

Master Thesis

Accelerating the implementation of the SDGs: How multilevel governance supports the implementation of SDG 12 in the EU

by

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Preface

This report is the result of my master's thesis in completion of the Double Degree Master European Studies and Comparative Public Governance. For my thesis, I focused on how multilevel governance supports the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals, more specifically SDG 12: Sustainable Consumption and Production. When writing my thesis, I realised where the SDGs stand for and how relevant they are for our society. This realisation came when I worked on my thesis, after large parts of my world got ways smaller due to the Covid-19 crisis, which put life on hold. It was interesting and strange to notice how Covid-19 changed my life, and how I realised the importance of the SDG that I was examining. I am happy to say that I could still focus on my master's thesis, and that I managed to do this relatively well. My supervisor Mrs. Clancy played an important role in this process and I want to thank her for being my supervisor. I also would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to the policy officers from the Netherlands, the Czech Republic and the European Commission who were available for interviews during the Covid-19 crisis, despite other issues were much more prominent and pressing.

I am happy with my final report and I am looking forward to my post-student life.

I wish the reader a lot of fun and luck while reading my thesis.

Melle Potter

Summary

This thesis has focused on the role of multilevel governance in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal 12, the SDG Sustainable Consumption and Production, in the European Union. The SDGs are based on two principles: to 'leave no-one behind' and the 'whole-of-society', which implies certain characteristics for its implementation and potential difficulties of implementation of the SDGs. This is also the case for SDG 12, which covers many different actors and also demands a lot of cooperation between governments at the global, national, regional and local levels. Based on the characteristics of multilevel governance, it was presumed that multilevel governance provides opportunities for the implementation of this SDG. To examine whether multilevel governance supports the implementation of SDG 12 in the EU, the research focused on the EU, the Netherlands, Czech Republic and Spain to analyse the EU and also the national implementation of SDG 12.

That is why policy documents from the European Union and documents on the implementation of SDG 12 and the circular economy have been analysed. In order to complement these findings with additional information, interviews have been held with policy officers from the European Commission, Czech Republic and the Netherlands. Due to COVID-19, it was not possible to schedule a meeting with a policy officer from Spain. However, sufficient information was collected to answer the research questions.

It appears that all of the selected cases, except the Czech Republic, make use of multilevel governance to implement their strategies to realise SDG 12, which is a part of these cases' circular economy strategies. The EU targets and objectives are leading for the Member States, but of the three nation states is the Netherlands the only state that shares the same objectives as the EU. Spain and the Czech Republic are less ambitious. It also appeared that multilevel governance enables the EU and national governments to cooperate with regional and local governments and also with other stakeholders to prepare and implement the policies. This is necessary, because only through a collective approach this SDG target can be achieved. Nevertheless, in all cases it appears that stakeholder involvement has become a requirement for policy making and that this leads to the creation of network governance, in which experts from multiple sectors have a key role in the policy development. Another interesting finding is the importance of interaction between stakeholders and the government, because otherwise the states indicate that it will not be possible to achieve the targets.

The main reasons how multilevel governance characteristics support the implementation of SDG 12, is that it enables the whole-of-society approach since it allows for regions and local governments to be involved, who can cooperate with stakeholders to create territory specific opportunities to work on the realisation of the circular economy via coordination and in cooperation with the central government. Cooperation and coherency of actions in the relevant policy areas and cross-sectoral cooperation is key to realise the SDGs, the EU, the Netherlands and Spain seem to do this quite well. Two issues with multilevel governance and SDG 12 is that you are dependent on the will and ability of non-government stakeholders, to contribute to the realisation and that there is little chance to force them to contribute. This is also noticeable at the EU level, where it appears that all Member States have different ambitions than the EU and the EU has little tools to guarantee compliance. For further research it can be important to examine the role on political relations or the GDP on the realisation of the SDGs, since this can have an important role on the progress that countries make, but is not really examined, because the thesis was mainly limited to structures of multilevel governance.

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1. Introduction

In 2015, the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as guidelines for future policymaking to shape an inclusive and sustainable society to be realised in 2030 (United Nations, 2015). The SDGs put the principles of planet, people and prosperity at the heart of policy development, given the fact that the current societal challenges that need to be tackled are challenges to economic development and are likely to result in social inequality. The SDGs address the complexity and multidisciplinary character of these problems. Climate change being the most eminent challenge, but not the only one that has to be overcome (United Nations, 2015; European Parliament, 2019). The SDGs cover a wide range of aspects of societal challenges that national governments have to overcome, resulting in 17 specific goals and 169 sub-goals, which can be measured through 232 indicators. These 17 specific goals, the SDGs, are relatively clear and obvious, however, the complexity and multidisciplinary character of an SDG only becomes evident when focus is put on the sub-goals and indicators of every specific SDG. This should bring coherence and consistency in the development of policies, since all SDGs serve the same goal at the end (United Nations, 2015).

In the EU¹, a lot of action takes place to achieve the SDGs throughout all its policies (Institute for European Environmental Policy, 2019). There is, however, one SDG that appears to be difficult to achieve. This is SDG 12: Ensure Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (SDG Tracker, 2019; Institute for European Environmental Policy, 2019). The target of SDG 12 is to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. This target comprises of promoting resource and energy efficiency, establishing a sustainable infrastructure, providing access to basic services and developing green and decent jobs and a qualitative life for all. The implementation of this SDG is expected to strengthen economic competitiveness, reduce poverty, but mainly to create overall development plans to reduce future economic, environmental and social costs (SDG Tracker, 2019).

1.1. Research Question

In 2019, there was a call from Meulman (2019) to implement the SDGs via multilevel governance, since this would be the best way to achieve the SDGs. Given the fact that the process of governance in the EU is described as multilevel governance, this research aims to determine how multilevel governance does support the implementation of SDG 12 (Marks & Hooghe, 1993; Marks & Hooghe, 2001; Eising, 2015).

The initial research question was: Which policy implementation mechanisms should an EU SDG implementation strategy encompass to achieve the realisation of Sustainable Development Goal 12? This research question was based on the demand of the Member States to the European Commission to develop a strategy for the implementation of the SDGs (European Council, 2019). The objective was to design a multilevel strategy that would lead to a coherent method and strategy to implement this and the other SDGs. However, during the research it appeared that the strategy that is currently in place in the European Union is a coherent strategy that should result in the realisation of SDG 12 and furthermore, that the Member States have developed similar strategies. That is why this new research question has been developed. There is a call for the SDGs to be implemented through multilevel governance. Therefore, it was necessary to examine how multilevel governance does

¹ In general, this thesis refers to the EU as the International Organisation that functions comprising of 27 members and its institutions. The term EU covers the three institutions that are responsible in the legislative process (European Commission, European Council and European Parliament). In case specific institutions are meant in this research, the term EU will not be applied and the specific institutions are mentioned and written out in their entirety.

support the implementation of SDG 12 in the European Union, since the process of governance in the EU is characterised as multilevel governance. This thesis aims to answer the question what benefits it has to implement the SDGs through the mechanisms of multilevel governance and led to the following research question:

How do multilevel governance mechanisms support the implementation of SDG 12 in the EU?

To answer the research question, the following research questions have been developed:

1. What is the role of the European Union to implement SDG 12?
2. How does the European Union try to prepare and implement policies to achieve SDG 12?
3. How have EU Member States developed their strategies to implement SDG 12?
4. What mechanisms have EU Member States established to coordinate the implementation of SDG 12?

To answer the research question, first a look is drawn into the tools of the EU to implement this SDG, by a look at the role of the EU in this policy area and its policy instruments. The second sub-question digs into the process of governance in the EU to prepare and implement sustainable consumption and production, to analyse and describe the process of multilevel governance at the EU level. The third and fourth research question are meant to analyse how EU Member States develop their strategies to implement SDG 12, to analyse whether this also highlights a form of multilevel governance and the fourth research question focuses on the implementation process and how this is coordinated. Literature has namely identified a few issues with implementation of multilevel governance and it is examined whether this is also the case in the structures of implementation of the Member States. It needs to be said that not all Member States use clear multilevel governance for its implementation, however, they do use structures and mechanisms of multilevel governance for the preparation and implementation of their policies.

1.2. Relevance of the thesis

Multilevel governance research has mainly been applied to the explain the general structures of the European Union in Cohesion policy, which has slowly shifted towards environmental and energy policies as well. However, with the introduction of the SDGs, the concept of multilevel governance is taken to a whole new level of 'transformational policies.' The EU is globally one of the main promoters of these type of transformational policies, but appears to have a lot of difficulty to tackle SDG 12, Sustainable Consumption and Production. All Member States are relatively far away from the realisation of this topic, despite clear policies and ideas on the implementation of this SDG have been developed. On the topic of sustainable consumption and production and the SDGs, the research has mainly focused on what specific policy areas should be tackled and what causes a lack or success of policy failure in this area. This thesis tries to relate policy action to multilevel governance, by mainly looking how and why multilevel governance can best be used as the governance method for sustainable consumption and production. Since the method of multilevel governance is mainly applied to the EU, this thesis aims to identify whether and how the characteristics and mechanisms of multilevel governance are applied to achieve this SDG. That is why this thesis analyses how multilevel governance can support the realisation of SDG 12. In order to analyse how multilevel governance does not only work at the EU level, it is also being examined if it is applied at the national level by EU Member States in their national implementation of SDG 12.

1.3. Main findings

This thesis finds that structures of multilevel governance are used in the EU and the Member States to implement SDG 12. However, it has to be noted that both the EU and its Member States do not specifically work with ‘Sustainable Consumption and Production’, but that they work on the topic from a larger perspective, being the ‘circular economy’. This leaves some space and potential issues with the SDG approach of ‘whole-of-society’ and ‘breaking the silos’ for cross-sectoral cooperation, nevertheless, it appears that both the EU and Spain and the Netherlands manage to develop a cross-sectoral strategy to implement this policy quite well. This is slightly different in the Czech Republic, which works mainly on a sectoral basis.

At the EU level and at the national level, multilevel governance supports the implementation of the SDGs because it enables cooperation between the different levels of government and the non-government stakeholders that all need to contribute ensure the realisation of SDG 12. Multilevel governance provides the possibility for an inclusive approach, meaning that all levels of governments can cooperate and coordinate actions with each other at different levels. Furthermore, the structures in the EU and the Netherlands and Spain also highlight that it is a method to invite non-government actors, such as private sector actors, the epistemic community and civil society to set an agenda that sets a framework for coordinated action of all parties that are relevant for the implementation. This comes down to clear government action, but also to coordinated action from the government in cooperation with businesses, industries and academia in which all actors know what they can do to contribute to the realisation of the circular economy. A last aspect of multilevel governance that is useful for the implementation of SDG 12 and is widely applied, is that it is the opportunity for cooperation among and between the actors involved, both governments and non-governments, to share practices, experiences and learn from each other to improve and evaluate policy actions.

1.4. Reading guide

This thesis first discusses the theory on multilevel governance and how the SDGs relate to multilevel governance. Chapter three describes the research methodology, after the main findings are discussed in chapter four. In chapter five an answer is given to the main research question. Throughout the thesis, there will be references to annexes and the interviews that were conducted. The annexes and interviews can all be found in chapter seven and beyond.

2. Theory

This chapter digs into multilevel governance as a method for policy implementation, describes the characteristics of multilevel governance and the main points of discussion. Thereafter, it is described how multilevel governance relates to the Sustainable Development Goals. The review of literature has resulted in the formulation of two hypotheses that are discussed at the end of the chapter.

2.1. Policy implementation

According to Sabatier & Mazmanian (1983; 20) policy implementation is “the carrying out of a basic policy decision. The decision that is to be executed is constituted of three components: the problem that is to be addressed, it stipulates the objectives to be pursued, and the “structures” of the process of implementation.” Implementation is a process, of interactions between setting goals and the actions directed towards achieving them (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980).

There are two main models of policy implementation: the top-down model and the bottom-up model (Cerna, 2013; Signé, 2017; Khan & Khandaker, 2016). The top-down model uses the decision of an authority as starting point and maps the structure of implementation as a logical structured process to limit the number of changes that must be made. It emphasizes the need to establish administrative mechanisms to enable the process of policy implementation and tends to leave political and societal pressures out of the process of policy change and implementation (Cerna, 2013; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980). Top-down policy implementation is a hierarchical and structured process. The bottom-up models of policy implementation point out that the centralised decision-making does not offer enough flexibility to local actors to reach goals (Cerna, 2013; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980). Most important in this model is cooperation and engagement of the institutions responsible for the implementation with those most affected by the implementation of the policy (the policy target group) (Cerna, 2013; Signé, 2017; European Commission, 2017a).

Multilevel governance in that regard, can be seen as a compromise of the top-down and the bottom-up models of policy implementation, underlining the importance of interaction between the different levels of governments and the need to include other stakeholders to implement policies (Cerna, 2013; Gornitzka, Kyvik & Stensaker, 2005; Radzyner, et al., 2014). A review of the literature on policy implementation can be found in appendix 1.

2.2. Multilevel governance

The theory of multilevel governance is relatively young compared to other theories of EU integration, because it is the first theory that does not put member states at the core of EU integration and decision-making (Radzyner, et al., 2014). Multilevel governance, which found its origins in Cohesion Policy and is currently also applied in environmental and energy policy, describes the decision-making in the European Union as “coordinated action by the EU, the Member States and regional and local authorities according to the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and in partnership, taking the form of operational and institutionalised cooperation in the drawing-up and implementation of the European Union’s policies” (Radzyner, et al., 2014; 25). In terms of EU policy-making, this comes down to the Member States slowly losing some of their power and central role in the decision-making phase of EU policies. The Member States share its role as ‘key driver’ of European integration with the European Commission, regional and local governments and the European Court of Justice (Eising, 2015; Marks, 1993). This means that political arenas are interconnected at different levels (Eising, 2015). EU governance has therewith become a process of supranational action, via the European Commission and the European Court of Justice, nation states and subnational governments (Marks, 1993). It also explains that within the EU there are many more actors than just the central governments of the Member States, like subnational governments and private actors, that cooperate with each other and directly cooperate with EU institutions.

What does this definition of multilevel governance entail? Dissection of the official definition presented by Radzyner, et al. (2014) provides greater clarity. First it is necessary to explain the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, which lay the foundation for multilevel governance in the EU. Subsidiarity means that the implementation of a policy needs to take place at the level that is most appropriate to execute the policy and that, if possible, the implementation needs to take place at the level closest to citizens (Van der Vleuten, 2013). This gives regional and local authorities a clear role in the implementation process. Proportionality means that all policy actions need to be proportionate and least disruptive as possible to achieve the policy goals: “the content and form of the action must be in keeping with the aim pursued” (Van der Vleuten, 2013, p. ; EUR-LEX, undated-a) Since this is complemented by “the coordinated action by the EU, Member States and regional and local authorities taking the form of operational and institutionalised cooperation in the drawing-up

and implementation of the European Union's policies", it explains that cooperation and coordination of actions for both the development and implementation of EU policies takes place between various levels of government (Radzyner, et al., 2014; European Commission, 2017a; Newig & Koontz, undated).

The principles of subsidiarity and proportionality in this regard, highlight that when deemed most logical or best to implement the policy, the implementation of the policy is done at the regional and local level. The "partnerships" in policy-making and policy implementation acknowledge that policy implementation can only take place through cooperation between the government and the private and public sector, who are the ones that in practice work or need to benefit from the policy (European Commission, 2017a; Radzyner, et al., 2014; Newig & Koontz, -; Meulman, 2019). Multilevel governance can in that regard be understood as a functional method of problem solving, since it "allows jurisdictions to be custom-designed in response to externalities, economies of scale, ecological niches and preferences" (Hooghe & Marks, 2010; 23). This explains the interaction between the different levels of government to prepare policies so that they can be implemented. These continuous dialogues between stakeholders and the European Commission and the delegation of tasks to non-central government actors, allows stakeholders to be engaged in the policy cycle and resulted in a rather horizontal process of policy development and implementation.

Important characteristics of multilevel governance are the horizontal and vertical structures within the policy process (Radzyner, et al., 2014; Newig & Koontz, -; Melica, 2018; Meulman, 2019; OECD, 2020). In general, multilevel governance is characterised by relatively good coherence at vertical and horizontal level. Vertical coherence means that the EU and national, regional and local governments work closely together to coordinate their policies, including collective or supportive monitoring at the various levels (Radzyner, et al., 2014; Newig & Koontz, -; Meulman, 2019; Melica, 2018). Horizontal coherence means the alignment between the government(s) and stakeholders, which includes partners from the public, private sector and civil society, to develop and implement policies to tackle societal challenges together (Radzyner, et al., 2014; Newig & Koontz, -; Meulman, 2019; Melica, 2018).

2.3. Multilevel governance in the EU

It has to be noted that despite the national governments not being the central actors in EU policy-making, the process of European decision-making is a democratic process in which the European Commission proposes legislation that needs to be adopted by the European Parliament and the Member States (Eising, 2015; Van der Vleuten, 2013). Since it can be expected that states are not intending to give up autonomy or competences, the European Commission always seeks to find solutions for policy problems that are supported by most of the Member States, allowing some deflections in regards to compliance with treaty commitments or by using directives as main tools for legislation, which gives states some freedom to implement policies (Eising, 2015; Scharpf, 2010).

Scharpf (1997) describes the policy process in the EU with the terms mutual adjustment, intergovernmental negotiation, hierarchical direction and joint-decision making. These are all vertical interactions that emerge in the EU in the decision-making process. Mutual adjustment means that when developing policies, national governments base their policy actions on policies that are developed by other governments or by international agencies that are established through international cooperation. According to Scharpf (1997), this shows a certain dependency and connection between these countries. Since countries are aware of this dependency, they will start intergovernmental negotiations to see how they can coordinate or combine policies, specifically on topics that are not limited to national borders. To effectively coordinate this process and ensure

coherence, there is a central role for the EU institutions to coordinate and guarantee that this process goes well. When Member States want to cooperate and harmonise policies, there has to be a central government to propose and monitor these coherent policy actions, which is the EU. It illustrates that Member States and the EU take decisions together (Scharpf, 2010).

The collective decision-making is an opportunity for coherent action, but can also be a problem when states have different perceptions of the problem and propose different solutions (Howlett & Cashore, 2009). Scharpf (1988) stated that policy outcomes of the EU are therefore sub-optimal, because Member States want to see their preferences incorporated in the policy. This means that, due to the voting rules of qualified majority or unanimity, the outcome of policy-negotiation is never optimal and it means that policy instruments are in general focused on coordination, cooperation and learning rather than enforcement (Peters, 2005). This is likely to be caused by the fact that decision-making in the EU focuses on finding solutions for large scale issues, whereas there can be large differences on the depth and scope of these issues between EU-territories (Thomann, Trein & Magetti, 2019). These regional differences make it difficult to find instruments that are fitting for policy implementation (Peeters, 2005). That is why Member States are given the opportunity of customisation of most of the EU policies to adapt them to domestic preferences (Thomann, 2019, Trein & Magetti, 2019).

Börzel (2007) characterises multilevel governance at the EU level with hierarchy, competition and networks. Hierarchy and competition are similar to those presented by Scharpf (1997), since hierarchy and policy competition are necessary to create more convergence in the EU. Policy competition enables Member States to compare the processes of implementation and allows Member States to learn from each other (Börzel, 2007; Tömmel, 2009). This does also take place in policy areas in which the EU does not have clear policy tasks. It allows Member States to identify policy problems and cooperate to tackle these problems, which allows them to compare their progress on the policy implementation without conferring competences to the EU (Héritier & Lehmkuhl, 2011). This method works, since it does not touch upon the sovereignty of Member States, but does guide them towards the policy targets set at EU-level (Börzel, 2007).

Since policy making in the EU can be a contest between opposing views and preferences, it has given rise to policy networks and network governance to smoothen this process of policy development. Network governance is a characteristic of multilevel governance that counters the difficult decision-making at the EU level and shows the horizontal character of multilevel governance (Börzel, 2005; Eising, 2015). These networks, which comprise of stakeholders, such as policy experts, private sector and societal organisations, have become extremely relevant for policy development. Their expertise and experiences helps the Commission develop policies that serve the general interest in the EU, while also trying to take away the contest between national interests (Radzyner, et al., 2014). These stakeholders can take part in online consultations, informal and formal meetings or working groups, to provide the Commission with input that can be the basis for policy development or implementation (Eising, 2015). Network governance also helps to explain that policies that are developed and implemented are closer connected to citizens and serve the interest of society. The organisations involved in these networks take part in the implementation of policies or experience the societal impact of policies, which strengthens their position and helps legitimize decisions taken by the EU (Héritier & Rhodes, 2011). Member States still have a final say in the policy process, but input provided by experts and stakeholders should ensure that there is less debate on policy preparation and implementation and that policies serve society.

2.4. Effectiveness and legitimacy

Multilevel governance is considered to be effective and increase legitimacy of a policy, because it allows policies that are to be implemented to be adapted to a specific regional situation. It also provides opportunities for coordination and cooperation, to make sure that possible externalities can be dealt with rather rapidly and precisely, which provides opportunities to develop economics of scale (Marks & Hooghe, 2003). However, multilevel governance also presents some issues. The complexity of decision-making and responsibilities of different actors in this process can mean that ‘‘core values of democracy’ are traded for accommodation, consensus and the expected increased efficiency in governance’ (Pierre & Peters, 2004).

Papadopoulos (2010) has identified other negative consequences for democratic accountability, like the disconnection from representative institutions. Since policy success is dependent on the responsibility of different levels of government and non-government stakeholders, it is likely that non-government actors will be overrepresented compared to citizens. On the other hand, this process is considered relevant to stay closer to citizens and increase the legitimacy of actions taken by European or national governments (European Commission, 2017a; Radzyner, et al., 2014; Van der Vleuten, 2013; Meulman, 2019). Another concern is that states will prefer peer accountability on policy performance at the EU level over the democratic process of accountability in national parliaments, because the scrutiny in case of a lack of results is rather weak in the EU. Benz (2012), argues that this method of cooperation and learning from other Member States is a very positive aspect of the EU. Another consequence of multilevel governance is the lack of transparency and the difficulty of the inclusion of many actors in this process. This makes it difficult to determine who is responsible for failure (Radzyner, et al., 2014). Multilevel governance is both institutionalised and informal, providing opportunities for network governance and the involvement of non-government actors. However, a lack of transparency of the actors that are involved in the policy process are likely to cause ‘blame-avoidance games’. The actors involved are likely to prefer to maintain relationships instead of taking responsibility or scrutinizing each other in case of policy failure (Radzyner, et al., 2014; Papadopoulos, 2010).

A general aspect and characteristic of multilevel governance, the disappearance of hierarchical structures and the shift towards complementary vertical and horizontal structures in the policy process, is that it has developed new instruments, such as self-regulation, co-regulation, benchmarking and also private-dispute resolution. This gives actors that cannot be held democratically accountable responsibility for the implementation of a policy (Marks & Hooghe, 2001).

2.5. Types of multilevel governance

Marks & Hooghe (2001), identify two types of multilevel governance. One is similar to the structure of federal states and the other type is more applicable to several characteristics of the European Union.

Type I multilevel governance, the federal model, states that authority in policy-making and policy implementation is shared between a limited number of governments at (international), national, regional and local levels (Radzyner, et al., 2014; Newig & Koontz, -). Authority of these governments is based on ‘‘clear and non-changing, general-purpose jurisdictions, with memberships that are mutually exclusive’’ (Radzyner, et al., 2014; 25; Melica, 2018; Newig & Koontz, -). Within this model, a limit number of actors is involved, since the actors involved are the levels of government with jurisdiction in the specific policy area (Radzyner, et al., 2014; Newig & Koontz, -). This this type of

multilevel governance rather clear. It is based on the rule of law and offers structures that allow the levels of government to cooperate and gives them responsibilities to implement policies (Eising, 2015; Hooghe & Marks, 2001). A downside is that this structure is slow, although it is stable. Policy tasks can be allocated to another jurisdiction (Hooghe & Marks, 2001).

Interest representation in type I takes place at all levels that are relevant for the policy implementation, the EU, national and regional level (Eising, 2015). Interest groups can organise themselves in associations at these different levels, to ensure that their interests are represented and heard at these levels to influence legislation (Coen, 2007). Associations are corporate interest groups that defend the interests of their members. They are limited in number due to their central position, and are given the power to make public policy themselves. They can be elemental in the public acceptance of policies (Eising, 2015; Lijphart, 2012). The other interest groups are pluralist interest groups. These interest groups lobby on a specific topic, are multiple in numbers and are not mandated to act as a policy maker (Lijphart, 2012). In multilevel systems, it is expected that more pluralist interest-organisations are involved, because of the large differences between regions in the multilevel system of the EU (Lijphart, 2012).

