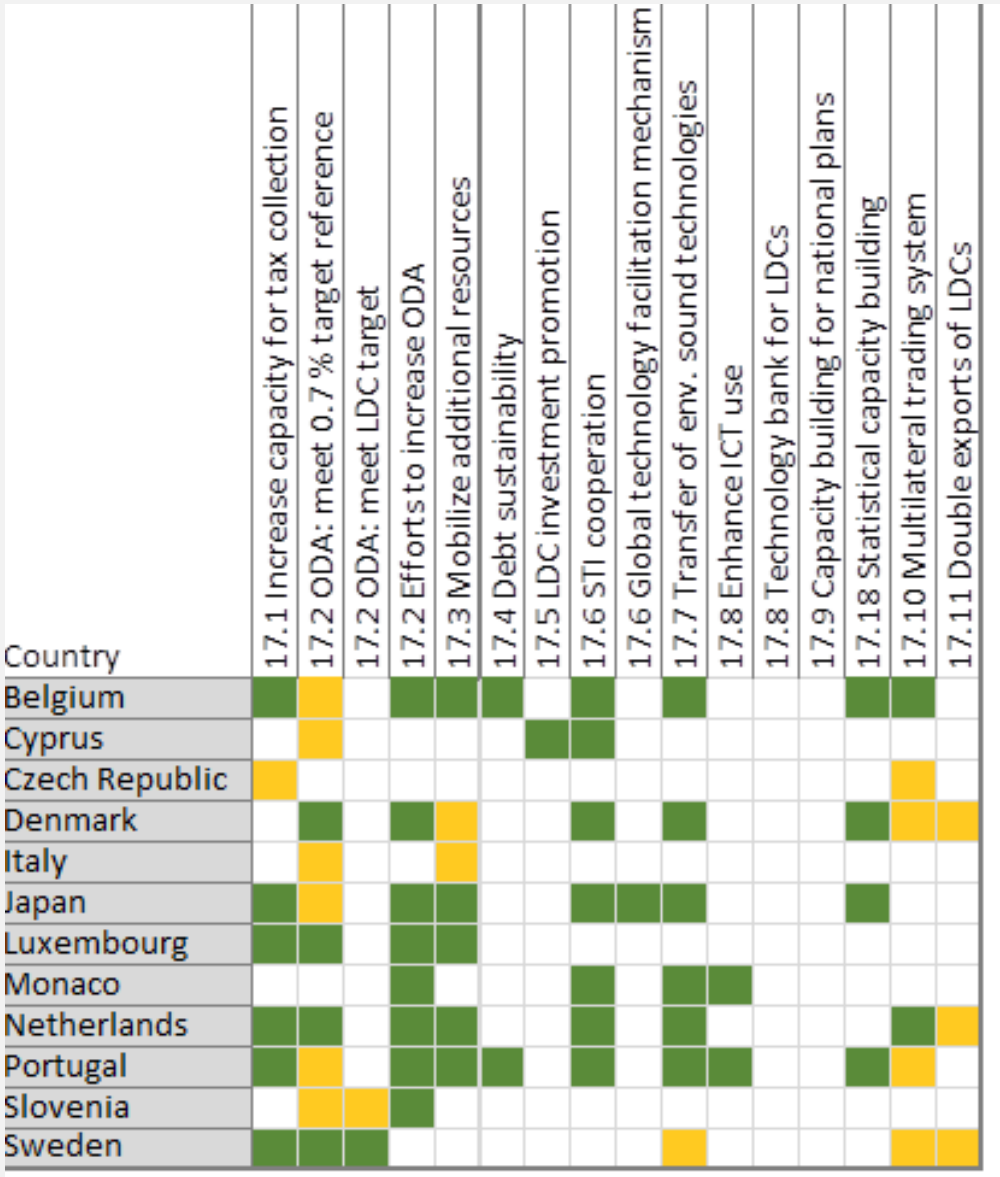
Addressing policy trade-offs

- Importance of integrated policy highlighted, but trade-offs receive less attention than synergies
- Most references to trade-offs are generic
- Some interesting examples, but details missing
- Recognizing trade-offs is necessary (but not sufficient!) for solving them

➢ Call for addressing trade-offs in VNRs

SDG 17

- Means of implementation and global partnership integral part of 2030 Agenda
- ‘Dual placement’: Stand-alone goal (SDG 17) and specific targets within other 16 SDGs
- How do developed countries address SDG 17 in their VNRs?



SDG 17 -Findings

- Limited coverage of SDG 17
  - Lack of commitment or reported through other global review mechanisms?
  - 'Orphaned' targets? (Technology bank, capacity building for development planning)
  - Stronger uptake of means if implementation and global partnership in SDGs 1-16?
- Some interesting examples, but mostly support to global initiatives and 'standard' ODA

Way forward

- Despite limitations, VNRs are only global mechanism for ‘peer reviewing’ commitments
- Reviewing VNRs can provide identify good (and less good) practices for ‘shared learning’
- Reviews could instill healthy competition to provide higher quality reports

Questions

- Should CDP continue analyzing VNRs using this methodology?
- Possibility for scoring (and what to score)?
- How to bring results into HLPF process?