Type II, is a bit more complex than type I. Network governance is much closer to this type of multilevel governance, because it shows how policy-making goes far beyond state structures (Eising, 2015). Examples are transregional networks, transnational projects and the EU in its efforts to facilitate cross-border cooperation between local authorities, regional authorities, private actors and civil society organisations (Bulkeley, Davies, Evans & Theobald, 2003; Eising, 2015). Type II multilevel governance can result in the establishment of clubs, agencies and polity forming bodies (Radzyner, et al., 2014). Agencies are directly established by the state and serve the state, whereas clubs and polity forming bodies are founded by state or non-state members with specific interests. Memberships in type II are often fluid and flexible, which results in a number of participants who have task-specific jurisdiction in a specific policy area, with members that only have one or two tasks in a broader policy area (Radzyner, et al., 2014; Hooghe & Marks, 2001; Newig & Koontz, -). In this type, jurisdiction is task-specific and it goes beyond territorial scales of type I. It means that citizens are not served by the government, but by different public service industries and private actors (Hooghe & Marks, 2001). There is no clear hierarchy in these networks. Members compete or cooperate (which can also be almost the same) to achieve targets (Hooghe & Marks, 2001). The fact that memberships in such networks are overlapping, mean that multiple actors are involved and become accountable for the implementation of a policy task (Radzyner, et al., 2014; Melica, 2018; Newig & Koontz, -). Since the networks are often large and membership is task-specific, interaction among members in these networks is limited. This guarantees that the members can work on their tasks. These networks will exist as long as necessary, until the objectives have been achieved.

Eising (2015) notes that in general, these type II models of multilevel governance can be embedded in type I multilevel governance. The European Union in this regard, has slowly shifted to type II. The EU heavily depends on the capabilities of state and non-state actors to implement policies and facilitates and stimulates implementation. Moreover, the EU its competences in policy areas are changing on functional or legal grounds and Member States can decide to opt out of EU policies, like the Schengen Area and the Eurozone. Besides, there are policy areas in which states can opt for more integration in case this is deemed desirable (Eising, 2015).

Coordination and accountability

Coordination and accountability are key to avoid harmful outcomes in the implementation of policy. Multilevel governance does not tackle this issue, which makes it difficult to deal with defectors.

In type I governance, coordination and accountability is evident, since there is a certain hierarchy in which citizens, authorities or a legal body can decide on the matter and hold the state jurisdiction accountable (Radzyner, et al., 2014). Federal states always have a vertical hierarchy of power, because they are based on state norms and structures (Weiler, 2000).

Coordination of actions and the accountability of the actors is more complicated in type II, because in type II this depends on the organisation or form of cooperation that is established to deliver on policy targets. Coordination often comes down to the members of the network executing their specific tasks to achieve the policy objectives. The focus lies solely on delivering the best policy outcome. Agencies, clubs and polity forming bodies are often founded in Type II (Skelcher, 2005). Whereas agencies are often government bodies and thus can be held accountable by its founder on the basis of performance, polity forming bodies form a new political community, which can be held accountable by a constituency to deliver a policy (Skelcher, 2005; Radzyner, et al., 2014). Clubs are a bit different, since they are governed by their members and members will decide whether the cost-benefit balance of membership is worth the membership (Skelcher, 2005).

2.6. The SDGS and Multilevel governance

According to Meulman (2019) and the OECD (2020), various reasons can be presented that highlight the close relationship between the SDGs and multilevel governance. The first reason is rather obvious, since the SDG approach of 'leave no one behind' implies that everyone should benefit from the implementation of the SDGs. Secondly, since the SDGs are at the global level, but large parts of their implementation take place at the local level because here is where the problems can best be tackled (Meulman, 2019; OECD, 2020). This means that for successful implementation of the SDGs, coordination and cooperation between institutions needs to take place at and between these levels. To implement the SDGs tasks and targets have to be translated from the global, to the European, then to the national and onto the regional and local levels (Meulman, 2019; OECD, 2020; European Committee of the Regions, 2019).

The principle of 'leave no one behind' also requires participation from NGOs, the epistemic community and the private sector, to tackle the policy problems and implement solutions collectively (OECD, 2020; European Committee of the Regions, 2019). However, this requires trust and sharing of decision-making and this can be rather problematic to achieve the SDGs (Meulman, 2019; Bowen, et al., Vogt & Barbi, 2017). It can be problematic, because not all relevant actors are expected to be willing to be involved in decision-making procedures concerning public policy. Bowen et al. (2017), also identified the problem of holding these stakeholders accountability and how to deal with trade-offs in this process. Both Meulman (2019) and Bowen et al. (2017) emphasize the need to build trust with the non-government actors for the basis of cooperation. From of this point on it is possible to involve them in implementation. To tackle trade-offs, Bowen et al. (2017) suggest that collaboration and coordinated monitoring and coherent action is necessary. In the EU, this can be established with multilevel governance (Meulman, 2019; Marks & Hooghe, 2003).

2.7. Multilevel governance and SDG 12

Given the scale, cross-border effects and the size of the issue of sustainable consumption and production, it can be expected that a multilevel approach seems most realistic to develop a strategy to solve this issue (Scharpf, 1997; OECD, 2020; OECD, 2019). When taking into account that policy-making and policy implementation in multilevel governance is taking place in a structure with important tasks for multi-level and involvement of many stakeholders, the figure below gives a good overview of the multilevel and multi actor character of SDG 12 (OECD, 2019; Le Blanc, 2015).

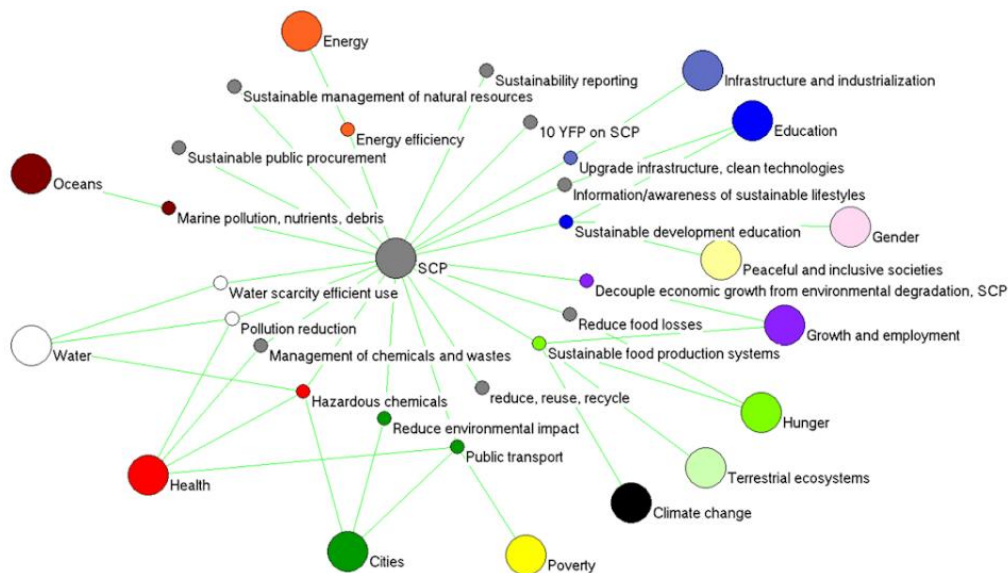


Figure 1: Network analysis of SDG 12 with other SDGs and targets

Source: Le Blanc, D. (2015), "Towards integration at last? The sustainable development goals as a network of targets", No. 141

Note: SDG 12 is denoted by SCP: Sustainable Consumption and Production.

When analysing SDG 12, Le Blanc(2015) shows the extensiveness of the topic sustainable consumption and production. Analysing the main bullets that are connected to sustainable consumption and production (SCP) in figure 1, a clear relationship with almost all SDGs becomes visible. There are 14 SDGS that can be linked to the targets/policy areas related to SCP. To solve all dimensions of SDG 12, De Gasper, Shah & Tankha (2019) state that a coordinated and society-wide approach is necessary at the state level, with a role for a supranational organ.

Cooperation with stakeholders at multiple governing levels to enable research and innovation are likely to result in strategic projects that help territories to facilitate the change and to limit issues for business and citizens (Tseng, et al., 2019). Transnational cooperation should also result in opportunities to tackle the issues of trade-offs and spill-overs across territorial boundaries (Bowen, et al., 2017; De Gasper, Shah & Tankha, 2019). The multilevel and multi-actor characteristics of SDG 12 shows that in order to truly establish change, cooperation is necessary with the entire supply chain: consumers, companies, industries, distributors, investors and financiers, while also following the global supply chains to the local level where products are sold and services provided (UN, 2013; Schally, 2020). This requires a coherent and coordinated approach in which it would be optimal that the same rules apply to the different actors that are relevant in the value chain to ensure that the same rules and similar enforcement mechanisms apply (De Gasper, Shah & Tankha, 2019). The process of policy implementation requires not only those stakeholders to participate, but also demands actions from governments and governmental regulatory bodies, industrial actors, civil-society actors and scientific and educational communities (De Gasper, Shah & Tankha, 2019; Luthra, Govindan & Mangla, 2017). According to Luthra, Govindan & Mangla (2017), this is regarded as a network that needs to cooperate to complement each other. Since all of these actors have different approaches on what are the best ways to achieve these targets, the realisation of this topic requires the whole of society holistic SDG-approach (Wang, Ghadimi, Lim & Tseng, 2019). This presumes the necessity of multilevel governance to coordinate this process.

According to Luthra, Govindan & Mangla (2017), regulations and resources for innovation and education are key to realise the objectives of this SDG. According to Luthra, Govindan & Mangla (2017), De Gasper, Shah & Tankha (2019), Omri & Mabrouk (2020) and Zhou, Govindan & Xie (2020) legislation, but mainly voluntary projects with governments and the exchange of knowledge, information and practices support the acceleration of the circular economy. It comes close to Meulman (2019), who states how trust, competition, cooperation and coordination between the responsible stakeholders is necessary to achieve the SDGs. This cooperation should also take place at the global level (Luthra, Govindan & Mangla, 2017). Not only with private actors, but also with citizens (Davis & Caldeira, 2010; Liobikiene & Dagiliute, 2016).

2.8. Hypotheses

Based on the research questions that are formulated, the literature review has resulted in the following hypotheses to test the research questions:

H1: Both at the EU and the Member State form of multilevel governance there is broad involvement of stakeholders in the policy-making and implementation phase.

Given the literature on multilevel governance in relation to SDG 12, it is presumed that at the EU level and at Member State level in which implementation goes through multilevel governance structures, there is a large involvement of stakeholders in order to prepare and implement the policies. This should ensure that stakeholders are not only on board with the policy proposals, but also that they are engaged and take part in the implementation of the policies.

H2: There are different mechanisms in place to coordinate actions for type I and type II multilevel governance implementation of SDG 12.

Since there are two types of multilevel governance with clear differences and different tasks in the implementation of SDG 12, it is presumed that it is difficult or almost impossible for the government to keep track of all actions. However, the government has to be able to measure and report on the progress. Given the differences between type I and type II multilevel governance, it is expected that the government makes use of different mechanisms for coordination of implementation in type I and type II multilevel governance.

3. Research methodology

This research is an empirical explanatory case study research, designed to retrieve information on and gain insight on the influence that multilevel governance has on the implementation of SDG 12 in the EU and on the national level. This provides the opportunity to analyse the role of multilevel governance in the EU for the implementation of SDG 12 and how multilevel governance can support the implementation of this SDG. This chapter describes how the case study is designed, the cases, the methodology and the conceptualisation and operationalisation of the mean variables.

3.1. Case study

The case study is a multiple-case study, with a holistic multiple case-design, because the implementation of policies to achieve SDG 12 is studied at the EU level and in three EU Member States, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands and Spain (Yin, 2003). To analyse how multilevel governance does support the implementation of SDG 12, it is important to conduct a multiple case study, to analyse whether and how multilevel governance mechanisms contribute in the process for the implementation of SDG 12 in different cases. To acquire all data necessary, a literature analysis

has been conducted, which in some cases resulted in an extensive overview of the process of stakeholder involvement and policy implementation. However, to retrieve more data on this process, conducting interviews was necessary as well. Interviews were held with policy officers, to hear their first-hand experiences with this process. The logical steps of the case studies, as described by Yin (2003), highlight the fact that a case study can best be done on a case by case basis. For every individual case, the EU or a Member State, a case report was made, to collect data, to compare data and to map whether data on the stakeholder involvement and implementation was missing. To acquire all data, the contact persons were all policy officers that could provide an important overview on these specific topics, to make sure that the accurate data was collected. The scheme that served as the basis for these case reports can be found in the methodology section of this chapter.

3.2. Case selection

The selected cases are the EU and the Netherlands, Spain and Czechia. The EU is chosen because it is known for its multilevel character, the other cases have been selected because these states all use different mechanisms to implement the SDGs, and their state form. State form is an important characteristic of multilevel governance, because it relates to federal states, and less to unitary states (Marks & Hooghe, 2001). Nevertheless, many of the characteristics of federal states and multilevel governance can currently also be identified in unitary states (Schakel, 2016). All states are unitary states, like the largest part of EU Member States, but Spain and Czechia's state structure are almost similar to that of federal states, whereas the Netherlands is more balanced and has got many features of both unitary and federal states. Furthermore, they represent three different geographical areas within the European Union, which should give an overview of how well multilevel governance functions in different regions. The countries are also selected because of their different methods of SDG implementation, which are vertical and horizontal implementation and stakeholder involvement, which are important characteristics of SDG implementation (European Parliament, 2019).

Furthermore, concerning their achievements on SDG 12, it appears that none of these countries is close to achieving the SDG, meaning that they score average/decent in the EU (Institute for European Environmental Policy, 2019). Hence, the cases are not selected based on their 'extremes' or very specific characteristics.

3.3. Methodology

The research methods used are qualitative research methods, to gain insights on how the mechanisms of multilevel governance are used to implement SDG 12 and how they contribute to the realisation of the targets. These are also the methods that Yin highlights as most useful for case study research (Yin, 2003). By conducting interviews and a literature review on the implementation of the SDGs, most data will be collected. Focus lies on the collection of knowledge and insights to understand the complexity of mechanisms to implement the SDGs. This means that both primary and secondary data were gathered to answer the research questions.

There is already a lot of data available on the implementation of the SDGs and the process through which the implementation takes place. Nevertheless, the Czech Republic did not have as much policy documents available as the Netherlands or Spain, which made it necessary to conduct interviews as well. All interviews that have been conducted were semi-structured, the questions can be found in annex 3, to ensure that all relevant dimensions of the variables were covered and to ask additional questions when something was unclear. The interviews that have been held with the policy officers

from the EU, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic took place via Zoom and over the phone. These policy officers were selected on their experience and expertise with the process of developing and implementing strategies and policies to realise SDG 12. The interviews were recorded with approval of the interviewees, to analyse the interview after it had been conducted. Due to COVID-19 it was impossible to arrange a meeting with policy officers from Spain. Nevertheless, since most research questions could be answered with the data available on the process of implementation and stakeholder involvement, the method of making case reports showed that the different concepts of the variables were visibly and could be used to answer the research question. To ensure that the data was accurate, it was often compared with information available in other documents to ensure an additional check in case an interview could not be held. All research questions were answered through literature analysis and some aspects were supplemented with data retrieved from the interviews. This has also been caused by the revision of the research question. To compare the data that was retrieved from the different countries, the following scheme was made (based on the conceptualisation of the variables):

Case	One overarching strategy – or various strategy for SDG 12	Cooperation and coordination with stakeholders for implementation	Policy implementation instruments	Horizontal or vertical cooperation (also, for policy coherence) Cooperation between different policy fields or different levels of government	Enforceability of the strategy and attribution of responsibility	Transparency - Participation of non-government
Way of coding	(x=yes) (o=no) Explanation	(x=yes) (o=no) Follow up: the depth of the cooperation and coordination	Mentioning the instruments	(x=strict hierarchy with enforcement) (o= lots of room for initiatives of stakeholders) Explanation	(x=yes) (o=no) Explanation	(x=yes) (o=no)
(1: EU						
(2: Netherlands)						
(3: Spain)						
(4: Czechia)						

Table 1: scheme for case reports

3.4. Operationalisation of the variables

The main variables that are conceptualised and measured in this thesis relate to how the states use multilevel governance to implement their policies and try to realise SDG 12. These variables are: the instruments used for policy implementation, the enforceability of the instruments, horizontal and vertical cooperation in the implementation process.

Instruments for implementation: These are the instruments that are in use for the implementation of SDG 12. Instruments for implementation of SDG 12 are legislation, public spending, monitoring and coordination and information and awareness campaigns, but also the clarity of the policy and policy goals that have to be achieved, to ensure the implementation of policy takes place (De Gasper, Shah & Tankha, 2019; McGuinn, et al., 2017; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980).

Enforceability of the instruments: Enforceability means whether the instruments for implementation are binding and mandatory, or whether they are voluntary and optional for the stakeholders that are covered by the legislation (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980).

Horizontal and vertical policy cooperation: This variable deals with the structures of implementation and policy development. In multilevel governance, it is characterized by cooperation between governments and stakeholders (Radzyner, et al., 2014; Hooghe & Marks, 2001). Vertical cooperation means that there is coordination of policy development and implementation between the different levels of governments (Radzyner, et al., 2014; Hooghe & Marks, 2001). Horizontal cooperation means that these levels of government negotiate the design and implementation of policies with relevant non-government stakeholders (Radzyner, et al., 2014; Hooghe & Marks, 2001). Additionally, this also deals with the question whether the implementation is cross-sectoral, which means that multiple sectors from different policy areas are involved (Radzyner, et al., 2014). This to ensure coordination of actions between local and regional levels of government and also between stakeholders from different sectors, for SDG 12 these are the epistemic communities, the actors from the supply chain and levels of government (UN, 2013; De Gasper, Shah & Tankha, 2019). This should guarantee a certain policy coherence, to limit trade-offs and spill-overs (Meulman, 2019). A complete operationalisation of the variables can be found in table 2, in Annex 2.

4. Results

This chapter answers the sub-questions. At the end of this chapter, the hypotheses are corroborated or rejected and the validity and reliability of the data analysis will be discussed. An overview of the schemes for the collection of the data for the EU and the selected Member States can be found in annex 4. The interviews with the policy officers from the European Commission, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic can be found in annex 10, 11 and 12.

4.1. The role of the EU to implement SDG 12

The European Union as an organisation is rather different from nation-states. The European Union is an economic and political union of 27 Member States (European Union, 2018). The aim of the European Union was to establish a common European market, a free trade area, that had to bring peace, stability, inclusion and wealth to all European citizens (European Union, 2018; Van Vleuten, 2013). Citizens, products, services and capital can flow freely in the Single Market Area. In order to let the market function properly and have EU Member States cooperate to allow competition among its private sectors, Member States conferred some of their competences to the European Union (European Union, 2018). This has the following effect on policy-making in the European Union: the European Commission represents the interests of the European Union as a whole, and is the only institution which has the right to propose legislation (European Union, 2018; Van Vleuten, 2013). The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union are the other institutions that have a say in the legislative process, both need to adopt the legislation before it can pass, which requires negotiations in order to get it passed (Van Vleuten, 2013). The European Parliament represents European citizens and the Council consists of all the ministers from the national governments, whose composition depends on the policy that is discussed. Since the EU has tasks in many policy areas, the ministers of all Member States that are responsible for the specific policy decide upon the legislation or policy (Van Vleuten, 2013). The most important EU institution is the European Council, which consists of the Heads of State and Heads of Government of the Member States. The European Council determines the main guidelines of the EU and mandates the Commission to develop an EU-

agenda (European Union, 2018; Van Vleuten, 2013). In the legislative process there is also an advisory role for the European Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee. Both these committees represent a specific sector: all European regional and local authorities and labour unions and employers' organisations (European Union, 2018; Van Vleuten, 2013). This illustrates that decision-making goes beyond the nation-state.

These two institutions provide an opinion based on the Principles of Subsidiarity and Proportionality, which sets limits to the powers of the EU (Article 5 Treaty on European Union). Subsidiarity means that decisions need to be taken at the level closest to the citizens, to check whether the EU or whether national, regional or local levels are the most appropriate levels for policy action (EUR-LEX, -a). It is the principle whereby the EU does not take action, unless EU action is considered more effective than actions at the other levels. The principle of proportionality states that the actions of the EU should be specifically aimed at achieving the specific targets of a policy and that the EU should not go beyond these objectives (EUR-LEX, -b).

4.1.1. Competences of the EU

Not only these two principles, but also the conferring of national powers to the EU has a large influence on the role of the EU in policy areas. The EU does not have competences in all areas, but almost all policy areas are discussed at the EU level. Policies are discussed to exchange practices or discuss actual policy, as it is perceived as useful by the Member States despite the EU not having competences in all policy areas. The EU has exclusive, shared and supportive competences in policy-making (EUR-LEX, 2016).

Exclusive competences relate to the policy areas in which the EU only is able to legislate and adopt binding acts. EU Member States are only able to legislate if empowered by the EU to implement these acts (art. 3 TFEU). Most important are the policy areas regarding the internal market and competition policy and the EU has the exclusive competence to conclude trade agreements (EUR-LEX, 2016).

Shared competences (art. 4 TFEU) means that both the EU and Member States have the power to legislate in the policy areas (EUR-LEX, 2016). Member States have the power to legislate in areas in which the EU does not have the power to legislate, or when the EU believes legislation can best be done by the Member States. The EU has shared competences in environmental policy, social and territorial cohesion, energy, consumer protection and many other policy areas (EUR-LEX, 2016).

The EU has a supportive competence (art. 6 TFEU) in policy areas in which it can only "support, coordinate or complement action of EU Member States" (EUR-LEX, 2016). In these policy areas, legislation does not need to be transposed into national law.

4.1.2. Policy instruments

In the EU, sustainable consumption and production is linked to the circular economy, which is part of the EU's environmental policies (European Commission, 2019a; European Commission, 2020b). The reason that environmental policies have become a competence of the European Union, is because environmental policy consists of a framework of international rules, which have all been adopted by the Member States. The EU has made them more binding (Johnson & Corcelle, 1989). Furthermore, since environmental policy does not stop at national borders, Member States thought it would be more logical to make the European Commission the coordinating body in environmental policy, that proposes legislation for all Member States (Knill & Liefferink, 2012). Another reason, that relates to the EU as an economic union, is that the single market could be undermined by different policy

proposals if the Member States themselves initiated the legislation, by setting national standards for products, or different rules on emissions, free trade could be undermined and there would not be a level competition field among the EU Member States (Johnson & Corcelle, 1989; Knill & Liefferink, 2012; McCormick, 2001). This was how the EU became largely responsible for environmental policy, which would also be a better way to tackle problems effectively and coherent without limiting the functioning of the single market. That is why the European Commission proposes legislation and policy, but also needs to ensure the legislation is properly implemented (Johnson & Corcelle, 1989). It means that most of the environmental legislation, also concerning the circular economy, comes from the EU level.

Concerning the methods of policy implementation in environmental and competition policy, the EU possesses many instruments, ranging from hard and binding regulation to soft regulation and also education and financial instruments (Princen, 2012; European Commission, 2018a). Nevertheless, depending on the territorial differences, it is likely that the EU will make use of multiple instruments to implement SDG 12 (European Union, 2018; European Commission, 2019a). A complete overview and explanation of the instruments for policy implementation can be found in annex 5. Many of these instruments are available to Member States, regional and local authorities and other stakeholders, to facilitate implementation of environmental policies and realisation of the policy targets.

However, the EU does not have many possibilities to launch infringement procedures in case of non-compliance with many policies, since many of these policies are economic incentives (Annex 10). This can only be done in areas where the EU has used regulations and directives.

4.2. Policy development and implementation in the EU

The EU has over 120 policies or policy actions that contribute to the realisation of the circular economy, being regulations, directives, funds and grants, monitoring systems, public awareness campaigns, knowledge and innovation platforms, labelling schemes, technical standard setting and self- and co-regulation (European Commission, 2019a; European Commission, 2018a; European Commission, 2019b). A list of these policies can be found in annex 9.

The main documents for the realisation of SDG 12 are the Green Deal and the Circular Economy Action Plan (European Commission, 2019a). The European Commission states that with its new Circular Economy Action Plan for a Cleaner and more Competitive Europe, it has completely covered the topic of sustainable consumption and production (European Commission, 2019a; EUR-LEX, 2020a). The Action Plan lays out most of the actions the EU as a whole will undertake to work on a European Circular Economy, describing funding that will be made available, but also the directives and regulations that will be revised or complemented to achieve targets. The ambition of the EU is to be fully circular and climate neutral in 2050 and 50% in 2030 (European Commission, 2020a).

4.2.1. Policy development

After the SDGs were introduced, the European Commission decided to establish a multi-stakeholder platform on the SDGs, which consisted of experts and specialists from different sectors to develop a SDG-strategy. Stakeholder participation was important, because they provided the Commission with important information, knowledge and experience on the relationship between policies and implementation of the SDGs (Annex 10). These members represented many associations for regional and local governments, civil society, private and corporate actors and other stakeholders, experts and specialists (Annex 7; European Commission, 2017b). Together they had to develop and agree on the input for the Reflection Paper 'Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030', which formed the outline

for the future EU agenda and advised on the implementation of the SDGs (Annex 10). The platform consisted of several sectoral working groups to provide the European Commission with advice on the SDG agenda (European Commission, 2018c). The platform was horizontal, in which the stakeholders were considered key, due to their expertise and advice on sustainability and how the SDGs could be implemented in a coherent and inclusive manner that would touch upon most of the EU its policies (European Commission, 2017a; European Commission, -). One of these groups was the subgroup for Corporate Social Responsibility, which prepared input on the role of businesses and industries on the realisation of sustainable consumption and production, discussing both what would be necessary from the EU and governments and what could be done by the private sector itself (European Commission, 2018a). Given the variety of actors that were involved in this process, all stakeholders had to agree on each other input. Since the input appeared in official EU documents, it seems that there was consensus among the stakeholders that the documents prepared by the subgroup would contribute to the realisation of the SDGs.

Member States were of course also involved in the preparation, however, since they also have an institutional role, their impact in the preparation appeared to be less visible than that of the stakeholders (Annex 10). Currently, Member States have the possibility to provide input on the legislation. In 2019, the mandate of the multilevel stakeholder platform expired, it is discussed whether this can be continued. Various new multilevel stakeholder platforms are developed to help Member States and stakeholders exchange knowledge and experiences on the circular economy and enable them to ask for help when issues appear in the phase of preparing or implementing a circular economy strategy (EUR-LEX, 2020a). The process is currently more open and informal than in the previous EU Commission mandate. Now there is more opportunity for ad-hoc meetings with interest organisations that want to add something to monitoring of the SDGs or see policy change (Annex 10).

This has to do with the structure. Vice-President Timmermans was in charge of the SDGs in the former period, currently he is in charge of the EU its Green Deal and the Circular Economy Strategy, but now all Commissioners are in charge of the implementation of the SDGs in their portfolio (European Commission, -; Annex 10). This makes the European SDG-agenda currently more blurred and less structured, also because most of the policy-proposals now lie with the Member States, who have to prepare their input to comment and make amendments on the policy proposals that are presented by the European Commission. Reactions from the Member States towards the EU its Circular Economy Plan were rather positive and are expected to contribute to the circular economy and therewith to SDG 12 (Annex 12; Annex 11).

4.2.2. Policy implementation

Based on the Commission proposal for the Green Deal and the Circular Economy, the input of the multi-stakeholder platform and the subgroup on Corporate Social Responsibility appears to be adopted to a large extent by the European Commission (EUR-LEX, 2020a; EUR-LEX, 2019). The cross-sectoral character of the SDGS is also recognizable in these policies, because the Commission states that these policies, or the rationale behind it, will be at the forefront all of the EU its policies and policy actions (EUR-LEX, 2020a; EUR-LEX, 2019).

The Circular Economy Action Plan presents policy actions that will be made in 2020 till 2023 to facilitate the implementation of the policies that should result in the circular economy in 2050. The role of the EU in the implementation is to ensure that all parties, stakeholders and Member States, can be facilitated and take action to realise the targets (European Commission, 2020a; EUR-LEX, 2020a). The EU Circular Action Plan highlights how the process of implementation is a task of the EU, national, regional and local governments, businesses and also the epistemic community and civil society (EUR-LEX, 2020a).

The mandatory actions for governments and businesses are presented in legislation, which are regulations and directives (EUR-LEX, 2020a). The EU mainly uses directives, which have to be transposed into national law by the Member States. Governments do not only need to transpose them into national law, but also have to ensure compliance with these laws. Furthermore, the European Commission proposes mandatory circular economy actions that need to be taken by national governments, regional governments and local government to push non-government stakeholders to step up their actions: Green Public Procurement to force businesses to become more sustainable and develop more environmental awareness (EUR-LEX, 2020a).

Most important are the Eco-design directive and the Ecolabel Regulation (European Commission, 2019b; EUR-LEX, 2020a). The Eco-design directive has to ensure that all economic sectors reduce the use of harmful raw materials, substances and fossil fuels to make products more sustainable and enable recycling, reuse of most materials of which products are made (EUR-LEX, 2020a). The Ecolabel Regulation is a voluntary instrument to put labels on products that are produced according to the EU rules on ecological standards, to show the public that these products are more sustainable and less harmful than other products (EUR-LEX, 2017). This should basically be to inform and force the producers in the supply chain to make use of more sustainable practices to produce their products. However, the EU also targets consumers, by informing them what products are sustainable, but also by expanding the rights of consumer through legislation (EUR-LEX, 2017; EUR-LEX, 2020a). This development has to strengthen the legal right of consumers on durability, reparability of products, to make them consume less. The EU approach focuses on both on consumers and producers.

The other aspect of the Circular Economy Action Plan is financing. Financing is done through several EU programmes, like Horizon Europe, the InvestEU Fund, Cohesion Funds and LIFE, to promote research and innovation, technological development, biodiversity and circular farming and to develop sustainable business models for sustainable businesses (EUR-LEX, 2020a). This funding aims to engage subnational governments, businesses and epistemic communities, but are voluntary instruments. Also, noteworthy is that the EU delegates tasks for standardisation and the monitoring of acts to non-EU institutions, like the business and industry sector (EUR-LEX, 2020a; EUR-Lex, 2020d). Besides, the EU aims to revise and erase legislation that can block the establishment of a functioning economic market for secondary raw materials. To ensure that this is done right and negative effects of legislation will not block innovation that will be important for the transition towards a circular economy, the EU does this in close cooperation with businesses and industries (EUR-LEX, 2020a; EUR-LEX, 2020b; EUR-LEX, 2020d). The complete overview of all policy actions on this topic can be found in annex 6.

The multilevel governance character becomes clear when seeing that funding is available for regional and local governments, companies, epistemic communities, and NGOs, who all have to work in a coherent way, often together, within the framework that is established by the EU and the Member States. It is especially noticeable when the focus is put on how the EU provides regional and local authorities and other stakeholders with knowledge and expertise. The EU has launched platforms for regional and local authorities to advise them on funding and to provide opportunities to exchange experiences on circular economy strategies. The EU will advise Member States on the harmonisation of waste management policies and offers funding and knowledge to local and regional authorities to improve waste collection. Furthermore, regions can receive assistance to address issues like sustainable tourism, agricultural production and water recycling. The EU offers funding to companies and the epistemic community for innovation and to develop circular business models (EUR-LEX, 2020a; EUR-LEX, 2020c).

Besides, the EU will take more steps to continue to lead the global circular economy alliance by making the European Plastics Pact and other sustainability aspects a core component of its Free

Trade Agreements. The Member States are, in these Free Trade Agreements, represented by the EU, which means they speak collectively and with one voice on sustainability at the international level.

4.2.3. Monitoring and coordination

For the monitoring of most of the SDGs, including SDG 12, the European Commission uses the European Semester as its main tool to report and compare progress.

The European Semester is used to coordinate economic and fiscal policies, to optimize coordination within the EU to ensure stability and coherence and limit negative effects across countries. It is important because it can give insights into developments of policy implementation successes' over a longer time period (Annex 10). This enables Member States to implement legislation and to report progress over a period of a few years and to compare it with results of other Member States. The Member States are obliged to report their progress of the SDGs into their national reports, because there is a strong link between the SDGs and their vision for a new way of living and the economy (European Commission, 2018b; European Commission, 2018c). However, the European Semester does in general not have an enforcement function, it is only binding on budget rules, the rules that are established in the Grow and Stability Pact, which do not touch upon the circular economy (Annex 10; Van Vleuten, 2013).

The main reason why the Semester is used, is because it can give annual insight into the progress of Member States. The reasoning behind it is that it shows responsibility and most importantly peer pressure, because the monitoring creates space for coordination and communication through dialogue (European Union, 2019c; European Commission, 2019d; Annex 10). It is used to show how accurately countries are taking steps into the right direction, which is monitored by the Commission. Member States are in general afraid to score low on these kinds of topics and will try to perform well, besides monitoring also allows for the exchange of knowledge on policies, projects and experiences on how to smoothen the progress towards realisation of the SDGs (Annex 10; Van Vleuten, 2013). SDG 12 is part of the European Semester (European Commission, 2019d).

The Commission believes that with the current strategies and targets of EU policies, the SDG targets will be achieved without developing a specific SDG strategy (Annex 10). One major factor that could change this, is that the European Commission has proposed a Climate Law (Annex 10). The Climate Neutrality 2050 is put into law, which is a first step to make the commitments more binding and puts pressure on the Member States to realise goals set at the EU-level (EUR-LEX, 2019). There are not many instruments to sanction states who do not comply with EU targets. The infringement procedure provides this opportunity, but is mainly used on lack of compliance with legislation and not for non-compliance of climate ambitions (Annex 10; Van Vleuten, 2013).

4.3. Development of strategies at the Member State level

Based on the data collection and the interviews, it can be concluded that SDG 12 is part of the national strategies to achieve the circular economy. Although this could be considered a risk for the inclusiveness of the policies, it has to be noted that Spain does have an SDG strategy and that the circular economy strategies of the Netherlands and Spain do resemble a cross-sectoral and 'whole-of-society' approach.

4.3.1. Netherlands

The Dutch ambition to realise SDG 12 is embedded in the policy objective of 'The Netherlands circular in 2050' (Rijksoverheid, 2016). It has not developed an SDG-strategy, and this might also not

be necessary according to the Dutch policy officer, since cross-sectoral society engagement has always been important for the Dutch government to tackle societal problems (Annex 11). The main policy documents are based on EU policies. The policy documents that are developed to realise SDG 12 are the Raw Materials Agreement, the Circular Economy Strategy and the Transition agendas (Annex 11). The Netherlands follows the targets set by the UN and the EU, and has discussed and tried to set an overall strategy together with the stakeholders from the relevant sectors (Rijksoverheid, 2016). It aims to be fully circular in 2050, and be 50% circular in 2030.

The Raw Materials Agreement is the main document, because it provides the basis for action to accelerate the transition towards the circular economy. It is the result of negotiations of the Dutch government with its partners (Rijksoverheid, 2017; Rijksoverheid, 2016). These partners were associations, that represented their members: the Employers Organisations, the Labour Unions, the Foundation Nature and Environment, the Association of Dutch Municipalities, the Inter Provincial Council, the Union of Water Authorities, the State Secretary for Infrastructure & Environment, the Minister of Economic Affairs and the Minister of Foreign Trade and Development aid (Rijksoverheid, 2017). These associations were involved in the negotiations and are committed to pursue the agenda. Individual parties also had the opportunity to endorse this agreement and to help with its implementation. They were only not directly involved in the negotiations themselves, but could align to support the agenda and contribute to realise the targets (Annex 8). The document, however, is not binding.

Specific actions have been taken by the Dutch government to implement the agenda for the Circular Economy Action Plan, which describes how the Action Plan should be implemented and what the government can do to support and stimulate stakeholders to enable them to participate in this process (Rijksoverheid, 2016). The Circular Economy Action Plan describes how the guidelines and basic framework for action enables regional and local governments to develop their own pathways to realise the circular economy (Rijksoverheid, 2016).

The other documents that are essential for the implementation, are the Transition Agendas, which are sectoral agendas (Rijksoverheid, 2016). They are more specific than the other documents, and prepared with the stakeholders, 'the partners', who have an important role to realise the targets (Rijksoverheid, 2018a; 2018b; 2018c; 2018d; 2018e). The government facilitates the dialogue and cooperation between the stakeholders, to develop a process for implementation in which actions are discussed and governments and stakeholders decide on actions that can be taken to contribute to the circular economy in a specific sector (Rijksoverheid, 2018a; 2018b; 2018c; 2018d; 2018e). The aim of the transition agendas was to bring more synergy and coherence in the different trajectories of the transition agendas, in the framework of climate change, energy policies and innovation policy (Rijksoverheid, 2016; Rijksoverheid, 2017; Rijksoverheid; 2019).

4.3.2. Czech Republic

The Czech Republic developed a strategy to implement the SDGs, which is coordinated with societal actors and the most important associations from regional and local level, from academia and the private sector, employers' organisations and the trade unions in the Government Council for Sustainable Development. Public consultations have taken place to engage with stakeholders and to determine how they can contribute to the agenda (Government of the Czech Republic, 2020). Sustainable Consumption and Production is one of the SDGs that is considered key, especially for the main themes like economic development, resilient ecosystems and the sustainable development of cities and regions (Government of the Czech Republic, 2017). Together, in the Government Council for Sustainable Development, government and stakeholders agreed on the importance of

cooperation and partnerships for the implementation of the SDGs (Government of the Czech Republic, 2017).

However, this approach is absent in the development of the circular economy. The Czech government has a sectoral approach, it does not work with a circular economy strategy (European Environmental Agency, 2019a). The main policies that are in place, the Waste Management Plan and the Secondary Raw Materials Regulation, have been developed with only a limited number of sectoral stakeholders, like labour unions, employers' organisations and sometimes also environmental NGOs and reviewed through an Environmental Impact Assessment, conducted by the ministry and open to everyone (European Environment Agency, 2019a; Annex 12). These instruments are rather basic, and not supported by further legislation or an implementation plan (European Environmental Agency, 2019a). The stakeholders are involved to prepare and comment on policy proposals, to increase legitimacy of the policies, since they are co-legislator (Annex 12). Nevertheless, on the other hand the Czech government also experienced that stakeholders were not supportive towards the policies and this causes some problems with its legitimacy (Annex 12). Currently, the Czech government is developing a Circular Economy Strategy for 2040. However, Czech policy officer also stated that stakeholders are more ambitious than the government, because they have to in order to comply with EU law (Annex 12; European Environmental Agency, 2019a). NGOs and industrial associations are in general more progressive than the government. However, the issue is that only a limited number of actors is involved in this process for policy making, making it hard to develop a greater strategy with more ambition (Annex 12).

A last point that needs to be made, is that the Czech Republic only has a short history of stakeholder involvement, which is currently heavily institutionalised and not open to many stakeholders. In that regard, the Czech Republic is still developing its methods to engage stakeholders and prepare policies (Annex 12).

4.3.3. Spain

The Spanish government has developed an extensive implementation plan for the SDGs. This plan is coupled with a strategy on how policies and actions of government and other stakeholders can contribute to the realisation of sustainable consumption and production patterns (European Environment Agency, 2019b). According to Spain, its SDG Plan portrays "unprecedented mobilization of national, regional and local administrations, our citizens, social stakeholders, companies, universities, research centres and civil society organisations, focused on a shared vision" (Government of Spain, 2018; p. 6). It has expanded rapidly, and lead to many agreements and consensus in political and economic sectors and context. The Plan for Implementation has been debated among civil society and private sector organisations, universities, think-tanks, and professional associations, who have also discussed and agreed on how their actions could accelerate the process (Government of Spain, 2018; European Commission, 2020b; European Environment Agency, 2019b).

In Spain, the main responsibility to prepare strategies lies with the Central Government, the Autonomous Communities (the Spanish regions) and the association of local governments in Spain. Thus, the different levels of government are the leading actors in preparing strategies, but invite non-state actors to contribute constructively throughout the development of these strategies. This 'SDG approach' also applies to Spain's Circular Economy Strategy (Government of Spain, 2018; Ministry for the Ecological Transition, 2018). This strategy is Spain's overarching strategy for the realisation of SDG 12. It is developed in line with the tasks of the different levels of government: the central government coordinates economic activity, promotes environmental protection through legislation and supports this with its policies on science and innovation (Ministry for the Ecological Transition,

2018). Regarding the role of the lower levels of government, the autonomous communities have many governing competences, which are executed and managed by the local authorities. Besides, actions at the regional and local level directly contribute to the circular economy (Ministry for the Ecological Transition, 2018). Spain's ambitions for the circular economy are sectoral, but point to a target of 25/30% circularity in 2030.

After this phase of preparing the strategy, the Spanish strategy was made available for public reviewing, specifically focussing on the main targets and consideration (European Environment Agency, 2019b; European Commission, 2020b). Furthermore, the government invited these reviewers, and other organisations, to subscribe to the Great Deal/Pact for the Circular Economy: contracts signed by the Spanish government with stakeholders to work together and increase their efforts to realise the Circular Economy (European Environment Agency, 2019b). Many of the stakeholders that signed this agreement are commercial associations and social agents, which underlines that a large part of society is involved.

To underline how the society as a whole has to contribute to the SDGs and the Circular Economy, it is interesting to note that the government worked together with companies, NGOs, regional and local governments and media companies to establish information campaigns on the SDGs and the green transition, which reached at least 75% of the Spanish population (Government of Spain, 2018).

4.4. Implementation process in the Member States

In essence, all of the countries make use of the following instruments to implement policies to achieve sustainable consumption and production: laws and regulations, financing, smart market incentives, knowledge and innovation and international cooperation and sometimes also awareness raising. At the national level, just like at the EU level, these instruments are used to touch upon the different topics that contribute to the realisation of the circular economy.

The process of policy development and implementation in the Netherlands and Spain show clear characteristics of multilevel governance, whereas the Czech process is more top-down, but in practice more bottom-up (Annex 11; Government of Spain, 2018; Annex 12).

All strategies and policies highlight that a mixture of policy instruments is necessary to achieve the targets, all similar to those provided by the EU. Sometimes the stakeholders need laws to be pushed into a direction, but often this is complemented with financial support like smart market incentives, funding for knowledge and innovation; international cooperation is also considered to be a main method to achieve the desired change (Rijksoverheid, 2016; Ministry for the Ecological Transition, 2018; Annex 12). For the development of knowledge and innovation, it is important that private actors engage with governments, social actors, but also knowledge and research institutions (Rijksoverheid, 2016; Ministry for the Ecological Transition, 2018). There are many small companies that cannot afford to innovate on their own, because this requires financial resources and funding, which can be lacking. Without involvement of governments, social actors and knowledge and research institutions, fundamental changes and innovation might not take place. The governments of the countries selected enable society to make innovation possible, but also educate society on how this can best be achieved or why this transition is necessary (Rijksoverheid, 2016; Ministry for the Ecological Transition, 2018; Government of Spain, 2018; Government of the Czech Republic, 2018).

The Dutch and Spanish governments both describe the use of these tools as 'strategic' (Ministry for the Ecological Transition, 2018; Rijksoverheid, 2016). Nevertheless, all countries refer to EU objectives, directives and funding as main priorities for national implementation (Ministry for the Ecological Transition, 2018; Annex 11; Annex 12). It appears that almost all legislation that is to be

implemented, are national transpositions of EU directives. At least seven EU directives are transposed into national law, which explains why Spain, the Netherlands and also Czechia refer to the EU, in particular the European Commission, to take and have a leading role in developing acts or coordinating the process (Rijksoverheid, 2016; Ministry for the Ecological Transition, 2018; Annex 12). Not all EU ambitions are perceived equally optimistically, but in general the responses to the EU proposals for the circular economy are positive (Annex 12; Annex 11). The implementation of the circular economy evolves around taking responsibility, and in that regard the whole-of-society approach specifically.

One of the main issues that is brought up by the Dutch policy offer, is that ambitious Member States are sometimes slowed down by the less ambitious Member States that have made less of a priority of sustainable consumption and production (Annex 11). Especially in international negotiations in which the European Union represents the interest of all EU Member States.

4.4.1. The Netherlands

Concerning the SDGs specifically, it can be stated that the general structure of implementation of SDGs or SDG 12 is bottom-up. Mainly municipalities and large companies are actively involved to contribute to SDG 12 and are calling upon the government to act as well.

Concerning the Circular Economy Strategy, the Netherlands engages with society to implement the strategy (Rijksoverheid, 2019). The government works with stakeholders to revise legislation to make it more progressive or supportive for those who want to contribute to the circular economy. It is aimed to stimulate bottom-up initiatives, but also shows characteristics of multilevel governance. The strategy defines action lines and targets along the lines of the transition agendas, along which stakeholders can communicate with the national government (Rijksoverheid, 2016; Rijksoverheid, 2017; Rijksoverheid, 2019). There are intergovernmental and intra-governmental programmes in which national, regional and local authorities participate and share experiences, based on the national and regional programmes. The subnational levels of government can develop their own strategies for implementation. These programmes are also developed in cooperation with NGOs, private sector and knowledge institutions (Rijksoverheid, 2016; Rijksoverheid, 2019; European Environment Agency, 2019). The aim of these subnational programmes is to mobilise regional and local levels of government and allow them to establish their own territorial programmes that are in line with national policies. This allows them to focus on their regional capabilities and take into account possible limitations in the implementation to achieve the national goals (Rijksoverheid, 2016; Rijksoverheid, 2019).

To facilitate the transition, the Dutch government has launched the Green Deals initiative and the 'Versnellingshuis' (Accelerator House) (Rijksoverheid, 2016; Rijksoverheid, 2019). These are platforms, under which government and non-government organisations can launch initiatives, that provide funding and knowledge to parties that intend to accelerate the transition to the circular economy (Rijksoverheid, 2019). The government leaves a lot to the market, but also tries to be engaged in projects to accelerate the transition. Projects take place with all actors in the supply chain (Rijksoverheid, 2019). The government often takes the lead, to stimulate the execution of projects and mobilise and motivate other actors to take action as well (Rijksoverheid, 2016). Regarding the public procurement obligation as mentioned by the EU: all levels government already contributed to green public procurement, voluntarily (Rijksoverheid, 2019; SDG Nederland, 2019).

The EU and international platforms are important tools for the Dutch government to increase global efforts or to exchange information and practices. The Dutch government for example, participates in

several global sustainability platforms that comprise of governments and companies that want to accelerate the transition to the circular economy (Annex 11; Rijksoverheid, 2016).

Within the transition agendas, there are clear agreements on who can take action and how projects serve the agenda (Rijksoverheid, 2018a; 2018b, 2018c, 2018d, 2018e). All priority areas are covered. Ministries can take the lead in these projects, but often the lead is taken by non-government actors like companies and research consortiums or municipalities. Other stakeholders that can participate in these programmes are NGO's, other ministries, knowledge institutions, specific parties from economic sectors, associations from economic sectors, the entire value chain, and consortiums of private, knowledge institutions and social actors (Rijksoverheid, 2019). Also, local and regional governments are involved in these projects. However, regional and local governments also have their own regional projects with various regional actors (Rijksoverheid, 2019). Projects can also be led by European or international partners. Nevertheless, a big group of private sector organisations is not reached and this causes some concern for the realisation of the targets (Annex 11).

An issue with the implementation of the transition agendas via multilevel governance, can be found in the Dutch nitrogen crisis (Rijksoverheid, 2020; CBS, 2020). The Dutch government and provinces agreed on policies to tackle the high level of nitrogen in the Netherlands, and specifically targeted the agricultural sector to reduce its waste. However, they developed different policies, based on the regional circumstances and need, to reduce the emission of nitrogen (Ministerie van Landbouw, Natuur en Voedselkwaliteit, 2019). This is in line with multilevel governance, but was not received well. It resulted in protests and demonstrations from the sector, pushing several provinces to withdraw their policies, whereas other provinces maintained their policies. This caused unclarity, unrest and uncertainty among stakeholders and provinces (Ministerie van Landbouw, Natuur en Voedselkwaliteit, 2019). This has not only put the circular economy agenda for the agriculture sector on hold, the government still seeks for alternative policies, but also puts pressure on the other sectoral agendas for the circular economy (Rijksoverheid, 2020; Brugh & Kamsma, 2020).

Coordination and monitoring

The implementation process presumes a form of mutual understanding, trust, because even when the legislation is in place, it still requires action and funding to allow the stakeholders that want to contribute to realise their targets (Rijksoverheid, 2016). Coordination of actions lies therewith with both the government and non-government actors, although most actions are coordinated by the responsible ministries (Rijksoverheid, 2016; Rijksoverheid, 2019). The real progress is measured through monitoring, which is done by ministries and the Bureau for Statistics, and extra pressure lies with the largest companies to report on their emission reduction (SDG Nederland, 2019).

In the Netherlands, there is a steering group which consists of the most important ministries that are involved and with the stakeholders which will be guiding the programme of implementation (Rijksoverheid, 2019). These parties also take part in a project-group that monitors the implementation, they have an overview of this process to give cross-sectoral guidance to the transition agendas to ensure cross-sectoral cooperation (Rijksoverheid, 2016; Rijksoverheid, 2019). Depending on the progress, this might lead to new priorities or revisions of the sectors and chains that are involved. For the official monitoring, use is made of the indicators that are made at the EU level. This should lead to the better alignment of policy trajectories in the Netherlands and the EU to accelerate the transition, and expand its scope to more sectors, while it also explains how well implementation takes place at different levels (Rijksoverheid, 2016).

4.4.2. Czech Republic

The approach for the SDGs in the Czech Republic is based on mutual understanding of the stakeholders to ensure coherent action takes place and reserves an important role for the Ministry of the Environment to coordinate this process, also for the economic-related SDGs (Annex 12). The lack of a clear implementation strategy and sectoral approaches have as a consequence that the policies are not inclusive or limit cross-sectoral exchanges, which can be problematic for the realisation of the circular economy (European Environment Agency, 2019a).

The Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Ministry of the Environment are responsible for the policies that deal with the circular economy, to ensure coherent action and facilitate cross-sectoral cooperation on the Waste Management Plan and the Secondary Raw Materials Agreements (European Environmental Agency, 2019a). Both ministries collaborate on resource efficiency, for example on the preparation of secondary raw materials policy (European Environmental Agency, 2019a). The Ministry of the Environment will be in charge of the preparation of a strategy for the circular economy, Circular Czechia, which will be launched next year. The Ministry of Industry and Trade and other relevant ministries will cooperate with Ministry of the Environment to develop this document, that covers all economic sectors (European Environmental Agency, 2019a). Currently, the policies are sectoral. The sectoral associations are key in the implementation to support its members to work on the targets, even when they are non-economic. Stakeholders are also important for the evaluation and monitoring of the policies (Annex 12). During preparation of new legislative documents and conceptual materials, proposals go through an interdepartmental consultative procedure in which a variety of stakeholders are involved. Employers' associations, NGOs and other relevant organisations can also be involved in these discussions (European Environmental Agency, 2019a).

For the implementation of the policies that are currently in place, there is a shared responsibility to finance policies and ensure compliance and implementation by the ministries, regions, municipalities, producers and waste companies to monitor how the actors comply with the objectives and monitor how measures contribute to realise the targets. The Waste Management Plan is discussed by a non-government Council for Waste Management which advises the Ministry of the Environment in its legislation (Ministry of Industry and Trade, 2014). To ensure that its targets are followed actively by the parties responsible, there is a lot of cooperation with the partners involved in the Raw Materials Policy facilitate the exchange of research, knowledge and innovation (European Environment Agency, 2019a). It is complemented by the Raw Material Policy of the Czech Republic on Mineral Materials and their Resources, which is directed at the industry to enable recycling or reuse of these materials in the future (European Environment Agency, 2019a). These policies are to support innovation and technological development (Ministry of Industry and Trade, 2014; Ministry of Industry and Trade, 2016).

The Czech government does not necessarily expect many actions from the stakeholders with whom it cooperates and also does not take many actions itself, on green public procurement for example. It does use large and successful campaigns to raise consumer awareness (European Environment Agency, 2019a). The process is formally top-down, but is, in reality, more bottom-up and selection of instruments is in general not really progressive (Annex 12). The market does often work harder on the implementation than the government, because the industry has to adopt to EU legislation. The market drives the change (Annex 12). There are a few non-government networks with actors that have voluntarily committed to contribute to sustainable development.

4.4.3. Spain

In Spain, the process of implementation of the SDGs and SDG 12 is described as a multilevel and multi-stakeholder process. It has to be noted that many stakeholders already worked on and with the

SDGs, without involvement of the government. The government took the initiative to develop a national strategy, to set targets and coordinate action of the stakeholders in cooperation with the stakeholders (Government of Spain, 2018). The overall targets are non-binding, but purely ambitions.

The Circular Economy Strategy sets targets and actions for and between governments, society and economic sectors 'to create more synergies and niches of knowledge and innovation' (Ministry for the Ecological Transition, 2018). Without this approach, the Spanish government feared that it would be impossible to reach the targets and also not harm the competitiveness of companies (Ministry for the Ecological Transition, 2018). The Spanish government has an important role to reach these targets, by participating in projects and concluding partnerships in Spain and in the EU.

The Spanish strategy allows regional and local authorities to develop their own strategy and actions, in line with the national strategy, to maintain regional or local strengths (Ministry for the Ecological Transition, 2018; Government of Spain, 2018). Together with stakeholders, the Spanish regions have great responsibility in the implementation of the circular economy. A look into the strategies of different Spanish regions shows that the regions develop their own plans that deal with specific issues (Circular Economy, 2018).

There are also other policies that are at the heart of the circular economy, like the Urban Agenda and Spain's Strategy for Science, Innovation and Technology and its waste plans. These policies are mainly linked to scientific research to improve innovation in reuse of raw materials and enable better recycling (Government of Spain, 2018; Ministry for the Ecological Transition, 2018). The Urban Agenda is developed by all government levels and stakeholders from the private sector and sets examples for spatial planning and urban development, however, since it is voluntary, compliance of the autonomous communities is not guaranteed (Ministry of Transport, Mobility and the Urban Agenda, 2019). All these programmes are linked to each other and, to enable cross-sectoral cooperation between the different stakeholders involved in these parties (Ministry for the Ecological Transition, 2018).

Monitoring and coordination

The Spanish government has developed an institutionalised strategy for coordination and monitoring of the implementation, which represents society as a whole (Ministry for the Ecological Transition, 2018; European Commission, 2020b). The strategy is inclusive, to ensure integration of different perspectives of units. There is a coordinating Steering Committee, consisting of the Ministries that are the key enablers for the transition on the three most important domains (Ministry for the Ecological Transition, 2018).

The next organ within this structure is the Inter-ministerial Commission, consisting of the eleven other ministries who work on policies that have a direct impact on the transition (Ministry for the Ecological Transition, 2018). This Commission evaluates policies and measures, determines whether policies and regulations have to be implemented, decides or advises on regional instruments and measures and monitors progress, to evaluate whether actions contribute to the Circular Economy (Ministry for the Ecological Transition, 2018). Furthermore, it can establish working groups between ministries that have to deal with specific targets, policies or actions.

There is also a Commission for the Coordination of Waste. Within the Waste Commission, there is a working group Circular Economy, that contributed to the strategy and recommend to ease cooperation and coordination, to ensure that there is consistency in actions by autonomous regions and municipalities (Ministry for the Ecological Transition, 2018; European Environment Agency, 2019b). This working group consists of representatives from the associations for the Autonomous

Communities and Municipalities and the State Government. Its task is to analyse the transition, trace limitations, identify measures, to exchange knowledge, information and practices and coordinate actions (Ministry for the Ecological Transition, 2018).

The fourth organ is the Advisory Council of the Circular Economy. This Council consists of social partners, NGOs, labour unions and private actors, from primary, secondary and tertiary sector, waste managers, producers, research and knowledge institutions, consumer agencies and representations (Ministry for the Ecological Transition, 2018). Their task is to monitor and revise proposals within the strategy. Independent actors can also participate in this Council. The Council's main tasks are to spread ideas, suggestions and proposals to formulate measures that could be applied to the ecological, economic and technological challenges that deal with transition towards the circular economy (Ministry for the Ecological Transition, 2018). Within this Council, the involvement of stakeholders resulted in participatory memberships and concrete actions of the parties and the Great Deal, an initiative to invite all societal, academic and private sector partners to arrange agreements with the government to accelerate the transition (European Environment Agency, 2019b).

To monitor the progress, the Spanish government has decided to use the indicators used by the European Commission, to compare progress and evaluate on measure in cooperation with other EU Member States (Ministry for the Ecological Transition, 2018).

4.5. Hypotheses

This section discusses the hypotheses to have them corroborated or rejected. The first hypothesis, H1, is: *Both at the EU and Member State forms of multilevel governance, there is broad involvement of stakeholders in the policy-making and implementation phase.*

Since SDG 12 is targeted at the whole of society and multilevel governance allows for extensive stakeholder involvement, it was presumed that many stakeholders will be involved in the EU and Member States to realise SDG 12 with a 'whole-of-society' approach. In general, all cases include associations to discuss policies and help facilitate the implementation of the policy. Nevertheless, there are differences between the cases. The Czech Republic has a top-down structure for implementation, and seems to have the most limited involvement of different stakeholders. The Czech Republic is followed by the EU, which also mainly interacts with associations, but also invites and interacts with individual stakeholders to discuss policy development. Spain and the Netherlands have a broad and inclusive structure in which the government invites many associations and individual stakeholders to be involved in the policy development and implementation. Stakeholders are very important for the development and success of policy implementation. H1 is therewith **corroborated**.

The second hypothesis, H2, is: *There are different mechanisms in place to coordinate actions for type I and type II multilevel governance implementation of SDG 12.*

The entire strategy for the realisation of SDG 12 consists of binding and non-binding policies, which are prepared by governments and stakeholders. This leads to a process of interaction between the different levels of government and interaction between the levels of government, agencies, clubs and other non-government actors. This makes it difficult to distinguish differences between type I and type II multilevel governance, because they are intertwined and connected. It does however show that, in the EU, Spain and the Netherlands, the central government (or European Commission) takes the lead in the implementation process. All levels of government, agencies and most other stakeholders are tasked to report their actions and progress to the national government. Furthermore, in Spain and the Netherlands, the central government, but also regional and local

government, tries to be involved in projects to facilitate innovation and help private sector or academia to realise policy targets. The central government does not dictate the actions of the other levels of government, but is in cooperation to monitor whether actions lead to desired results. The structures for coordination are identical: the central government collects all data to monitor progress and the other state/non-state actors responsible for a part of the implementation all report their progress to the government or other institution that is responsible for the monitoring of progress. To coordinate actions, they discuss, communicate, interact, cooperate and monitor results to measure progress. There appear to be more actors involved in type II, but since the levels of government are also closely involved in these structures, they mainly communicate with and to the government. The government supervises this process in both type I and type II. There are no clear differences in coordination of action, because the government aims to be involved as much as possible in both types. Type I and Type II are not only closely connected, but appear to be interwoven. **H2 is therewith rejected.**

4.6. Validity

The data that was retrieved was analysed by putting them through the analysis scheme that can be found in annex 4. By systemically analysing them along the same standards, there is a clear opportunity to also compare the data with the other data that is collected, to see whether all the data is comparable and whether the accurate data is acquired and whether it can be analysed. The fact that the data for the EU, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic could be further explained through interviews, meant that clarification of the data could be asked for and that additional information could be asked for. The fact that this was not the case for Spain, means that there is more dependency on the direct sources available. For Spain and the Czech Republic, there was not always as much information available as for the Netherlands and the EU, but to ensure that the data that was retrieved was understood correctly, the data was compared with the data that was found in other documents. This to ensure that the data was interpreted correctly. That is also why the interviewees were given the opportunity to review the interview to ensure that it was understood correctly and they were not misquoted and data would not be used in an incorrect way. Furthermore, since the Netherlands and the EU gave a good overview of the entire process, there were clear structures for data analysis that could also be used for Spain and the Czech Republic to ensure that the main characteristics of policy implementation through multilevel governance could be acquired and analysed. This is done to ensure the construct validity, as was advised by Yin (2003).

The external validity, the generalisability of the findings of the research, are expected to be high. This because the research is conducted among a range of MS of the European Union, with different characteristics, to analyse how multilevel governance supports the implementation of SDG 12. Given the size of the EU, multiple case studies are conducted. Based on the selected cases, Czechia, the Netherlands and Spain, which are three of the 27 EU MS that function within the EU multilevel structure and of which two Member States use multilevel mechanisms to implement SDG 12 at the national level, the expectation is that the supporting role of multilevel governance for the implementation of SDG 12 can be identified.

4.7. Reliability

Since the selection of literature for analysis and selection of interviewees was based on specific criteria, the reliability is presumed to be high. Especially since the case study protocol was used to come to answer the sub-questions and to answer the research question, which was also explained in the methodology (Yin, 2003). The interviewees were selected based on their knowledge of the implementation of SDG 12 and their knowledge of the development and implementation of the

corresponding policies. The interviews consisted of the same specific questions that relate to the implementation of the SDGs. This to ensure that the same data was collected and to prevent that different kind of data is being retrieved (accidentally) during the interviews that have been held. This is also why the collection schemes were used. The data was consistent, also with the literature, and all aspects were covered with the interview questions. That is why it is assumed that when the same procedures are followed, a new research should get similar findings and conclusions. However, given the fact that there can always be difference in knowledge and personal opinion of the interviewees and the fact that the research question was revised after the interviews took place, it is possible that a new research will get a bit more specific results, but that in general the findings will be rather similar.

5. Conclusion

This chapter discusses the main findings of the thesis, before it answers the overall research question.

The mechanisms of multilevel governance are, according to the literature: mutual adjustment, hierarchy, competition and cooperation, network governance and a process of both horizontal and vertical interaction between different levels of government. Based on the analyses of the EU and Czechia, Spain and the Netherlands, it is possible to present an overview of the cases and relate them to the theory of multilevel governance and the SDGs.

A first important point that needs to be discussed, deals with mutual adjustment and intergovernmental negotiation, hierarchy and competition which are used by Scharpf (1997) and Börzel (2007) (who uses competition and hierarchy) to describe how the process of policy implementation comes down to many interactions between Member States, but also highlight the role of the EU to lead implementation orderly. Based on the specific country cases, it can be stated that the EU, or European Commission, definitely uses its supranational character to implement policies. All countries refer to legislation and policies that are proposed by the European Commission as key for their policy actions and refer to EU instruments as fundamental for the realisation of their targets. The role of the EU is evident, but the fact that there are large discrepancies between Member States their individual targets and the targets set at the EU level, does question the aspects of mutual adjustment and the role of intergovernmental negotiation. This does more seem to presume a sort of 'free for all' approach, in which the EU uses regulations, directives and other policy instruments in order to push the Member States into the right direction, but it is up for the Member States to actually do something due to a lack of enforcement capabilities. The statement from the Dutch policy officer that the less ambitious Member States seem to be having a better position and more often get what they want, does suggest that Scharpf (1988) is right and that policies are indeed sub-optimal.

The Circular Economy Action Plan is received positively by the least ambitious and the most ambitious Member States, which does presume that the policies do serve a good purpose and are in the interests of the Member States. There does not seem to be a lot of competition between the Member States for policy success, but the Member States do acknowledge benefits of coordination, cooperation and the possibility of learning at the EU level. Member States intend to use indicators to monitor their progress based on the monitoring as is done at the EU level, to have the possibility to compare results, evaluate the role of directives and policies and to learn and share their experiences with each other, highlighting that policy learning serves a great purpose and has an important role in the EU. Interesting is that policy learning and policy negotiations also take place at the national level with regional and local governments. This is the case in Spain and in the Netherlands, where there are direct lines of implementation between the different levels of government, these lines also go

beyond the levels of government, since negotiations take place with a large number of other stakeholders. It shows the importance of negotiation and mutual adjustment in this process, which takes place at different levels. In Czechia, the role of stakeholders is also really important. However, their involvement is not as direct and extensive as in the other countries.

The role of stakeholders was mainly described by Eising (2015) and Börzel (2007). Whereas Eising (2015) describes the different forms of stakeholder involvement, Börzel (2007) highlights how stakeholder input in governance can lead to governance networks. Governance networks are meant to help preparing policies from multiple perspectives and with policy-experts, to take away some political weight in the development and implementation of the policies. These networks seem to be very present at the EU level, at the national level and they are also of importance at the regional level. Eising (2015) differentiates between corporate and pluralist interest groups and presumes that the latter prevails in the EU. Although pluralist interest groups are involved in the process, both the European Commission and the national governments mainly prepare and implement policies in close cooperation with associations that act on behalf of their members. This is institutionalised, since these associations are seen as co-legislators and are important for the legitimacy and implementation of the policies. This also explains the institutionalised character of stakeholder involvement in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of policies. In the Czech Republic, the process is also characterized by stakeholder engagement, but much less stakeholders are involved due to the structure of stakeholder involvement.

Nevertheless, the Czech Republic does also use stakeholder input to change or improve policies. The term network governance can be applied to the processes of policy development and implementation in the EU, Spain and the Netherlands, especially since stakeholders are involved to ensure that the policies are coherent, clear and cover all relevant actors and sectors from the supply chain. This is done to enable the central, regional and local government and the other stakeholders to contribute to the implementation and realisation of SDG 12 without limiting their capabilities, providing them the opportunities to contribute out of their own strengths and characteristics. Given the consensus among the most important stakeholders on policy ideas and the fact that they came to an agreement with decision-makers on the strategy for implementation of policies to realise the circular economy, network governance is considered relevant and useful to implement policies to achieve the circular economy. Stakeholders in general indicated that they intend to contribute to the circular economy agendas. Inclusion of stakeholders in the policy process does show that government and non-government stakeholders can build trust and understanding to work together in the implementation process for the SDGs, as was indicated by Meulman (2019).

A problem with the role of stakeholders, as was highlighted by the Czech policy officer, but mainly comes forward in the Netherlands, is how stakeholders and multilevel governance can put pressure on policies. Not only the central government and associations from the agricultural sector, but also the central government and provinces (also among each other) created a problem concerning the implementation of policies to reduce the emission of nitrogen. It put pressure on the climate policies for the agricultural sector, but also impacted the cross-sectoral coordination of activities and negatively influenced the societal support for the policies. This is caused by the lack of consensus between the government and relevant parties, and makes the stakeholders question the role of the governments to facilitate the parties to enable the transition to a circular economy. It puts the entire policy in a deadlock. The role of stakeholders is in general very useful, but this case shows the concerns raised by Papadopoulus (2010), who states that non-government actors can become too dominant in the process and take away democratic legitimacy of the decision-making and policy implementation.

Eising (2015) states that governance networks have many characteristics of type II multilevel governance, which seems to apply to the process of implementation in the EU and in the Netherlands. At the EU level, the fact that implementation, standardisation and monitoring is done by non-government bodies, makes it rather obvious that type II co-exists with type I at the EU level. In the Netherlands and Spain, type I and type II multilevel governance can also be identified. The different levels of government are first involved in the implementation, however, the second line of actors involved in the implementation are the non-government stakeholders who have also have a direct role in the implementation process and cooperate with the different levels of government to implement policies. Since the success of the transition to the circular economy and sustainable consumption and production patterns is dependent on the inclusion of the entire supply chain, their close involvement in this process is evident and for good reasons. Through an EU and a national approach, regional and local circular economy 'agendas' can be developed. These agendas are in line with EU and central government objectives and allow for cooperation between the levels of government to develop agendas that are well-adapted to the regional economy. This supports the claim of Meulman (2019) and Eising (2015) that multilevel governance is functional, allows for cooperation between regions to tackle policy problems and potential spillover effects together (Hooghe & Marks, 2010).

The issue of coordination and accountability as put forward by Papadopoulos (2010) and Radzyner, et al. (2014), can only be identified in a few areas. It becomes visible when focussing on the role and participation of stakeholders, whose input is elemental but who cannot be forced to contribute to the circular economy. They contribute to the realisation of the circular economy because the governments acknowledge the importance of their input and that allows these stakeholders to be closely involved in this process, as mentioned by Meulman (2019). Coordination of actions is more blurred, due to the fact that a multiplicity of parties tries to contribute to the transition to the circular economy. Based on the examples, it seems like the type I multilevel governance and the type II form are both used and are combined rather often: the levels of government work together on state-responsibility basis, whereas the other actors limit their interactions with each other and with the governments through projects and partnerships, in order to achieve a project and reach targets. Although these processes are different, it is obvious that the central government tries to monitor and coordinate all actions that take place in type I and type II multilevel governance. This was mentioned by Skelcher (2005) and seems to be the case when specifically looking at the Netherlands, which provided the most data on this topic.

To answer the main research question: **How do multilevel governance mechanisms support the implementation of SDG 12 in the EU?**

The SDG approach of 'whole of society' seems to be the basis for the development and implementation of policies to achieve sustainable patterns of consumption and production in the EU, the Netherlands and Spain, who all use clear multilevel structures, whereas Czechia has a different approach, namely bottom-up, to this topic. This 'whole of society' approach is important, since it shows that multilevel governance is a method to involve many societal actors to develop and implement policies, to develop a coherent approach in which government and non-government actors pursue the same agenda. They are on board with the overall and sectoral targets, knowing how to act and contribute to the same targets. Multilevel governance allows for cooperation and the opportunity to exchange experiences and practices of policy implementation. The fact that the EU targets and actions are leading for the Member States and regional and local governments and that the EU and Member States facilitate the regional and local governments to pursue this agenda, underlines the coherence and consistency in the implementation of the circular economy agenda in the EU. More important is that the structures of stakeholder involvement in both the preparation and the implementation of the strategy, and the freedom that regional and local levels of government have to implement these policies, highlight the functionality of the mechanisms of

multilevel governance. It allows all relevant stakeholders to be engaged in the implementation, whereas the use of instruments for implementation highlight that the aim is to involve and benefit the whole of society. The instruments are available for all the actors that can help achieve the circular economy. Government and stakeholders work together to get results. This to 'leave no one behind' and enable cooperation between governments and stakeholders at multiple levels to accelerate the transition towards the circular economy collectively. It does mean that tasks of implementation can take place outside of the control of the government. Implementation is done by non-government actors, because they are better equipped to execute that role in the implementation process.

One major aspect that does not need to be forgotten is that many parties also contribute to the SDGs or the circular economy without involving or cooperating with a government. A lot is or would also be done without the governments getting involved. Nevertheless, the fact that the government involves these stakeholders to create a strategy, shows the ambitions of the government to have the relevant stakeholders and sectors work together in a coherent way. This to ensure everybody contributes in a way that limits trade-offs and negative spillover to achieve the best results and deliver on the ambitions. The structures of multilevel governance allow for this cooperation and coordination with the stakeholders at the regional and the national level, which was especially visible in the Netherlands and Spain. Not all Member States manage to organise this well or manage to involve stakeholders to develop cross-sectoral and 'whole-of-society' approaches for the implementation of SDG 12. Nevertheless, the structures used by the EU, Spain and the Netherlands to develop and implement policies with similar targets at the European, national and regional level in cooperation with stakeholders, provide clarity and also provide possibilities to apply multilevel governance in the implementation process at the national level: it sets coherency for the multiple levels of government and results in cross-sectoral coherence and cooperation, while taking into account regional differences and capabilities, caused by the alignment of visions and targets which can enable an acceleration of the implementation of SDG 12.

The structure of multilevel governance makes the implementation process interesting, especially regarding the role of the central government. Central governments are key in the implementation and coordination of policy actions, to align all stakeholders and set out ambitions for the future to realise the policy targets. This means that central governments are dependent on others to achieve targets, both at the EU and at the national level. The role of the European Commission seems weak, because the findings leave the question whether Member States really need to comply with EU targets and how it is possible that there are such large differences between the targets set by the Member States and the targets set by the EU. Only the Netherlands has got ambitions that are similar to EU targets, whereas Spain and Czechia are less ambitious. This is a problem, because they will not reach the targets set by the EU. The only method to sanction those who do not meet the ambitions is the infringement procedure, but this will cause major havoc and unrest among Member States and takes a lot of sovereignty from the Member States, making it less interesting for them to participate in coalitions at the EU level to tackle climate change. It means that the position of the European Commission is rather strong, because Member States are forced to take action to achieve the targets set by the EU and keep up with other Member States. Without the role of the European Commission, the process of implementation of policies to realise a circular economy would be less structured and less coherent. At the national level, this role is played by the central government.

The fact that coalitions are formed by actors which does not include the government, sometimes with the government, to accelerate the transition, is a positive point, but also a concern. It shows that from the bottom-up level many organisations and associations contribute to the transition, but they do not necessarily coordinate their actions on a larger scale. In the case of Czechia, the bottom-up approach of the government means that those who are interested do not need the government for cooperation and coordination of actions. In the cases that do make use of multilevel governance,

the central government coordinates this process: it has formulated ambitions and agendas (with stakeholders and the other levels of government) that are leading for regional and local governments when making their own circular economy agendas. The central government and also regional and local governments facilitate projects, activities and enable policy learning at the regional and local level, but also communicate with and facilitate the stakeholders to contribute to the transition. This shows the difficulty of policy-making for these types of 'transformational' policies, in which policy-making becomes diffuse and complicated and requires a dialogue with everyone, not just the economic sectors and different actors in the supply chain.

This highlights that when it comes to realising policy targets in multilevel governance, the central government (EU and national level) is instrumental to realise the targets, to facilitate the stakeholders to take part and contribute to the circular economy and to ensure policy coherence and cooperation between and among (non-) government stakeholders. Without this role of the European Commission or national government, there would less be coordination of policy actions and cooperation among and between national, regional and local governments and stakeholders, making it more difficult to achieve national or EU ambitions. When interaction and cooperation leads to coherence among the different levels of government and to cross-sectoral coherence in preparation and implementation of policies for SDG 12, also known as the structure of multilevel governance, it can support and accelerate the realisation of sustainable consumption and production in the EU.

According to the literature, the political colour of the governing parties could also have an important role, perhaps another variable that could have a role on the realisation of the SDGs is the GDP of a country. This can have an influence on the realisation of the SDGs and also the functioning of multilevel governance. Since this thesis completely focused on the structures and characteristics of policy development and policy implementation of multilevel governance, it is possible that a focus on political preferences and GDP could zoom in more on the different structures that national governments use for the implementation of the SDGs and SDG 12, also regarding the cross-sectoral cooperation. However, since the EU provides a clear multilevel framework for policy development and implementation, this master's thesis did solely focus on how multilevel governance provides structures to implement SDG 12 in a coherent matter within the EU.

6. References

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7. Annex 1: Theoretical review of policy implementation

SDGs, Policy Implementation and Multilevel Governance

Links between the SDGs, its implementation and multilevel governance can be identified when analysing the goal and underlying thought behind the SDGs. The principle of the SDGs is that "no one should be left behind". The attribution of tasks and roles for the realisation of the SDGs therewith reflects the theory of multilevel governance, that not only national governments, but also supranational and regional governments and other actors have an important role in the realisation of the SDGs (Meulman, 2019; Radzyner, Tödting-Schönhofer, Frangenheim, Mendez, Bachtler, Charles, Granqvist, 2014). These other actors include civil society organisations (CSOs), private actors and companies, epistemic communities and citizens (OECD, 2020).

Contrary to multilevel governance, which is a form of governance, the SDGs form an instrument that supports governments and other actors how to design their policies in line with the principles of sustainable development to be inclusive and support economic growth (OECD, 2020). In essence, this is the main difference between the SDGs and multilevel governance. Whereas multilevel governance already describes the process of policy development, policy implementation and the attribution of responsibility in the implementation of policy, the SDGs are still 'under development'. This does not touch upon the goals and sub-goals that have been established, but on the development of a strategy or policy on how the SDGs can be processed in regular policies and through which mechanisms the SDGs can be implemented (Meulman, 2019). The division of responsibilities in policy implementation, but also other facets of policy implementation are to be developed, defined and identified by both national governments and the European Union in order to implement the SDGs.

Public policy change

To describe policy change and policy implementation, its mechanisms and the relationship between policy implementation mechanisms and multilevel governance, first the process of policy change is described.

In theory, the stages in the public policy cycle, which describes the development of public policy, are constituted of the following steps: agenda-setting, policy-formulation, decision-making, implementation and the evaluation (Knill & Tosun, 2012). However, in real-life this process is more complicated and steps are less linear (Knill & Tosun, 2012). Agenda-setting relates to the collection of beliefs, about a problem, the importance of a problem and who is supposed to address the problem and how this can be addressed. It is the process in which groups intend to put different topics on the public and political agenda, in order to make policymakers and decision-makers do something about the situation that is undesirable and present their desired solutions (Knill & Tosun, 2012). There are different reasons that get ideas or interests on the political agenda (Knill & Tosun, 2012; European Commission, 2017). This is the first step in establishing policy change and leads to the formulation of the policy. Policy formulation is the phase of selecting a policy related to the problem, and formulating possible policy objectives and defining the adequate policy solutions to solve this problem, often results in various proposed solutions to one single problem (Knill & Tosun, 2012; European Commission, 2017). The decision-making phase is the phase in which the decision-makers decide which policy formulation seems most accurate to solve the problem that is at stake. Decision-making is followed by the implementation of the policy. Implementation of policy is the translation of

the policy objectives into a strategy that appoints the institutions responsible for executing the policy, by assigning responsibilities to the different institutions often linked with attribution of financial instruments and advising or executing work-methods and practices with the hope or understanding to realise the policy objectives (Knill & Tosun, 2012). The attribution and distribution of tasks and responsibilities to the various actors involved, are considered to be among the different mechanisms of policy implementation. Policy implementation mechanisms are the tools, such as assigning roles and providing financial instruments, that enable implementation of the policy (Cerna, 2013; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980).

Despite the fact that the SDGs are already a given and the main focus of this thesis is on the implementation of the SDGs and the mechanisms of policy implementation, it is worth noting how agenda-setting, policy-formulation, decision-making and the eventual implementation of a policy can have a large influence on each other. The fact that society is pluralistic has a major influence on the agenda-setting and the formulation of a policy (Knill & Tosun, 2012). Pluralistic means that different groups not only identify different problems and situations which they want to bring forward to the decision-makers, it also means that problems are identified differently and that the actors involved similarly identify different solutions (Knill & Tosun, 2012). Not only can this lead to battles between groups to make 'their problem' end up on the political agenda, it makes it difficult to formulate one distinctive policy that manages to grasp the entire definition of the problem, which are the losers of agenda-setting, and the formulation of the policy to tackle the problem and set targets that are to be achieved. The politician is likely to decide to go with the policy formulation that matches his thoughts and his party's interests (Knill & Tosun, 2012; Cerna, 2013).

Formulating policy objectives does therewith become a diffuse process, with different parties having different interests and making it sometimes difficult to come to a consensus regarding the formulation of the policy (Knill & Tosun, 2012). The different approaches of the decision-makers regarding the objectives and priorities can also have an influence on the implementation of the policy, given the fact that the decision-makers focus on the priorities and objectives that they consider to be crucial for the success of the policy. Based on their preferred policy, they will assign different roles and tasks to the different actors that can have a role in the implementation of the policy. It shows that most policies will be implemented differently by different political parties, based on their ideology or other preferences (Knill & Tosun, 2012). Not only does this have an impact on the methods through which policies are implemented, it can also influence the success or failure of a policy.

Policy implementation

To describe the mechanisms of policy implementation, it is first important to give a definition of policy implementation. According to Sabatier & Mazmanian (1980) policy implementation is "the carrying out of a basic policy decision. The decision that is to be executed is constituted of three components: the problem that is to be addressed, it stipulates the objectives to be pursued, and the "structures" of the process of implementation." Implementation is a process, of interactions between setting goals and the actions directed towards achieving them (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980).

A policy decision is the decision that is taken by decision-makers to implement a certain policy to tackle a policy problem (European Commission, 2017). It is the translation of the targets to tackle a policy problem into a form that should lead to the realisation of the targets. A policy decision is based on various factors, but in general policy-makers let their decision to take a policy option be based on their political priorities, the data that is presented to them and the expected consequences

for those affected by the policy (European Commission, 2017; Khan & Khandaker, 2016; Knill & Tosun, 2012).

As described, the process of implementation starts with the decision to implement a policy. The second step is the determination of the policy outputs and assigning agencies and institutions responsible for implementation (European Commission, 2017; Knill & Tosun, 2012). This should, at the end, result in compliance with the decisions from those targeted by the policy (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; Cerna, 2013). The most important step is the measurement of the impact of the outputs of the policy, which can eventually result in policy revisions of the law that is supposed to lead to the desired policy outcome (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; European Commission, 2017). Whether the output of the policy is 'successful' is dependent on the 'tractability of the problem addressed', the structuring of the implementation process and the 'effect of a variety of political variables on the balance of support or objectives' (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980).

The process of implementation is characterized by the development of a strategy and the selection of mechanisms through which the targets are expected to be achieved (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980). The strategy translates the objectives into an understandable and workable step-by-step plan, choosing the mechanisms that are considered to be most effective to realise the policy objectives (European Commission, 2017). This sounds rather obvious, but given the different mechanisms available to implement policies and the fact that they need to be practical for the stakeholders involved as well, it can be difficult to select and install functioning mechanisms to realise policy targets. In the end, after all, the main aim is policy success, the realisation of the policy targets (Khan & Khandaker, 2016; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; European Commission, 2017). The term policy performance, the level of success of policy implementation, can be divided into three categories: 1. The output and the outcome of the policy; 2. The impact of policy; 3. Assessment whether the policy leads to the development of a country or society as a whole (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980). Ingram and Schneider (1990) hold a broader approach, dissecting the performance of policy implementation into more specific categories: "Successful implementation implies that 'agencies comply with the directives of the statutes, agencies are held accountable for researching specific indicators of success, goals of the statute are achieved, local goals are achieved or there is an improvement in the political climate around the programme'" (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; Khan & Khandaker, 2016). The latter comes closer to the definition of multilevel governance and is a consequence of decentralisation, however, in both cases policy success is dependent on a strategy that enables the relevant stakeholders to perform their designated tasks and management of the process (European Commission, 2017; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; Khan & Khandaker, 2016; Schakel, 2016).

Before this strategy and the related mechanisms are selected, the first step for governments is to determine the methods of implementation of a policy. Governments possess various tools to implement a policy, for example via public spending or via regulations, taxation and even the launch of information campaigns (European Commission, 2017). The selection of one or multiple of these methods to achieve the policy target is again based on the balancing of the pros and cons that the specific method would have.

Policy implementation methods

Public spending is a policy option for policy problems that are not related to the functioning of the market, or in policy areas that are not affected by the market, such as sustainable and environmental policies, especially concerning long term policies (European Commission, 2017). Public spending can lead to innovation and investment, as it has a 'multiplier' effect. It provides capital that invites organisations to spend money on investments which they would not have done otherwise. Two main

downsides of public spending are ‘the favouring of interests over other interests’, the government needs to take a decision which favours some but has a negative effect on others and that it is financed via taxation instruments (European Commission, 2017).

The role of laws and regulations is obvious, since it sets standards that people and organisations have to adhere to/comply with. This to ensure safety and security in different policy areas, because it prescribes a certain behaviour (European Commission, 2017). Regulations are a cheaper alternative for public spending, since its costs are lower than the costs of spending. A first concern would be if regulations can achieve the desired change. Furthermore, every regulation that is set needs to be implemented and causes changes in the acts of institutions and of the public (European Commission, Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980). This causes expenditure or costs to those who are impacted by the legislation (European Commission, 2017).

Compliance with rules and laws can become rather problematic for those who are directly affected by the legislation (European Commission, 2017). In general, it takes time to prepare for compliance with the new laws, which is costly, requires staff to dedicate to prepare the organisation for the change, it can change the work of organisations such as processes of working or changing the products or processes to produce the product (European Commission, 2017; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980).

Another objective for policies, can be achieving the policy targets by establishing behavioural change (European Commission, 2017; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980). This does not have to be achieved through regulation or direct public spending. Examples of such policies that aim to achieve change are campaigns to stimulate healthy living or environmentally friendly ways of living (European Commission, 2017). However, it is also possible that behaviour change is an indirect result of policy implementation and can lead to negative consequences. This can also be the case for policies that target business, who are likely to affect the behaviour of the consumers. Examples of indirect influence on behaviour or policies that lead to changes in behaviour, are higher taxes on tobacco products or food labelling (European Commission, 2017).

Co-production

Since groups within governments and public administration realise that limitations in their policies, and the lack of realisation of policy objectives, can be overcome in cooperation with non-government actors (European Commission, 2017; OECD, 2020; Howlet, Vince & Pablodel, 2017; Meulman, 2019). This results in cooperation with private actors, who, together with governments or public institutions, can offer public services and therewith establish policy change. Implementation is therewith no longer a sole task of governments or public organisations, but a process of cooperation in which various stakeholders are involved (European Commission, 2017; Melica, Betroldi, Kona, Iancu, Rivas & Zancanella, 2018). This involves lower layers of government, citizens and business, but also non-profit organisations, public-private cooperation and citizens who intend to contribute to the implementation of policies (individually or collectively (NGOs)) (European Commission, 2017; Radzyner, 2014; Melica, et al., 2018). Involvement of these stakeholders is considered to be more legitimate than purely top-down methods of implementation such as legislation, hence more sustainable in the future as well (European Commission, 2017).

An important aspect of achieving policy objectives, is ensuring compliance of stakeholders and agencies (European Commission, 2017; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980). Enforcement is of course easiest achieved through legislation, which legally binds actors to align their actions with the law (European Commission, 2017). The cooperative method of co-production has its strengths in that regard, because it takes a less hierarchical and a more levelled approach, since through cooperation

and shared responsibility, the stakeholders might be more willingly to take their responsibility and comply with the targets set because it is in their own interest (European Commission, 2017). The methods of public spending, such as grants and funds to the stakeholders to support them in taking action and providing them with the financial instruments to undertake changes or innovations to achieve the desired results, are perhaps the method that stimulate stakeholders to comply with the change necessary (European Commission, 2017). However, as a single method it cannot establish policy change, because grants cannot be forced on actors. That is why public funding can work when combined with legislation. To ensure compliance, it needs to be enforced via one or multiple methods.

The methods discussed all have their own characteristics and lead to the use of mechanisms, which will be discussed in the next section.

Models of policy implementation

The two main models of policy-implementation are the top-down model and the bottom-up model (Cerna, 2013; Signé, 2017; Khan & Khandaker, 2016). The top-down model uses the decision of an authority as starting point and maps the structure of implementation as a logical structured process to limit the number of changes that must be made. It also emphasizes the need of resources to establish administrative mechanisms to enable the process of policy implementation and tend to leave political and societal pressures out of the process of policy change and implementation (Cerna, 2013; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980). Responsibility of policy implementation lies with an agency that holds the power and has a favourable position towards the policy that is to be implemented, causing few bottlenecks to the process of implementation. The bottom-up models of policy implementation point out that the centralised decision-making does not offer enough flexibility to local actors to reach goals (Cerna, 2013; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980). Most important is to cooperate or engage with those mostly affected by the implementation of the policy (the policy target group) (Cerna, 2013; Signé, 2017; European Commission, 2017). The stakeholders who are responsible for the implementation of a policy are therewith expected to be of similar importance to the success or failure of a policy than the institutions that develop these policies (Cerna, 2013).

A third strategy of policy implementation has also been developed. This model, characterized as the combined approach (Cerna, 2013), and is considered to include the strengths of both models. This evolution has made policy-making and policy implementation in various policy areas taking place in a network structure (Cerna, 2013; European Commission, 2017, McGuinn, Oulès, Bradley & McNeill, 2017; Newig & Kootz, -). Networks that are hierarchical, but more dynamic and also rather informal, have slowly become inevitable in the policy cycle (Gornitzka, Kyvik & Stensaker, 2005; Radzyner, et al., 2014). One example of such a network is the SDG Steering Group, constituted of various level stakeholders that are not taking part in the official legislative procedures of the EU (European Commission, 2017).

There are also researchers who argue that there is not a single model for the process or challenges of policy implementation (Khan & Khandaker). The complexity and the fact that every process of policy-making and policy implementation will differ for every single case, can even lead to 'nuanced implementation strategies' (Suggett, 2011; Khan & Khandaker, 2016). This especially relates to the combined approach which presume the networking structure in policy implementation, which are formal, but also more open and informal than the top-down model of policy implementation and blur the regular processes of implementation (Radzyner, et al., 2014; Melica, 2018). 'The complexity of public policy and political sub-systems poses serious challenges to the student of implementation, when ideas of self-regulation mix with continued aspirations and practices of central control, and

when structures of responsibility and governance are unclear' (Gornitzka, Kyvik & Stensaker, 2005). That is why Gornitzka, Kogan & Amaral (2005) advice to deal with every specific policy area individually and that this case-by-case approach could eventually lead to a theoretical model that consists of elements that could be applicable to all areas.

Factors and implementation mechanisms

The implementation of a policy goes through mechanisms, which are factors that play an important role in the realisation of policy targets. There are various factors that play a role in policy implementation, most of which are considered mechanisms of policy implementation. Mechanisms are the methods through which a policy is implemented. Nevertheless, several factors that are of influence on the policy success, are conditions that do not relate to the actual implementation of a policy.

First and foremost, a factor that has a big influence on the implementation of public policy, is the political climate (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; Knill & Tosun, 2012; Khan & Khandaker, 2016). The combination of economic, social and political conditions often lay an important framework in which decisions are taken and how to be implemented, since they set the link between the objectives and the final results (European Commission, 2017; Sabatier & Mazmanian). The political climate, the political situation in the country and the decisions made by the decision-makers and mainly government officials, determines how a policy balances these three conditions set out below. This means that not only targets, but especially the methods through which the policy targets are to be achieved are largely influenced by the relationship between these factors (European Commission, 2017). This can be largely impacted by the political climate in the country. It is in that regard, that the political will and support that the policy gets throughout the implementation process, from legislators and also the courts, that is an important requirement for good policy performance (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; European Commission, 2017). This is also influenced by the number of actors that are involved in this process, because policies and their implementation need to take into consideration the desires, strengths and weaknesses of the actors whose behaviour is to be influenced through the policy (European Commission, 2017; Radzyner, 2014; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; McGuinn, Oulès, Bradley & McNeill, 2017).

The political climate is not a mechanism of policy implementation, but can influence the set of implementation mechanisms that the decision-makers intend to use to implement a policy. Mechanisms of policy implementation that are often mentioned are:

The strategy in itself, which means the policy standards and the policy objectives, are also of importance for the realisation of the targets set by the policy-makers (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; Khan & Khandaker, 2016; European Commission, 2017). This to allow monitoring. The nature of the policy deals with the content of the policy and with the extent to which it demands change from the people and groups that are targeted by the policy (European Commission, 2017). The policy standards and objectives relate to the clarity of the policy (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980). For example, the operationalisation of policy objectives into indicators that can help monitor implementation and measure the results of the policy (European Commission, 2017; McGuinn, Oulès, Bradley & McNeill, 2017). Indicators can help the policy-makers to determine policy performance, but also help other actors, whose behaviour, working procedures or targets might need to be revised as a consequence of the new policy, in determining their own targets in line with these indicators (European Commission, 2017). Indicators do therewith need to be designed and operationalised very carefully, otherwise it might be unclear which targets need to be realised (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; European Commission, 2017; Khan & Khandaker, 2016). Two main difficulties are the definition

of the operationalisation and the collection of data to measure the indicator, or whether it truly measures what needs to be measured (European Commission, 2017).

Another variable that is argued to be of great importance for the realisation of policy success and especially for sustainable or environmental targets, are policy resources (European Commission, 2017; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980). These are the financial resources available for the agencies that are tasked with the implementation of policies. To raise the budgets of the agencies tasked with implementation, public spending can be used as a solution (European Commission, 2017). Policy resources have already been mentioned with the method of public spending. Main mechanisms of public spending are fiscal transfers which comprise governing financing, welfare benefits, grants and subsidies (European Commission, 2017). Other forms of public spending are those on public services and funds, such as EU funds (Radzyner, et al, 2014; European Commission, 2017). The availability of these resources plays an important role in policies that require great change from the stakeholders targeted by the policy (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980).

Other mechanisms that are regarded as factors that influence policy success, are the characteristics and competences of the implementing agencies and the communication and enforcement activities between the organisations (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980). Since new policies require change and change requires time, money and capacity, it can put the agencies and stakeholders that are to implement the policies under pressure (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; Newig & Koontz, -). This relates to the knowledge, but also technical advice and assistance that these organisations possess to implement a policy or can use to support other organisations to implement policies (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; European Commission, 2017). Depending on the power of the agency and its specific task, this also deals with enforcement mechanisms such as sanctions or rewards when stakeholders fail to comply with the policy targets (European Commission, 2017). The characteristics of the implementing agencies relate to the formal structural features of organisations and the informal attributes of their personnel (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; Khan & Khandaker, 2016). For example, the competence and size of the agency's staff, the degree of hierarchical control of processes within implementing agencies, which at the end can largely influence their capability to implement a policy (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; European Commission, 2017; Newig & Koontz, -).

Another variable is the involvement of stakeholders (European Commission, 2017; Newig & Koontz, -; Radzyner, 2014; Cerna, 2013). This is a group that is relatively often forgotten in policy implementation, but co-production has shown that an increasing number of policies is implemented through cooperation between governments and public and private actors (European Commission, 2017; Melica, 2018). Stakeholders are of great relevance in the preparation of the policy, for example via consultations, since policy change impacts the stakeholders with an interest in the policy and stakeholders have the expertise to provide the decision-makers of input when to design policy (European Commission, 2017; Radzyner, 2014; McGuinn, Oulès, Bradley & McNeill, 2017; Melica, 2018). Furthermore, stakeholders have expertise and, capacity and the authority to enable change (European Commission, 2017; OECD, 2020, McGuinn, Oulès, Bradley & McNeill, 2017)). This does, however, require the government to have the stakeholders involved in the planning of the implementation and choose mechanisms of policy implementation that are considered effective by the stakeholders, which in EU policy is known as a 'roadmap' (European Commission, 2017; Cerna, 2013). Stakeholders can also be of importance for the monitoring of the policy, to provide advice to assess and explains the outcome and the input of the policy (European Commission, 2017; OECD, 2020). There are policy areas in which business or civil society are expected to be better equipped, with (local) knowledge and specific skills and specialisation that can enable policy success (European Commission, 2017). Due to the increasing number of difficult dossiers and societal issues that are to

be overcome, interdisciplinary groups of experts from various policy areas have become important, showing that a multi-stakeholder approach to define and implement policies are making a rise in Europe (European Commission, 2017; Radzyner, et al., 2014; McGuinn, Oulès, Bradley & McNeill, 2017; OECD, 2020). Collaboration and shared responsibility become strengths of policy implementation.

Theory-related mechanisms

Given the characteristics of the different models of policy implementation theory, there are also a view factors that are specifically applicable to one of the theories. For example, the hierarchical integration within and among the implementing institutions (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980). This variable is derived from the top-down model, which is centrist and based on strong hierarchy: the government, or political leaders, determine the programme, the content of the programme and its targets, they also set the terms and determine the target groups and lower officials are responsible to organise and deliver the policy (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; Cerna, 2013; Khan & Khandaker, 2016).

Recent trends, driven by neo-liberal ideology, show a vision of policy-making that is closer to the bottom-up model of policy implementation (Cerna, 2013; Khan & Khandaker, Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; European Commission, 2017). This is the direct involvement of citizens, business and other organisations in policy decision and policy implementation, by giving them co-responsibility (European Commission, 2017). It means that non-government actors or local governments are given tasks and that, in general, the close and self-centred public agencies become networking organisations that are open to the public, gives tasks to institutions that are closer to citizens (European Commission, 2017; Melica, 2018; Radzyner, 2014, Meulman, 2019). This interaction and the evolution of policy-making and policy implementation into a process of networking is considered to strengthen the democratic legitimacy of policies, by making processes more transparent and attributing accountability to the actors involved (European Commission, 2017; Meulman, 2019; OECD, 2020).

In relation to both theories, the assignment of tasks to agencies and officials can play an important role in the realisation of policy success (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; Cerna, 2013; European Commission, 2017). This includes the tasks and the role of non-government actors that can be involved in the process of implementation (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980, European Commission, 2017; Melica, 2018; Radzyner, 2014). The strength of the top-down model is the clear distribution of tasks and responsibility that is attributed to the government-related actors (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; Khan & Khandaker, 2016; European Commission, 2017). Since the number of actors involved is limited to government officials, this model enables a clear distribution of tasks and responsibility that should result in clarity and logic that can play an important role in the realisation of policy objectives.

The bottom-up and combined model are laissez-faire models, that do not start from the hierarchical view of 'imposing', but recognize the complexity of the policy process (European Commission, 2017; Meulman, 2019; Melica, 2018; Radzyner, 2014). Targets are set in cooperation with local actors and other stakeholders, however, this can easily result in the development of such a multitude of actors involved that can result in unclear division of tasks and blur the attribution of tasks and responsibility of the actors involved in the implementation of policy (Radzyner, 2014; European Commission, 2017). In general, the involvement of various actors is expected to lead to 'confusion' among actors who is in charge of the (specific parts of) implementation and can result in policy failure (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980). A certain structure for the implementation of a policy and a certain level of

hierarchy of those in charge of the implementation over the other stakeholders tasked with the implementation is therewith advisable.

Another variable that can improve the policy implementation is the alignment of decisions and rules of agencies tasked with implementation (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; European Commission, 2017; McGuinn, Oulès, Bradley & McNeill, 2017). Coherence is a 'keyword' in the realisation of a policy. Given the way in which policy areas are connected and that policy decisions in one policy area can influence other policy areas, overall coherency among all political actors and other agencies and stakeholders whose decisions can have a negative impact on the realisation of the policy is preferred (OECD, 2020). Without this coherency, when politicians, agencies or other actors do not align their decisions and actions with the overall policy target, policy success will become more difficult to achieve (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980).

Policy failure

Given the explanation of most of the variables that influence policy performance, it is also important to mention the main factors, which are connected to the factors and mechanisms that are mentioned above, that are likely to cause policy failure. For example, the use of the faulty theory for the policies, but also setting unclear goals (Khan & Khandaker, 2016). These two aspects mainly relate to the selection of the right policy, the policy decision, and the selection of goals that were supposed to be linked to the policy. Another aspect of setting unclear goals, is that the institutions tasked with implementation are not certain how to achieve these targets (Khan & Khandaker, 2016; Newig & Koontz, -; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; European Commission, 2017)). The other main factors that cause policy failure mainly deal with the aspect of stakeholder involvement or not dealing with the process right, for example the lack of coordination in the planning, difficult cooperation between agencies and institutions involved and also the complexity of taking joint actions (Khan & Khandaker, 2016; European Commission, 2017). This deals with problems that arise when a large group of stakeholders is involved in the process, or can be caused by the decisions that need to be taken (unclear targets and unclear process), but also by the different goals that can be set in the beginning or can arise during the process of policy implementation (Radzyner, 2014; European Commission, 2017; Newig & Koontz, -).

Issues that are deal less with stakeholder involvement or issues in implementation, are events that cause uncertainty or delay (Khan & Khandaker, 2016; Newig & Koontz, -).

8. Annex 2: Operationalisation of the variables

Table 2: the dimensions and operationalisation of the variables.

Variable	Dimensions	Operationalisation
Instruments for implementation Mechanisms or policy instruments that can be used to implement SDG 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is the implementation strategy a top-down model, a bottom-up model or a model of multilevel governance - The instruments used for implementation - How feasible are the instruments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hierarchical integration of the policy within and among implementing institutions The instruments that are used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legislation - Public spending - Information and knowledge - Awareness campaigns - Clarity of the goals - Monitoring - Incentives to stimulate implementation
Enforceability of the instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are the instruments for policy implementation mandatory and binding or are the instruments voluntary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The instruments that are used demand compliance (legislation) - The instruments that are used are voluntary and the actors covered by the policies can decide themselves whether to make use of them (information, knowledge and spending)
Vertical and horizontal cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is the process of implementation a process of cooperation between different levels of government (vertical cooperation) - Is the process of implementation a process in which the levels of government cooperate with non-government stakeholders - Which stakeholders are involved - The inclusion of the entire supply chain - There is cooperation across sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation and policy development goes through official state structures and the state jurisdictions are responsible for the implementation (Type I of multilevel governance) - Implementation and policy development is also done through structures that involve non-state actors or in which state jurisdictions cooperate with non-state actors to implement policies (Type II of multilevel governance). - Cooperation across different policy areas - The different types and competences of stakeholders that have been involved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Epistemic community - Companies - Financers - Investors - Producers - Distributors - Consumers - Regional and local governments - Civil society organisations - - Opportunities for knowledge sharing and cooperation at different levels and between the stakeholders in the implementation process

9. Annex 3: Interview questions

At first, I would like to inform you about the structure of the interview and like to ask you a few questions:

Do you agree that this interview will be recorded and that a transcript of the interview will be made, which will be send to you for correction, and that the data retrieved from this interview will be used for the master thesis?

The interview consists of three parts, an introductory part that focuses on the development of policies, strategies, and targets, the second part on the inclusion of stakeholders and the third part focuses on mechanisms/instruments for policy implementation.

1. Which policies are included in your national approach to realise SDG 12 and how do these policies complement each other?
2. What are the main policy targets?
3. How did you set targets to be achieved?
4. How has your country developed an SDG strategy or a strategy to achieve Sustainable Consumption and Production?

5. Which stakeholders have been involved in the process of establishing a strategy to implement the SDGs or SCP specifically?
6. What was the role of stakeholders in the development of strategies and policies to achieve these targets?
7. What are the reasons to involve stakeholders or not to involve stakeholders?
8. What are the characteristics of the stakeholders involved, and what are the competencies and possibilities of the stakeholders to achieve SCP?
9. What are the different responsibilities of the stakeholders involved to contribute to SDG 12?
10. How are stakeholders held accountable/ Who can be held accountable in the process towards realisation of the targets for non-compliance?
11. How do you try to cooperate with all stakeholders and enable all stakeholders to contribute to SCP?
12. How would you describe the process of cooperation with the stakeholders?
- Is there a strict process of stakeholder involvement?
- (13. additional for the EU: What is being done with the input of stakeholders and how does this compare to the input and requirements / expectations of the EU Member States when making an SDG strategy or developing policies that are SDG-proof?

(how is the input of stakeholders used and how does this relate to the way in which the wishes of the member states are taken into account when developing an SDG strategy or SDG policy?)

13. Which methods of policy implementation are used to achieve SCP? (incentives, laws & regulations, public spending, behavioural campaigns)?

(14.) Additional question for the EU: How will the integration of the SDGs into the European Semester contribute to the realisation of the SDGs?

14. Which mechanisms of policy implementation are available for the realisation of SCP?

15. How have these methods and mechanisms been selected?

16. Is the implementation process a top-down process, a multilevel process, or a bottom-up process?

17. What are the tasks of the political actors to ensure realisation of SDG 12?

18. Which policies are developed, are these policies cross-sectoral and cross-ministry?

19. What does the national government do to ensure integration and policy coherence amongst government institutions?

20. What happens if stakeholders fail to act? (How binding are the policy targets and are they enforceable?)

21. What is the role of the EU for the realisation of SDG 12? Is an EU strategy for the realisation of SDG 12 desirable?

10. Annex 4: Scheme of the main findings per case

Case	One overarching strategy – or various strategy for SDG 12	Cooperation and coordination with stakeholders for implementation	Policy implementation instruments	Horizontal or vertical cooperation (also, for policy coherence) Cooperation between different policy fields or different levels of government	Enforceability of the strategy and attribution of responsibility	Transparency Participation of non-government
Way of coding	(x=yes) (o=no)	(x=yes) (o=no) Follow up: the depth of the cooperation and coordination	(x=yes) (o=no)	(x=strict hierarchy with enforcement) (o= lots of room for initiatives of stakeholders)	(x=yes) (o=no)	(x=yes) (o=no)
(1: EU)	X Various policies, but the Circular Economy Strategy is key for the realisation of this SDG.	X EU makes the policies and provides the policy instruments that are to be achieved and used by the Member States. For the implementation is there cooperation with national, regional and local governments, but also non-government stakeholders to enable the transition.	X Regulations Directives Funds Subsidies and grants Market incentives Knowledge and innovation International cooperation	X&o Aim is to get policy coherence by making the principles of sustainability the core of all EU legislation. Trying to connect the policy instruments to enable different actors to cooperate from within and across different sectors. Direct cooperation with Member States, and associations of Regional and local governments and with non-government stakeholders	X&O Legislation can be enforced, but most of the instruments are voluntary and implementation is dependent on the interests of the stakeholders and their associations that represent them. However, by providing them with tools and involving them, the European Commission believes it will enable the actors. Plans to make EU Climate Law, to demand compliance.	EU based platforms for knowledge sharing and cooperation that is open for societal actors, private actors and governments
(2: Netherlands)	X One overall strategy for the realisation of the circular economy	X Central government coordinates the processes with local and regional governments and non-government stakeholders. Regional and local governments coordinate their actions with the national government, and have the opportunity conduct	X - Laws and regulations - Smart Market incentives - Financing - Knowledge and innovation - International cooperation, within the EU and in other platforms	X&O Central government coordinates the process to ensure cross-sectoral cross-overs and cross-sectoral cooperation. This is to a lesser extent also done by regional and local governments. Relevant ministries cooperate with all other ministries to	X&O EU directives are to be transposed into national law and binding, but more focus on obligatory reporting of actions to monitor progress. Other instruments are voluntary, but the agreements with stakeholders are aimed at motivating the stakeholders to turn the agreements into action	Special national agencies and platforms to support stakeholders and enable stakeholders to share knowledge and allow partnerships to promote the realisation of the SDGs, including governments. Does itself

		their own activities and develop their own strategies in line with the national strategy.		ensure greater follow-up and involvement.	along the lines that national governments and the other stakeholders have agreed on. Government actively tries to engage with society through projects and including them in the whole of society approach to facilitate the change.	participate in international non-government platforms
(3: Spain)	X Yes. One overarching strategy for all sectors for the Circular Economy.	X The different levels of government where the first to design the strategy, but many opportunities non-government stakeholders to comment through public consultation. Regions and local authorities get the chance to develop their own strategies, based on the guidelines of the national government. In the implementation, there are government councils, council for regional and local authorities and a council of societal actors that can all comment and propose actions in the implementation process.	X - Laws and regulations - Smart Market incentives - Financing - Knowledge and innovation - International cooperation	X The Ministries try to coordinate to make sure that the different policy programmes are connected, but the structure is strongly focused on sectoral action. Almost all ministries work together to ensure action and increase the sector-specific contributions to realise the targets set.	X&O EU directives are to be transposed into national law and binding. The government seeks to engage in cross-sectoral and sectoral partnerships to further promote the steps, also by making agreements with large organisations and associations. Most actions are based on cooperation with the government, which is voluntary.	X Through a societal approach to make 'circular agreements' with businesses and other social actors with the Great Deal.

(4: Czechia)	<p>O</p> <p>Several strategies and policies for the realisation of SDG 12. Not an overarching strategy to achieve this target.</p>	<p>X</p> <p>Interaction with a limited number of stakeholders to prepare and implement policies, actions are mainly initiated by the central government. Regions and local governments and non-government stakeholders can comment on legislation to improve legislation via advisory committees.</p>	<p>X</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Laws and regulations - Smart Market incentives - Knowledge and innovation - International cooperation (mainly EU) 	<p>X & O</p> <p>Government programmes are top-down, with inclusion of various actors that are relevant in the designated sectoral policy areas. However, most of the progress comes bottom-up with little guidance from the government. The government mainly sets standards. Relatively little cooperation between the relevant ministries, although all policies are examined by the Ministry of Environment.</p>	<p>X&O</p> <p>EU directives are to be transposed into national law and binding to all. Government uses campaigns, but in general is not really engaged to further promote the topic. Those who contribute do mainly do this because they are forced to do so by the EU market.</p>	<p>X&O</p> <p>Does involve non-government stakeholders, but only a limited number.</p> <p>Mainly non-government platforms that promote circularity. Government is not really ambitious, associations do more to promote circularity in society than the government.</p>
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11. Annex 5: policy instruments of the EU

Instrument	Enforcement	Type of instrument	Description
Hard regulation	Binding	Regulation	Regulations are directly applicable in all EU Member States and binding in their entirety. They are used in policy areas where uniform implementation of a policy is desired.
	Binding	Directive	Directives are binding on those Member States that are addressed in the directive, but the national authorities have a certain freedom to determine their own methods to achieve the targets set in the directive.
	Binding	Decision	Decisions are binding in their entirety on those to whom the Decision is addressed, which can be individuals, companies or Member States.
Soft-regulation	Non-binding	Recommendations	Recommendations are a legal instrument that set non-binding rules for Member States or Union citizens.
	Non-binding	Technical standards	Technical standards are standards that are developed by standardisation bodies. These bodies set specifications and technical information regarding products, materials, services and also processes. Can be done by the EU is standardisation organisation and by other international standard-setting bodies.
	Non-binding	Self-regulation	Self-regulation means that businesses or industrial actors formulate their own codes of conduct to achieve targets, with the EU facilitating such a voluntary agreement. This type of act is concluded when the parties aim to work in the interest of society.
	Non-binding	Co-regulation	Co-regulation means that public or private partners can cooperate to achieve policy goals. There are ways of control, like deadlines, mechanisms for implementation, monitoring and sanctioning.
	Non-binding	Indirect referencing	Union legislation makes a collective reference to unspecified harmonised or other European standards adopted on the basis of a Commission request and where the Commission subsequently publishes and updates the exact references of such standards. The Commission defines the overall scope for the requested standards and sets generic requirements as to their content. After the standardisation work, the Commission assesses whether the requirements set in its request were fulfilled before publishing the references of the standards in the Official Journal. Indirect referenced technical standards can confer a legal effect.
	Non-binding	Direct referencing	Direct referencing (to standards in Union legislation) is a technique where the relevant Union legislation itself contains an exact reference to a standard or parts thereof as set by the Legislator. If direct referencing to

			technical standards is used, the relevant Union act should also foresee a procedure for updating these references e.g. by using Delegated Acts. Union legislation should be drafted carefully taking account of the different nature of binding Union acts and the voluntary nature of technical standards. Voluntary technical standards may, however, confer a legal effect like harmonised standards in Union harmonisation legislation for products.
Coordination and monitoring	Voluntary	Open Method of Co-ordination	provides a framework to monitor policy progress of the national policies in their steps towards a policy objective. It sets peer pressure, because Member States are evaluated by each other's progress. It is used in policy areas where the EU or its institutions cannot or do not have the competence to supersede Member States. It is based on the targets that are to be achieved, the instruments for measurement and the possibility to compare performances and exchange practices.
Education and information campaigns, training, testing and rating systems	Voluntary	Awareness campaigns	Aims to reach citizens, consumers and producers and have them better informed or educated. It is useful when it is considered a cheap option and a problem, legislation is ineffective due to lacking information or clarity on enforcement, or when the public requires greater information.
Economic Instruments	Voluntary	Public spending	market-based instruments are: taxation, charges, fees, fines, subsidies, grants, liability and compensation schemes, deposit-refunding systems; labelling schemes and permit trading schemes. In general, these instruments are based on regulations or directives. They are used to enable changes or initiatives from the of market, by setting the right conditions for market-based initiatives.

Source: (European Commission, 2018) The Choice of policy instruments.

12. Annex 6: Policy actions on circular economy and sustainability of the European Commission

ANNEX A new Circular Economy Action Plan

For a cleaner and more competitive Europe

ANNEX

Key actions	Date
A SUSTAINABLE PRODUCT POLICY FRAMEWORK	
Legislative proposal for a sustainable product policy initiative	2021
Legislative proposal empowering consumers in the green transition	2020
Legislative and non-legislative measures establishing a new “right to repair”	2021
Legislative proposal on substantiating green claims	2020
Mandatory Green Public Procurement (GPP) criteria and targets in sectoral legislation and phasing-in mandatory reporting on GPP	as of 2021
Review of the Industrial Emissions Directive, including the integration of circular economy practices in upcoming Best Available Techniques reference documents	as of 2021
Launch of an industry-led industrial symbiosis reporting and certification system	2022
KEY PRODUCT VALUE CHAINS	
Circular Electronics Initiative, common charger solution, and reward systems to return old devices	2020/2021
Review of the Directive on the restriction of the use of certain hazardous substances in electrical and electronic equipment and guidance to clarify its links with REACH and Eco-design requirements	2021
Proposal for a new regulatory framework for batteries	2020
Review of the rules on end-of-life vehicles	2021
Review of the rules on proper treatment of waste oils	2022
Review to reinforce the essential requirements for packaging and reduce (over)packaging and packaging waste	2021
Mandatory requirements on recycled plastic content and plastic waste reduction measures for key products such as packaging, construction materials and vehicles	2021/2022
Restriction of intentionally added microplastics and measures on unintentional release of microplastics	2021
Policy framework for bio-based plastics and biodegradable or compostable plastics	2021
EU Strategy for Textiles based on input from industry and other stakeholders.	2021
Strategy for a Sustainable Built Environment	2021
Initiative to substitute single-use packaging, tableware and cutlery by reusable products in food services	2021
LESS WASTE, MORE VALUE	
Waste reduction targets for specific streams and other measures on waste prevention	2022
EU-wide harmonised model for separate collection of waste and labelling to facilitate separate collection	2022
Methodologies to track and minimise the presence of substances of concern in recycled materials and articles made thereof	2021
Harmonised information systems for the presence of substances of concern	2021
Scoping the development of further EU-wide end-of-waste and by-product criteria	2021
Revision of the rules on waste shipments	2021
Making the circular economy work for people, regions and cities	

Supporting the circular economy transition through the Skills Agenda, the forthcoming Action Plan for Social Economy, the Pact for Skills and the European Social Fund Plus. The Commission will ensure that its instruments in support of skills and job creation contribute also to accelerating the transition to a circular economy , including in the context of updating its Skills Agenda, launching a Pact for Skills with large-scale multi-stakeholder partnerships, and the Action Plan for Social Economy . Further investment in education and training systems, lifelong learning, and social innovation will be promoted under the European Social Fund Plus.	as of 2020
Supporting the circular economy transition through Cohesion policy funds, the Just Transition Mechanism and urban initiatives	as of 2020
CROSSCUTTING ACTIONS	
Improving measurement, modelling and policy tools to capture synergies between the circular economy and climate change mitigation and adaptation at EU and national level	as of 2020
Regulatory framework for the certification of carbon removals	2023
Reflecting circular economy objectives in the revision of the guidelines on state aid in the field of environment and energy	2021
Mainstreaming circular economy objectives in the context of the rules on non-financial reporting, and initiatives on sustainable corporate governance and on environmental accounting	2020/2021
Leading efforts at global level	
Leading efforts towards reaching a global agreement on plastics	as of 2020
Proposing a Global Circular Economy Alliance and initiating discussions on an international agreement on the management of natural resources	as of 2021
Mainstreaming circular economy objectives in free trade agreements, in other bilateral, regional and multilateral processes and agreements, and in EU external policy funding instruments	as of 2020
MONITORING THE PROGRESS	
Updating the Circular Economy Monitoring Framework to reflect new policy priorities and develop further indicators on resource use, including consumption and material footprints	2021
The European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform will continue to be the place for stakeholders to exchange information.	
The proposed European Urban Initiative, the Intelligent Cities Challenge Initiative, and the Circular Cities and Regions Initiative will provide key assistance to cities. Circular economy will be among the priority areas of the Green City Accord.	
Circular Economy Finance Support Platform will continue to offer guidance to project promoters on circular incentives, capacity building and financial risk management. EU financial instruments, such as SME guarantees under the current framework and InvestEU as of 2021, mobilise private financing in support of the circular economy .	
International Platform on Sustainable Finance;	
Furthermore, the Commission will continue to support capacity building with guidance, training and dissemination of good practices and encouraging public buyers to take part in a “Public Buyers for Climate and Environment” initiative, which will facilitate exchanges among buyers committed to GPP implementation.	
The transition to the circular economy will be systemic, deep and transformative, in the EU and beyond. It will be disruptive at times, so it has to be fair. It will require an alignment and cooperation of all stakeholders at all levels - EU, national, regional and local, and international. Therefore, the Commission invites EU institutions and bodies to endorse this Action Plan and actively contribute to its implementation, and encourages Member States to adopt or update their national circular	

economy strategies, plans and measures in the light of its ambition. Furthermore, the Commission will recommend including the **circular economy** among the topics for discussion on the future of Europe and a regular theme of citizens' dialogues.

ANNEX The European Green Deal

Annex to the Communication on the European Green Deal Roadmap - Key actions

Actions	Indicative Timetable ¹
Climate ambition	
Proposal on a European 'Climate Law' enshrining the 2050 climate neutrality objective	March 2020
Comprehensive plan to increase the EU 2030 climate target to at least 50% and towards 55% in a responsible way	Summer 2020
Proposals for revisions of relevant legislative measures to deliver on the increased climate ambition, following the review of Emissions Trading System Directive; Effort Sharing Regulation; Land use, land use change and forestry Regulation; Energy Efficiency Directive; Renewable Energy Directive; CO2 emissions performance standards for cars and vans	June 2021
Proposal for a revision of the Energy Taxation Directive	June 2021
Proposal for a carbon border adjustment mechanism for selected sectors	2021
New EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change	2020/2021
Clean, affordable and secure energy	
Assessment of the final National Energy and Climate Plans	June 2020
Strategy for smart sector integration	2020
'Renovation wave' initiative for the building sector	2020
Evaluation and review of the Trans-European Network – Energy Regulation	2020
Strategy on offshore wind	2020
Industrial strategy for a clean and circular economy	
EU Industrial strategy	March 2020
Circular Economy Action Plan, including a sustainable products initiative and particular focus on resource intense sectors such as textiles, construction, electronics and plastics	March 2020
Initiatives to stimulate lead markets for climate neutral and circular products in energy intensive industrial sectors	From 2020
Proposal to support zero carbon steel-making processes by 2030	2020
Legislation on batteries in support of the Strategic Action Plan on Batteries and the circular economy	October 2020
Propose legislative waste reforms	From 2020
Sustainable and smart mobility	
Strategy for sustainable and smart mobility	2020
Funding call to support the deployment of public recharging and refuelling points as part of alternative fuel infrastructure	From 2020

Assessment of legislative options to boost the production and supply of sustainable alternative fuels for the different transport modes	From 2020
Revised proposal for a Directive on Combined Transport	2021
Review of the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Directive and the Trans European Network – Transport Regulation	2021
Initiatives to increase and better manage the capacity of railways and inland waterways	From 2021
Proposal for more stringent air pollutant emissions standards for combustion-engine vehicles	2021
Greening the Common Agricultural Policy / 'Farm to Fork' Strategy	
Examination of the draft national strategic plans, with reference to the ambitions of the European Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy	2020-2021
'Farm to Fork' Strategy Measures, including legislative, to significantly reduce the use and risk of chemical pesticides, as well as the use of fertilizers and antibiotics	Spring 2020 2021
Preserving and protecting biodiversity	
EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030	March 2020
Measures to address the main drivers of biodiversity loss	From 2021
New EU Forest Strategy	2020
Measures to support deforestation-free value chains	From 2020
Towards a zero-pollution ambition for a toxic free environment	
Chemicals strategy for sustainability	Summer 2020
Zero pollution action plan for water, air and soil	2021
Revision of measures to address pollution from large industrial installations	2021
Mainstreaming sustainability in all EU policies	
Proposal for a Just Transition Mechanism, including a Just Transition Fund, and a Sustainable Europe Investment Plan	January 2020
Renewed sustainable finance strategy	Autumn 2020
Review of the Non-Financial Reporting Directive	2020
Initiatives to screen and benchmark green budgeting practices of the Member States and of the EU At national level, the European Green Deal will create the context for broad-based tax reforms, removing subsidies for fossil fuels, shifting the tax burden from labour to pollution, and taking into account social considerations.	From 2020
Review of the relevant State aid guidelines, including the environment and energy State aid guidelines	2021
Align all new Commission initiatives in line with the objectives of the Green Deal and promote innovation	From 2020
Stakeholders to identify and remedy incoherent legislation that reduces the effectiveness in delivering the European Green Deal	From 2020
Integration of the Sustainable Development Goals in the European Semester	From 2020
The EU as a global leader	
EU to continue to lead the international climate and biodiversity negotiations, further strengthening the international policy framework	From 2019
Strengthen the EU's Green Deal Diplomacy in cooperation with Member States	From 2020

Bilateral efforts to induce partners to act and to ensure comparability of action and policies	From 2020
Green Agenda for the Western Balkans	From 2020
Working together – a European Climate Pact	
Launch of the European Climate Pact	March 2020
Proposal for an 8th Environmental Action Programme	2020

ANNEX
A Farm to Fork Strategy

ACTIONS	Indicative time-table	N°
-Proposal for a legislative framework for sustainable food systems	2023	1.
-Develop a contingency plan for ensuring food supply and food security	Q4 2021	2.
Ensure sustainable food production		
-Adopt recommendations to each Member State addressing the nine specific objectives of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), before the draft CAP Strategic Plans are formally submitted	Q4 2020	3.
-Proposal for a revision of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive to significantly reduce use and risk and dependency on pesticides and enhance Integrated Pest Management	Q1 2022	4.
-Revision of the relevant implementing Regulations under the Plant Protection Products framework to facilitate placing on the market of plant protection products containing biological active substances	Q4 2021	5.
-Proposal for a revision of the pesticides statistics Regulation to overcome data gaps and reinforce evidence-based policy making	2023	6.
-Evaluation and revision of the existing animal welfare legislation, including on animal transport and slaughter of animals	Q4 2023	7.
-Proposal for a revision of the feed additives Regulation to reduce the environmental impact of livestock farming	Q4 2021	8.
-Proposal for a revision of the Farm Accountancy Data Network Regulation to transform it into a Farm Sustainability Data Network with a view to contribute to a wide uptake of sustainable farming practices	Q2 2022	9.
-Clarification of the scope of competition rules in the TFEU with regard to sustainability in collective actions.	Q3 2022	10.
-Legislative initiatives to enhance cooperation of primary producers to support their position in the food chain and non-legislative initiatives to improve transparency	2021-2022	11.
-EU carbon farming initiative	Q3 2021	12.
Stimulate sustainable food processing, wholesale, retail, hospitality and food services' practices		
-Initiative to improve the corporate governance framework, including a requirement for the food industry to integrate sustainability into corporate strategies	Q1 2021	13.
-Develop an EU code and monitoring framework for responsible business and marketing conduct in the food supply chain	Q2 2021	14.
-Launch initiatives to stimulate reformulation of processed food, including the setting of maximum levels for certain nutrients	Q4 2021	15.
-Set nutrient profiles to restrict promotion of food high in salt, sugars and/or fat	Q4 2022	16.
-Proposal for a revision of EU legislation on Food Contact Materials to improve food safety, ensure citizens' health and reduce the environmental footprint of the sector	Q4 2022	17.

-Proposal for a revision of EU marketing standards for agricultural, fishery and aquaculture products to ensure the uptake and supply of sustainable products	2021-2022	18.
-Enhance coordination to enforce single market rules and tackle Food Fraud, including by considering a reinforced use of OLAF's investigative capacities	2021-2022	19.
Promote sustainable food consumption, facilitating the shift towards healthy, sustainable diets		
-Proposal for a harmonised mandatory front-of-pack nutrition labelling to enable consumers to make health conscious food choices	Q4 2022	20.
-Proposal to require origin indication for certain products	Q4 2022	21.
-Determine the best modalities for setting minimum mandatory criteria for sustainable food procurement to promote healthy and sustainable diets, including organic products, in schools and public institutions	Q3 2021	22.
-Proposal for a sustainable food labelling framework to empower consumers to make sustainable food choices	2024	23.
-Review of the EU promotion programme for agricultural and food products with a view to enhancing its contribution to sustainable production and consumption	Q4 2020	24.
-Review of the EU school scheme legal framework with a view to refocus the scheme on healthy and sustainable food	2023	25.
Reduce food loss and waste		
-Proposal for EU-level targets for food waste reduction	2023	26.
-Proposal for a revision of EU rules on date marking ('use by' and 'best before' dates)	Q4 2022	27.

ANNEX A STRONG SOCIAL EUROPE FOR **JUST** TRANSITIONS

Annex: Commission initiatives

1st Quarter 2020	first stage consultation to social partners on minimum wages
	sustainable Europe investment plan – European green deal investment plan
	just transition fund
	European gender equality strategy, followed by binding pay transparency measures
	updated skills agenda for Europe
	industrial strategy
	sees strategy
	demography report
2nd Quarter 2020	reinforced youth guarantee
	updated digital education action plan
3rd Quarter 2020	platform work summit
	European education area
4th Quarter 2020	digital services act
	green paper on ageing
	Europe's beating cancer plan

	initiative on roam equality and inclusion
	European unemployment re-insurance scheme
2021	action plan to implement the European pillar of social rights
	child guarantee
	action plan for the social economy
	strategy for disability
	long term vision for rural areas

13. Annex 7: Members of the European Commission's SDG Platform

List of Platform members

- Chairperson: Vice-President of the European Commission
- Birdlife
- Business Europe
- CEMR Council of European Municipalities and Regions
- COFACE Families Europe
- Committee of the Regions
- CONCORD
- COPA COGECA
- CSR Europe
- EUROCITIES
- ETUC
- EESC European Economic and Social Committee
- ENEL
- EPHA European Public Health Alliance
- ESADE Business School
- ETUCE
- EUA European University Association
- European Environmental Bureau
- European Youth Forum
- International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC)
- Social platform
- SDG Watch
- Transparency International
- Unilever
- WWF
- Vandinika Shukla
- Christian Thimann
- Wiebe Draijer
- Janez Potocnik
- Mella Frewen
- Sergi Corbalan
- Observers:
- CoR, EEAC, EESC, EIB, ESDN, IUCN, OECD, UN, World Bank

14. Annex 8: Stakeholder engagement in the Netherlands

Raw Materials Agreement

Partners (De opstellende partners van dit akkoord, te weten):
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• VNO-NCW en MKB-Nederland• FNV, Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging• VCP, Vakcentrale voor Professionals• Stichting Natuur & Milieu• VNG, Vereniging Nederlandse Gemeenten• IPO, Interprovinciaal Overleg• Unie van Waterschappen• de Staatssecretaris van Infrastructuur & Milieu en de Minister van Economische Zaken, mede namens de Minister voor Wonen en Rijksdienst en de Minister voor Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (hierna gezamenlijk 'Rijksoverheid');
Ondersteunende partners die mede dit akkoord onderschrijven en in de uitvoering ervan willen bijdragen uit de geledingen van:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ondernemers• Werknemers• Milieu- en Natuurorganisaties• Gemeenten, regio's, provincies en waterschappen• Financiers• Kennis- en onderwijsinstellingen• Andere maatschappelijke organisaties, samenwerkingsverbanden en platforms

The parties that are involved in the transition agendas are known, but their individual members are included in these overviews them. This does not seem to be to appropriate, that is why the sectoral transition agendas are not mentioned.

15. Annex 9: Policies of the EU for the realisation of SDG 12

[7th Environment action programme](#)
[African, Caribbean and Pacific \(ACP\) cooperation](#)
[Circular economy -](#)
[Classification, labelling and packaging of substance and mixtures](#)
[Clean energy for all Europeans](#)
[Cohesion policy](#)
[Cohesion policy for sustainable growth](#)
[Consumer sales and guarantees](#)
[Development cooperation instrument \(DCI\)](#)
[Digital single market](#)
[Enlargement policy](#)
[EU/ACP microfinance programme II](#)
[EUROCLIMA+](#)
[European consensus on development](#)
[European development policy](#)
[European neighbourhood policy](#)
[European strategy for plastic in a circular economy](#)
[Forest law enforcement, governance and trade \(FLEGT\)](#)
[Global Climate Change Alliance +](#)
[Global public goods and challenges \(GPGC\) programme](#)
[Global transformative solutions for inclusive markets](#)
[Green public procurement](#)
[LIFE programme](#)
[Nature action plan](#)
[Partnership instrument](#)
[Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency](#)
[Promotion of decent work in global supply chains in international processes](#)
[Protecting habitats and species](#)
[Renewed impetus to the Africa-EU partnership](#)
[Resource efficiency](#)
[Single market for green products](#)
[Sustainable consumption and production and sustainable industrial policy action plan](#)
[Switch to green - EU flagship initiative](#)
[SwitchMed - Transition to green economy in the Mediterranean region](#)
[Transition to green economy - Switch Asia](#)
[Transition to green economy - Switch Africa](#)
[Unfair trade - environmental claims](#)
[Waste electrical & electronic equipment](#)
[Waste management](#)
[Waste streams - batteries](#)
[2020 climate and energy package](#)
[2030 climate and energy framework](#)
[2050 low-carbon economy roadmap](#)
[Chemicals](#)
[EU biodiversity strategy to 2020](#)
[Private sector development](#)
[Sustainable and responsible supply chains](#)
[Better training for safer food](#)

[Blue growth](#)
[CO2 labelling for cars](#)
[Common agricultural policy - direct support](#)
[Common agricultural policy - market measures](#)
[Common agricultural policy - organic farming](#)
[Common agricultural policy - quality policy](#)
[Common agricultural policy - rural development](#)
[Ecodesign](#)
[Energy efficient products](#)
[Environment and green economy](#)
[Environmental assessment](#)
[European Earth observation programme Copernicus](#)
[Fuel quality rules](#)
[Generalised scheme of preferences \(GSP+\)](#)
[Groundwater](#)
[Hazardous substances in electric and electronic waste](#)
[Integrated maritime policy](#)
[International ocean governance](#)
[Landfill of waste](#)
[Marine and coastal management](#)
[Maritime spatial planning](#)
[Plastic recycling processes for food contact materials](#)
[Raw materials initiative](#)
[Reducing CO2 emissions from transport](#)
[Reducing emissions in non-ETS sectors \(effort sharing\)](#)
[Resource efficiency in buildings](#)
[Towards a circular economy - A zero waste programme for Europe](#)
[Trade and sustainable development](#)
[Waste review](#)
[Waste treatment](#)
[Agreement on the application of sanitary and phytosanitary measures \(SPS Agreement\)](#)
[Codex alimentarius](#)
[Common fisheries policy](#)
[Common fisheries policy - aquaculture](#)
[Food information to consumers](#)
[Food safety: Valorisation of former food in animal nutrition](#)
[Reduce food loss and waste](#)
[Rules for innovative food](#)
[Waste prevention, recycling and landfill reduction](#)
[Air quality policy](#)
[Animal feed - authorisation of feed additives](#)
[Chemicals - international agreements](#)
[Chemicals labelling](#)
[Construction and demolition waste](#)
[Endocrine disruptors \(environment\)](#)
[Endocrine disruptors \(health\)](#)
[Fertilisers](#)
[Hazardous chemicals - trade](#)
[Hazardous chemicals: mercury](#)
[Mining waste](#)
[Ozone layer protection](#)
[Pesticides approval, authorisation and use authorisation](#)

[Reducing emissions of fluorinated greenhouse gases](#)
[Registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals \(REACH\)](#)
[Sustainable use of pesticides](#)
[Transboundary air pollution](#)
[Urban waste water](#)
[Veterinary medicines - authorisation](#)
[Waste shipment](#)
[Codex alimentarius](#)
[Common fisheries policy - discards](#)
[Internal market for goods - legal framework](#)
[Packaging waste](#)
[Business and biodiversity platform](#)
[Company reporting](#)
[Consumer financial services](#)
[EU eco-management and audit scheme \(EMAS\)](#)
[EU Ecolabel](#)
[EU emissions trading system \(EU ETS\)](#)
[EU policy on corporate social responsibility](#)
[Growth and investments](#)
[Insurance and pensions](#)
[Non-financial reporting](#)
[Securities market](#)
[EU public procurement framework](#)
[European neighbourhood instrument](#)
[Instrument for pre-accession assistance \(IPA II\)](#)
[Eco-innovation](#)
[Food labelling](#)
[Green action plan for SMEs](#)
[Horizon 2020 - rules for participation and dissemination](#)
[New political framework for tourism in Europe](#)

16. Annex 10: Interview European Commission

Date	May 15 2020
Interviewee	Policy officer from the Cabinet of EU Commissioner Gentiloni
Duration:	Duration: 58:31
Recording device	Zoom
Melle	Interviewee
Shall I first introduce myself and explain why I was interested in you and your colleague regarding the SDGs? I am writing my master's thesis on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals; I specifically focus on SDG 12: Sustainable Consumption and Production. I am looking at methods and strategies of implementation as have been developed by EU Member States and the European Commission. For this reason, I will mainly focus on the SDG strategy in general, because I think that is most of your concern and not specifically SDG 12.	<i>SDG 12 is mostly Timmermans Cabinet. I am not particularly sure, but I can give you a contact later from the person who was responsible for the SDGs in the previous mandate.</i>
That would be excellent. Since you and your colleague are in charge of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, I thought it would be important for me to reach out to you as well. And I am really happy that you had the time to meet with today.	<i>I would maybe just say, I think I can answer a lot of your questions and give you our view. I have to tell you that we are not responsible for the implementation. We are responsible for articulation, setting up of strategies for targets and then monitoring and doing the follow-up. The implementation is closer to the ground, so its member states and even local and regional authorities who do this.</i>
But you do coordinate it, so you do know how member states are implementing it as well or do you have some control regarding this?	<i>Yes, we can say something about this as well.</i>
Could you first introduce yourself?	<i>Yes. I am a policy assistant in the cabinet of Euro-Commissioner for Economy Paulo Gentiloni, since December 2019. In the Cabinet, I am responsible for SDGs, together with my colleagues, we are working as a team on the SDGs in general. Which for all of us, is a bit of a new topic, but it is fitting because our Commissioner was made responsible for the integration of the SDGs in the European Semester, which I will mostly explain to you. It is a very important part of the work programme</i>

	<p><i>of this Commission. With the new President that put the SDGs very high at the political agenda and where we are definitely doing more to address this issue and streamline, articulate design SDG policies and follow-up. I would say it is much higher up on the list of political priorities than in the previous Commission. That was already active in the field, but we are taking this one step further. So as part of this, we are charged with implementing the SDGs into the European Semester. I am doing other things in the Cabinet as well, I am also working on the European Semester, also together with Jakob and Estelle, because these are very complementary topics. And I am also working on the Custom's Union, which is something completely different. So, I suggest we mainly focus on the first two.</i></p>
<p>Shall I start with my questions? Does the EU have a strategy to implement the SDGs?</p>	<p><i>This is a very interesting question, because we have been receiving a lot of questions from external stakeholders, that are NGOs and different organisations at the level of the EU, as well as the European Parliament and the European Council that have prompted us to develop an SDG strategy.</i></p> <p><i>We are not going to do it, because we feel that we don't need another strategy as such. Because it will present other problems such as comparability with other strategies and we believe we have enough strategies already, that we don't need this as separate. Because there were so many strategies, you are probably aware of the Europe 2020 Strategy, which is following a lot of SDG related topics. It is coming to an end in 2020 and then there was a lot of discussion after. In our answer to this is: if you look at the political guidelines of the Von der Leyen Commission, where she lists priority areas and actions in priority areas for her Commission. And if you look at the Mission letter that every Commissioner received, the college as a whole, all 27 Commissioners, are now responsible to jointly implement the SDGs and each Commissioner is responsible for the SDGs in their field. The College as a whole is responsible to implement them. So, if you look at all sectoral strategies that we have, for every Commissioner, the Farm to Fork strategy, European Semester, everything that we have... this is our strategy to implement the SDGs. We didn't feel the need to articulate a parallel strategy. If we articulate everything, we send</i></p>

out to do, that it's SDG proof, we will implement the SDGs by implication. The reason we are having this discussion, and we are getting a lot of questions, is that in the beginning of this mandate, we realized that we would need to clarify toward the outside world what exactly we are going to do with the SDG strategy that some member states were pushing for in the Council, some not so much. I think Sweden was one of the most active that demanded a strategy from us, in the Council, but we realized there is a lot of confusion. Because right now the college is jointly responsible, every Commissioner is responsible, but it still leaves a bit of unclarity as to how exactly are we going to do that. So, at the beginning of the Mandate we were coming up in our cabinets together with the other four cabinets. SDGs, I mean I agree with those whole of government approach, because what is really important is these interlinkages and the fact that SDGs are an agenda as a whole. And that all of the complementarities and trade-offs are addressed. We were coming up with a drafting, internally, a policy document, maybe a Commission Communication that would set out exactly what we are planning to do, to explain the focus now is on implementation in all of the existing strategies and all in the field and that this is basically our strategy for the implementation in fact. And of course, to ensure that these are already SDG compatible and of course that they are streamlined across all of them. And then the Coronavirus came and our considerations were a bit put on a backburner because we ran into crisis mode. We were suddenly dealing with how to help the economy survive. A lot of your questions, most of them, would be answered if we had already published our communication. The President's cabinet agreed our internal reflection would be a useful document, we are now, since the situation is stabilizing, coming back to it, but we would have to rephrase it in the context of the lessons learned from the crisis. Even more considerations about the future, about really interconnectedness, about all of these policy areas. So, this is something which will probably be one of our plates in the second half of this year. You can't use it for your master's thesis, but basically, it is what I am telling you. Because we realize that there is a bit of a vacuum in the

	<p><i>understanding of our approach to implement the SDGs.</i></p>
<p>I will skip to the fourth question (now question nr. 2). I think you already explained this quite well, but maybe you can explain it a bit further: How are the SDGs included/reflected in EU policies?</p>	<p><i>We have so many. If you look at the political guidelines, you will see so many policies and action plans and initiatives and communications in all of the fields. I am not familiar with all, but for sure, which SDG they refer to is articulated somewhere there and it is clear that we have adopted a gender equality strategy, and it is clear which SDG we are measuring with it. They are also explicitly mentioned in the Green Deal, I am sure it is referred to which SDGs are implemented through this and that policy. We are really just making sure that all are SDG compatible. And overall, it is of course the aim that they encompass everything, right.</i></p>
<p>What is the relationship between the EU and the Member States in the implementation of the SDGs? Not only competences in policy areas, but also on who takes the lead, because I see many different approaches in various EU Member States. In the Netherlands for example, the government is really looking at the EU, like when the EU developed a policy or a strategy we will follow. But Spain, and a few other countries, are much more enthusiastic about working with the SDGs.</p>	<p><i>We have a unit in the Secretariat General that is responsible for relationships with Member States in the Council and they are having discussions in Coreper and so on. They are tracking their positions, there are countries that are taking the lead, there are countries that are very much behind that are interested in what we want to put forward. There are countries that want us to develop a strategy, there are countries that don't want us to develop a strategy. There is a great variety and I don't have other countries' positions and their relations with the EU. In our field, we are now cooperating with Member States, I would say, indirectly via the European Semester. When it comes to the SDGs in the European Semester. We have implemented a certain number of SDGs into the European Semester, which are the SDGs that have a macro-economic dimension. This is consistent with the legal basis of the Semester, where we talk about things with a macroeconomic relevance. For sure, Semester is not a tool to put all of them in there. We cannot talk about life under water, we cannot talk about democracy to such a degree, not even about gender equality or the external developments of the SDGs. There are a lot of them that fall out.</i></p> <p><i>But what we have done specifically, I don't know if you had a look at the country reports? Yes.</i></p> <p><i>Compared to last year, what is new is this section on environmental sustainability. In previous years, before, the Semester was mainly</i></p>

about macroeconomic stability and coordination of fiscal and economic policies. Then more social considerations and employment considerations started coming in, so we implemented the European Pillar of Social Rights which we integrated into the Semester.

We kind of had economic and social. And now, to close the circle, we discussed what was lacking in the semester and that is the environmental dimension. Which nowadays, nobody can say anymore is not macroeconomic, because it will immediately have repercussion on how we can consume, produce, and build our economies in the future. So now we have this triangle in the Semester, economic, social and environmental and we have, basically, included certain SDGs. We also have an annex, with the progress of specific Member States how they are doing on these SDGs that are relevant for the European Semester. We also have a Eurostat Report, that is an annual monitoring report, where we also track, for every country in the EU, 100 targets. We also made a bit of a selection, which is not identical to the UN one, because we selected the SDGs that we find the most relevant to our context and also there is a kind of consensus in the epistemic community that 100 is a bit of the upper hand to be able to monitor and follow them on such a large cross-country comparable basis. And that now the EU can send clear messages and communicate on them.

So, in terms of our relationship with the EU, it is true that the Commission, here in the Cabinet, we have contacts with stakeholders. EU level civil society organisations, not so much Member States directly, but yes in the SG in the Council we are talking with them about SDGs all the time. They are giving their positions.

On the lead with implementation. I would say it is clear that there are these SDGs at local partnerships and we think that local implementation is really key. Because the closest you are to the problem. We are really happy when someone takes the lead on implementation, because it is not an exclusive competence. The more people implement them, the better and I think the people that are better placed to do it, are the people with the local

	<p><i>knowledge of the problem. We say that SDGs should be implemented there were people have clear experiences or the context and the know-how to solve the issue.</i></p>
<p>I will now ask you more specifically about the European Semester, because you said that the SDGs have already become a part of the European Semester. How will the integration of the SDGs into the European Semester contribute to the realisation of the SDGs?</p>	<p><i>The Semester is a tool for coordination of economic and fiscal policies. Where we try to optimize coordination within the EU to minimize the negative spill-over effects across countries that in the monetary economic union are very important. We have a legal basis, this is currently the question with the Semester, does it have this to push through what we say is a good idea, do we have track-record of implementation to follow through recommendations we give, we give over 100 recommendations each year, are implemented. If you look at a 1-year horizon, the results are not great, if you look to 3-5-year horizon, the results improve significantly because a lot of these reforms take a lot of time. You have to give Member States some time to actually get around to doing them, the legislative processes are longer than 1 year. In a democratic process it is normal that they can't just be implemented over one night. But yes, the European Semester does not have an enforcement function, except of in the case of certain breaches in the macroeconomic field. We have the excessive deputy procedure; we have certain articles in the form of the six and to tack regulation (budget) that is mostly about deficit and public spending and debt. This is a procedure where we have legislative power to sanction Member States that breach our treaties. But its true, people are saying 'yes but you can put in social considerations, you can put in environmental considerations', but there is no enforcement. Member States will just not respect it. I will not look at it negatively in that way, I think there is also a lot of peer pressure in the process. We will not fine Member States that will not implement it in one year on for example environmental CSR's on sustainable transport. But this is a tool for coordination, it is based on dialogue, it is based on peer pressure and it is based on responsibility of everyone. So, we are also putting pressure on them to go into the right direction, but they already know they have to go. Because also their electorates are asking</i></p>

	<p><i>them to do so, it is an additional push that we can give for the moment.</i></p>
<p>And I also understood that new legislation, especially now, with the Green Deal, that other Member States don't really need the push from the SDGs because they know that EU policies and programmes are heading towards the targets set by the 2030 agenda. That it is a transition we as a society need to make happen and, in that regard, I think that the EU policies in general also contribute a lot to the SDGs.</p>	<p><i>Exactly, then in the Green Deal, we have actually put into law the Climate Neutrality in 2050. So, this is a first step into this direction also and make the commitment a bit more binding.</i></p> <p><i>What other tools do you use, besides the European Semester, to implement the SDGs? There are a certain other vehicles and tools that we have in specific fields, there is a rule of law monitoring framework that produces specific reports on only that field and I think we can even have infringements in that area. There is the Energy Union monitoring tool who is following the energy targets, there are a few mechanisms like this which complement the Semester and are much more detailed in a much more restrained framework. I think these are the most important tools, that I am aware off from the top of my head. You must understand the distinction between the strategies and tools, many documents such as the Green Deal and the Circular Economy Package are strategies, but the tools.</i></p> <p><i>I know we are talking about the rule of law mechanism, which is not coming up this year but maybe next year. I am not sure if there is something published about this, but basically the idea of these separate tools is, because the Semester is already quite broad, it's far from encompassing everything. But in the field of economic, social, employment or even environment, it is already quite extensive. And the idea of these other tools is really to focus and then also be able to sanction in certain cases like an infringement procedure.</i></p>
<p>Would you describe the implementation process as a top-down process, a multilevel process, or a bottom-up process? What characterizes this process?</p>	<p><i>That is a good question. But this is really like my opinion. I think it goes a bit into all of the directions. I find it difficult to characterize it. I think it is an heterogenous, messy, there are pressure groups in all directions. There are top-down strategies that we put forward, but they don't come out of a vacuum. There are dialogues with stakeholders, with Member States, we know what is the state of play, what is expected, what is desirable and what we want to achieve. So, there is a lot coordination. We have, the Commission has a lot of dialogue. Like</i></p>

in the framework of the European Semester, for a very long time now, we have an institutionalized dialogue with social partners, that we meet during our semester missions in every country, this is more about social employment. But then we are also meeting civil society, and in fact, European Semester, when I was last year still working on it, previously I was working on European Semester at DG Employment, we also started recommending that we give more space to civil society. Social partners are very organised, it is very clear and easy for every country to know his representative of labour markets, so you basically set up meetings with unions and employer organisations that are representatives. Civil society is much messier, way less organised. It is much more a challenge to get and to inform or form an opinion from their part, because there are so many different interests that are out there. But we are trying to capture even more of this input as it is of importance. I think this is important to mention, that in the previous mandate we had a high-level multilevel stakeholder platform. Which was a platform administered by the European Commission, by Vice-president Timmermans, for the representatives of civil society at the EU level to give their input into the SDGs, into our Green Deal and all of these strategies. It was a very appreciated exercise, because there you had representatives of business and also extremely green radical social NGOs, that all had worked together to come up with a compromise. They had to adjust and negotiate among them and it was really a productive exercise. Because it was not just about everybody blowing their own trumpet or criticizing the others. They really had to construct something that everybody could agree on and submit it. This year, this platform came to an end. What they did, fed the reflection paper on sustainable development that was published last year. Which is also important to read, because it is a strategy of the Commission on SDGs. The platform resulted in this reflection paper, which also really fed the political guidelines of President Von der Leyen and into our Mission letters. So, these NGOs really contributed significantly to our working programmes our political priorities and our operational working programme.

	<p><i>Now the preparations are under way, because the programme discontinued. We judged that their mission was completed, even though the stakeholders would very much like to continue the process, because it added a lot of value to the work. The President now decided that she does not want to continue this, also we are now collectively responsible instead of Vice-President Timmermans, this means the platform had the advantage of being streamlined and centralized which was maybe easier for coordination.</i></p> <p><i>Now the idea is that different NGOs would contact a Commissioner to discuss a specific topic and all Commissioners are of course encouraged, they have to, to talk to representatives from the field. We already had various meetings with different umbrella organisations, very different very interesting organisations, now we still have some Skype or Zoom meetings, so there is really a lot of engagement going on at the level of the Commission.</i></p>
<p>The Next question is perhaps a bit more difficult, especially based on what you just told me. One important aspect of policy implementation, and especially when it is more a multilevel process with various stakeholders involved, is the aspect of responsibility. Who would you say bears responsibility regarding implementation of the SDGs? Is that the Commission, the Member States or would you say that stakeholders have a responsibility for the implementation as well? This also relates to the next question: can you hold someone accountable for non-compliance or is it mainly voluntary?</p>	<p><i>In the case of the European Semester, I would say: no, we cannot start an infringement procedure against someone who does not live up to its commitments. It is a process of political commitment signed up by the SDG agenda and it is really a collective responsibility on all levels of government to implement it. I am not sure how legislation will develop in this field; I assume it will become more binding as we are facing a crisis with more environmental concerns and a bigger 'prix de conscience' of our citizens. But for now, no, we don't have a mechanism to that end. We are not sure it will be productive, in the Commission in general we prefer political dialogue, we prefer coordination and sharing of information and best practices. I think it is important to secure the bond of Member States and have a combined approach to implement these things. On responsibility I would say in the first phase it is on the Member States, they are the signatory of the Agenda. The European Commission also is a signatory, but the initial idea was for Member States. To sign this, because in most cases, they have the competence in the areas that pertain compared to the Commission, which has relatively few</i></p>

	<p><i>competences. We have certain exclusive competences for sure, but most of the competences are still at the national level. Be it from education to healthcare. So, there are even a lot of things we cannot do, even if we wanted to. We cannot do more than recommending. But until something changes in the treaties, we have to respect the autonomy of the Member States and I really think it is their main responsibility and we are here to ensure this EU-wide coordination.</i></p>
<p>That is indeed very true and also, the Member States have many more competences than the European Commission, but what do you think when you hear Member States that say: we want to wait for the European Commission to start taking action and afterwards we will also start doing our things? That does of course sound rather strange, knowing the different competences the Commission and the Member States have.</p>	<p><i>I think it is always an easy position to wait for the Commission for someone else to move. So, in a way I see a shift of responsibilities, because I also don't know what they are waiting for and it is relatively clear when you sign the agenda. We all know what are the targets, targets are set at national levels also to take into account national level specificities, we also have EU targets for comparability, but I would still say from public transport to education system, to environmental protection, we have a very few concrete decision-making levers. In the democratic process, to vote on laws, then we are very happy to lead the way and give the signal, the political signal, of what is desirable, and I think we did this in a great deal already with the Green Deal, the European Pillar of Social Rights, which is our European compass for social policy-making at the level of the EU. So, I would not say that clear signals of what we envision as desirable or ideal is lacking.</i></p>
<p>I don't know how much you have been engaged in the stakeholder involvement with the SDGs, so I will just ask the questions I wrote down and give you the opportunity to respond or explain your knowledge and experience, since you said that it was mainly of presence in the previous Commission mandate that this was discussed. Do you know how have stakeholders been involved in the development of policies/ the strategy to implement the SDGs?</p>	<p><i>I would say that it was of course really important, but I can give you a more recent description. We of course had the stakeholder platform, which was a major input for us and contributor to our SDG streaming. It was welcomed very positively by the participants, who could also really see what they contributed to and happened with their response.</i></p>
<p>(phone rings) I am sorry, I have to pick up the phone quickly. My apologies, could you please repeat what you said, because I wasn't listening due to the phone ringing.</p>	<p><i>Of course, I said that the multilevel stakeholder platform was an amazing input and that it was really well received on part of those concerned, because it was an initiative that contributed to very concrete results and everybody was really happy with the way in which it was set up. But I</i></p>

	<p><i>think now, what we are preparing, it is again under the responsibility of Vice-President Timmermans, in the context of the Green Deal, there will be a Climate Pact, in which all of the stakeholders are again invited to join, but now specifically stakeholders in the environmental field. It will not be about the SDGs, but about climate and the environment. It is about to be set up, but is still under construction and being discussed. What we are also trying, is an important part in this Commission, Vice-President Timmermans is no longer overall responsible for the implementation of the SDGs, is that we also want to show the message that in our view the SDGs are not only an environmental agenda. We want everybody to understand that we know it is not all about the Green, we are now seeing that we have a lot of initiatives under the green, because currently the environment and climate are the fields in which we are lacking the most progress. Compared to our other developments, in the economic and social field, we would judge here is the most yet to be done. So, we have a lot of initiatives on the green, at the same time, we are completely aware that the SDGs are broader and that it has really to be considered in its entirety as an interconnected agenda.</i></p>
<p>Thanks, you explained that really nicely. To the next question, could you give a short overview, if you can, of the stakeholders that have been involved in this process of not implementing, but developing these policies?</p>	<p><i>The ones we met so far? We met with the coalition of sustainable cities, about funding, we met... there are all of these abbreviations that I really forgot. But we also met with the CoR, the Committee of Regions, which is also an important stakeholder, which is institutionalised as an EU institution. We are meeting a great diversity of actors. We are also talking with SDG Watch Europe, the WWF, so really a lot of different stakeholders. Regional, local representatives. A great diversity.</i></p>
<p>What is the role of these stakeholders in the preparation of the strategy/policies? How do use their input and what do you do with the input?</p>	<p><i>I think it is really a two-way learning process. They tell us about their expectations, what they want and what they are working, what they deem important and we tell them what is our perspective. We don't always have a same approach in mind, because we are institutions and they represent a more diversified field. But we can also tell them what we expect and have an open and transparent dialogue. It is of</i></p>

	<p><i>course, when you are a one issue NGO, it is easy for you to advocate for that one thing. We as the Commission, we are basically covering all of the spheres. And we have to take this one issue as part of our entire engagement and strategies, so we also have to be a bit more balanced. But they appreciate it, it is also a no-surprise policy, we are openly sharing and telling them what we plan to do and what we are doing. They will ask us about some considerations to make and sometimes there is an angle that we would not have thought of ourselves or lack that perspective. So, then we realize how it is important and that we have to stress this. It is really open and flexible, which is informative to both parties and we are very aware of their expectations in general. With their positions we know what we can articulate, because we know who is our public, we know about their concerns and demands, we cannot always cater it for 100% but we also know that we cannot let down a certain number of demands. So, we are trying to be balanced.</i></p>
<p>You already answered the next question, about the characteristics of the stakeholders involved. I am quite curious how the input of stakeholders compares or differs from the input of the Member States and how this is used when it is turned into policies or legislation. Because I think that stakeholders have a very different position than most of the Member States, but the Member States have a much broader view. When it occurs that they have different or conflicting views, how is this used or what is done with this?</p>	<p><i>There are for sure differences. I would say Member States are in that sense more similar to the Commission. They have to take care of all of the fields and have a holistic approach to their development in all its spheres. When you are advocating for a single, we had an exchange with an NGO on gender equality/open data initiative. Where they were looking at female genital manipulation numbers in Europe. We are not saying it is not important, but we don't follow this indicator for the SDGs, because we have selected six indicators per goal (selected 100 goals). So, we have six indicators and they asked us to include this indicator as well. We are not saying it is not important, because it is very important, there are too many cases in Europe. For the European context, however, this is not the most important consideration.</i></p> <p><i>And it is holistic, I mean, when in all of the other gender equality indices you would score really highly, you will then probably also not have a superhigh incidents of female genital manipulation if you are a super equal society. I am just trying to tell you: yes, there is a difference, with very sectoral perspectives and also the whole of government approach where you have to be a bit more moderate or balanced across the policy fields. And yes, Member States</i></p>

	<p><i>have their own agendas and preferences and traditions and all of this is also coming through, also in their articulation of SDG agendas.</i></p>
<p>How would you describe the process of cooperation with stakeholders? Is it a strict or an open process of stakeholder involvement? The way you describe it, it sounds very open, the way you describe it. Is that correct?</p>	<p><i>There are parts that are institutionalised, that is with Semester missions when we go to each country every year before the publication of the Country Reports and then after, before the publication of the Country Specific Recommendations. Where we officially meet, we have missions, we meet stakeholders, sometimes we have fact-finding missions. Sometimes we have more political missions with the focus on communication of what we want them to achieve and we have, this is internal rules, we give our country teams, that are dealing with each country, we say: in the light of your two-day fact-finding mission, you have to meet representatives from the social partners, or you have to meet representatives from the civil society. So, we have a very regular, very institutionalised meetings and exchanges and organised interests. But then there is also very spontaneous, we just get a request for a meeting from someone who writes to us, no matter what NGO, if it's something in our field, we would always accept the meeting. Maybe not in the next week, but in a manner of two or three weeks. In person and now the camera. When they are not in our field, we send them to our colleagues in a more suited cabinet. I would say it is a mixture of both, institutionalised but it can also be completely open.</i></p> <p><i>We mostly talk to organisations that are still at the EU level, the umbrella organisations, that regroup different national NGOs in this umbrella organisations. We are not contacted by specific national NGOs', but by the EU NGO perspective, because this is the perspective we are working on.</i></p> <p><i>So, these are the ones we meet. And otherwise we refer them to other Cabinets. We try to be open and cooperative. We also organise events, especially for stakeholders, where we can have a broader discussion, with seminars or lectures so for them it is also an opportunity to meet people and organisations at a larger scale. This is not only happening at the Cabinet, but also by the DGs who invite NGOs on the topics that they are working on. Poverty for example, I know this</i></p>

	<i>because I worked on Poverty and we were in close contact with Antipoverty Network and hosted events where hundreds and hundreds of associations were invited and we can give them the opportunity to give their view. So basically, this exchange and dialogue is really present, but it goes through EU level structures.</i>
I think we handled most of the questions already. I have got one last question, which is not really related to the other questions, but do you know someone who has been tasked with the topic of SDG 12 or the topic of sustainable consumption and production? Because then I will try to contact this person as well.	<i>I will give you this name in shared, I am not 100% sure, but she will be able to direct you to the right person. Good?</i>
Thanks, that's excellent. Do you have any questions for me regarding the interview or my research in general?	<i>What is the main topic of main research question of your master's thesis or main focus?</i>
How the EU and different Member States have different implementation structures and measures for SDG 12, I first deal with a general SDG strategy, the development of the strategy and the implementation of these policies and strategies. I am doing this comparative research to see how it is possible that EU Member States have difficulty achieving SDG 12. The Member States have been interested and think they might get something out of it as well, because it is one of the SDGs in which not that much progress is made and I thought it strange since there are so many actions and policies developed at the national and EU level that target this topic.	<i>I hope I gave you some useful or interesting perspective on the dealing with the SDGs at the EU level and I wish you all the best with your thesis.</i>
I also really want to thank you for your time, especially since you are really busy right now, that I am really happy you made time to discuss the questions with me.	<i>We really try to accommodate all of the requests in line with the principles of good governance that we have. And I will send you the recording.</i>
Thank you very much.	<i>Thank you, have a nice weekend, bye.</i>
You too, bye!	

17. Annex 11: Interview the Netherlands

Date:	May 20 2020
Interviewee	Policy officer from the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management from the Netherlands
Duration: 1:15:08	
Recording device	Phone
Melle	Interviewee
	<i>Hoi Melle,</i>
Hoi. Zal ik me eerst even voorstellen, wie ik ben en wat ik doe?	<i>Ja dat lijkt me handig.</i>
Ik studeer European Studies en Comparatieve Public Governance, dat is een dubbele Master aan de Universiteit Twente en de Universiteit Münster. Ik heb het afgelopen half jaar stagegelopen bij de Provincie Flevoland, daar heb ik onderzoek gedaan naar de Sustainable Development Goals en zo ben ik daar een beetje ingerold. Voor mijn scriptie focus ik mij voornamelijk op SDG 12, Duurzame Consumptie en Productie, omdat het mij opviel dat veel landen in Europa moeite hebben met het realiseren van deze doelen, of er dichterbij komen en op basis daarvan leek het mij interessant om te kijken naar de methoden die worden gebruikt voor implementatie die worden gebruikt bij de SDGs en specifiek Duurzame Consumptie en Productie. Daarvoor doe ik een vergelijkend onderzoek, waarbij ik 3 EU-lidstaten vergelijk met de EU zelf, om te kijken op welke manier ze bezig zijn met ontwikkeling van beleid, hoe dat wordt omgezet in beleid of een strategie en hoe dat vervolgens wordt geïmplementeerd. Op deze manier kom ik dan bij jou uit, via via.	<i>Oké. Zal ik me ook even voorstellen?</i>
Ja lijkt me goed.	<i>Bij het Ministerie focus ik voornamelijk op klimaat en de circulaire economie. Dus ik hoop dat ik de meeste vragen kan beantwoorden.</i>
De eerste vraag is: Op wat voor manier werkt Nederland met de Sustainable Development Goals?	<i>Op basis van mijn ervaring zien sommigen de SDGs als leidraad, het komt niet altijd naar voren, maar als overheid werken we er wel naartoe. Ook als collega's er onbewust mee</i>

bezig, of weten ze de indicatoren of targets niet, komt een groot deel van onze beleidstukken overeen met de doelen, ook al is dat indirect. Wat ik denk is dat er meer bewustzijn nodig is, wat ik daar wel lastig aan vindt is dat het door veel ambtenaren kan worden gezien als een én, ik moet nog iets gaan doen, ik moet over nog iets gaan doen, terwijl het juist een manier zou zijn om te standaardiseren om beter samen te werken, ook juist interdepartementaal hieraan te werken. Dat kost bij elke overheid tijd, het is fijn dat het in Nederland al in onze natuur zit, dat interdepartementale werken, wij beseffen wel dat bij het maken van beleid dat grensoverschrijdend is. We zijn ons ervan bewust dat we buiten die silo's moeten werken en we hebben de ruimte om dat te doen, maar het is niet overal duidelijk en dat kan ook wel erg lastig zijn. Wat ik heel raar vind, en dat is met name hoe het is gestructureerd. Het lastige is het vraagstuk: waar zet je je coördinatiepunt voor de SDGs binnen de overheid, bijvoorbeeld het kantoor van het President. Waar dat bureau zit, maakt een heel erg groot verschil. Een ministerie van Financiën bijvoorbeeld, waar de SDGs kunnen worden meegenomen als leidraad in de begroting en dat dat wel, omdat Financiën heel erg nadenkt over impact, input en output, dat het beter helpt om het te mainstreamen. Bij ons ligt het coördinatiepunt voor de SDGs bij Buitenlandse Zaken. Daarnaast zijn er aanspreekpunten bij elk ministerie voor alle SDGs, wat heel positief is, omdat het fijn is dat het zo gebeurt. Bij mijn Ministerie, Infrastructuur en Waterstaat, bij zo'n groot ministerie en zo'n variatie aan onderwerpen dat wordt behandeld door mijn collega's dat het niet een dagelijkse gedachte is van: hoe draag ik bij aan de SDGs. En de vraag is of dat nodig is? Ik weet het niet, want je ziet wel dat wij al duurzamer zijn, in vergelijking met andere landen ons beleid al duurzamer is, vooral op het gebied van klimaatadaptatie en circulaire economie, je ziet dat dat voor ons geen nieuwe onderwerpen zijn. Dus op zich doen we dat van nature, en dat we niet in silo's moeten werken en juist samen moeten werken met andere sectoren, dat zie je ook terugkomen in het grote plaatje. Wij kijken ernaar van: hoe moeten we het beleid uitvoeren, wat zijn de kansen daar? Dat is wel een uniek punt van Nederland, en in dat soort documenten zie je de SDGs ook

	<i>terugkomen, maar het is niet zo dat de SDGs in het dagelijkse werk van het ministerie bij iedereen op het netvlies staat.</i>
Op welke manier draagt Nederland bij aan SDG 12, Duurzame Consumptie en Productie?	<i>Oké, ik heb vandaag gekeken naar de progressie op het doel op het kennis platform. En het is wel zo dat wij hier al mee werken als Party for the Montreal Protocol, Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Convention en wij dragen bij aan de uitvoering daarvan en dat is vooral het internationale pad. Op basis van de nationale onze circulaire economie actieplan, het feit dat wij echt heel duidelijk hebben besloten het halveren van het gebruik van natuurlijke grondstoffen in 2030 en het volledig overgaan op circulaire grondstoffen in 2050 is zeker minder ambitieus dan de doelen, maar het gaat de goede kant op. Het is zeker haalbaar, misschien hadden we wat ambitieuzer kunnen zijn, maar we zijn wel echt één van de weinige landen die echt concrete targets heeft opgesteld en dat geeft ruimte voor meer ambitie. Dat nationale actieplan is natuurlijk wel lange termijn, maar dan hebben we het uitvoeringsprogramma tot 2023. Dat is gewoon onderdeel van mijn werk, kijken met partners en andere actoren hoe staan we ervoor, hoe staat het met de monitoring, welke doelen van de SDGs zijn hieraan gekoppeld, hoe draagt het bij aan Parijs, zodat we dat allemaal definiëren in Nederland en buitenland om betere standaarden hebben om te monitoren. Ik denk dat we het best goed doen en dan natuurlijk ook op Europees niveau dat we het Europese Plastic Pact hebben gelanceerd, waarvan ik denk dat het een grote stap is in de plasticwereld, waar we dan kijken hoe we plastic gebruik gaan veranderen en reduceren, niet alleen als overheid maar juist vanuit de whole-of society approach als het hele framework.</i>
Waarop focust het beleid van Nederland zich voornamelijk op dit thema?	<i>Ik denk dat wij als Nederland het geluk hebben dat we een land zijn dat we de ruimte hebben om op lange termijn te denken voor ons beleid. Ik vergelijk het nu met Caraïbische landen, waar ze sinds 2001 in een recessie zijn, daar heb je niet de mental capacity of ruimte in jouw overheid om überhaupt te denken over de langere termijn. Er zijn hier natuurlijk meerdere redenen voor, maar politieke stabiliteit is daar ook heel helpvol in, wat zorgt voor stabiliteit om op de lange termijn te denken en te werken. En</i>

	<p><i>daardoor bij de circulaire economie, ik denk dat zij ook wel zien dat wat er nu staat in het Parijs Akkoord, dat we daar slechts 50% van de emissiereductie doelen mee behalen, dat is een gat wat we, daar is onderzoek naar gedaan door de Europese Commissie en de Allan McArthur Foundation, grotendeels kunnen dichten, bijna 45%, door volledig circulair te worden als samenleving. We hebben wel geluk dat we de ruimte hebben om daarover na te denken en op de lange termijn mijlpalen kunnen zetten om te realiseren.</i></p>
<p>Dat is wel een leuke insteek, zo had ik er nog nooit echt naar gekeken. Op basis waarvan zijn de doelstellingen geformuleerd?</p>	<p><i>Dat is voornamelijk EU-beleid en ook Internationale Akkoorden, en wat ik ook zei, ik mis helaas heel vaak de link met de SDGs in ons beleid. Ik merk dat er best veel mee bezig ben om met collega's te praten om de link te leggen met de SDGs, het draagt ook bij aan deze targets, neem dat ook mee. Er is wat dat betreft wel een gebrek aan bewustzijn dat de SDGs kunnen worden meegenomen in onze targets. Maar voornamelijk denk ik EU-beleid en dan wel het idee dat Nederland vooruit moet streven naar een duurzame wereld.</i></p>
<p>Als je het zo stelt, mis je dan, want er zijn een aantal landen die een hele strategie hebben gebaseerd op de SDGs, ook een SDG-strategie in Nederland, niet als extra maar gewoon om aan te tonen hoe de SDGs zouden doorwegen of invloed kunnen hebben op het werk dat jullie doen?</p>	<p><i>Ik weet het niet. Want wij hebben natuurlijk wel dat rapport van de CBS, de Brede Welvaart Monitor, en daar komen de SDGs ook elk jaar weer sterker terug en ik weet niet zo goed wat zo een strategie, dat komt ook omdat ik denk dat we heel erg van de strategieën zijn op de lange termijn en dat er dan weinig gebeurt in de uitvoering momenteel. Misschien is dat ook wel mijn frustratie met deze strategieën, maar ik weet niet zo goed wat dat zou bijdragen. Ik denk inderdaad dat er meer bewustzijn moet komen onder ambtenaren, alleen ik weet niet of zo'n strategie daar ook echt tot zou leiden of dat het meer zo iets is van 'ohja' weer meer werk, dat wil je natuurlijk voorkomen. Wat ik denk dat we wel nodig hebben en misschien is dat een soort van een strategie, een soort van een visie op hoe de SDGs te allignen met wat we doen. Een soort van alignment, mapping om te laten zien: hier ben je al mee bezig, dat maakt het niet moeilijker, en het kan het beleid ook verder helpen, bijvoorbeeld met andere landen die ook in vergelijkbare problemen terecht komen. Dat is natuurlijk ook de bedoeling van de SDGs, dat we een manier hebben om landen</i></p>

	<p><i>hun progressie te laten meten die dan wereldwijd gestandaardiseerd is, maar het geeft ook megaveel ruimte om, en dat gebruiken we denk ik niet genoeg, om ook gewoon een soort van community of practice te laten ontstaan waar experts en beleidsmedewerkers van landen en tussen bedrijven, met elkaar in gesprek kunnen gaan op basis van dezelfde visie en taal. Dan kan je veel beter een discussie met elkaar voeren over duurzame consumptie en productie, wanneer je allemaal aan dezelfde indicatoren en targets werkt waarmee je je vooruitgang meet. Zo kan je ook beter je ervaringen delen of juist waar je tegenaan loopt. Dat zal zeker voor andere actoren wel anders kunnen zijn, maar die zien ook wel ruimte om de discussie te voeren, daar is denk ik veel meer ruimte voor dan nu wordt gedaan. Ik ben bijvoorbeeld bij bijeenkomsten geweest van de Bertelsmann Stiftung, en daar werd heel erg gekeken hoe we elkaar kunnen helpen met het meten van onze progressie en hoe we kunnen we daarbij van elkaar leren. En toen merkte ik dat het heel goed is om te vergelijken met andere landen, die wellicht een andere structuur hebben, maar wel om juist te leren en te kijken hoe zij bezig zijn met de SDGs en het implementeren van de doelen en daar hebben we heel veel aan. Ik heb juist het gevoel dat dat in Nederland niet veel gebeurt en ik vind dat echt heel jammer, juist omdat deze gezamenlijke taal op technisch niveau niet gebruikt wordt.</i></p>
<p>Je bedoelt dan door Nederland internationaal of ook in Nederland zelf?</p>	<p><i>Ja beide. Ik bedoel, je ziet heel erg in Nederland bij gemeenten en provincies, de SDGs die leven daar, en het is daar ook leuk, maar wat ik heb gezien dat de gemeenten en provincies niet heel vaak hierop samenwerken. Iedereen doet het gewoon in zijn provincie of gemeente en natuurlijk komt het allemaal samen als we een rapportage schrijven en daar zijn we wel ver in omdat we dan grotendeels denken vanuit dezelfde taal, maar wanneer ik kijk naar Nederland internationaal en we doen best veel, maar als het gaat om het leren en informatie delen over de SDGs en hoe we dingen beter kunnen implementeren, op het technische niveau, dus naast het politieke, het draagvlak creëren, kunnen we daar echt nog winst behalen en ik denk ook op het lokale en regionale niveau binnen Nederland.</i></p>

<p>Ik wil het nu graag meer hebben over stakeholders, hoe die worden meegenomen. Op welke manier wordt met stakeholders gewerkt voor de realisatie van de SDGs en specifiek duurzame consumptie en productie?</p>	<p><i>Er is natuurlijk het nationale actieplan per thema, is er een werkgroep en wordt er met partners op gemeenteniveau en vanuit het bedrijfsleven en Ngo's samengewerkt op de verschillende onderwerpen. Bij Buitenlandse Zaken werd er heel erg nauw samengewerkt met de jongerenvertegenwoordigers om ook daar de SDGs beter te agenderen en om ze mee te nemen in ons beleid bij BZ. Ik denk dat daar wel meer aan kan worden gedaan op nationaal niveau om ze mee te nemen in de SDGs. Ze schrijven mee met het national voluntary review, en ook toen we het SDG-verslag gingen presenteren, werd het door onze minister gepresenteerd, wat ik merk en dat ik kan alleen maar zeggen op mijn ervaringen, is dat ze niet goed weten hoe we dat programmatisch aan kunnen pakken. Het is meestal op basis van een activiteit of een evenement, dan weet iedereen wel jongeren te vinden, maar het is lastig om een programmatische aanpak op te zetten om jongeren altijd te vinden. Ik weet niet of dat nodig is, maar het zou wel helpen, omdat het belangrijk is dat jongeren erbij te betrekken. Maar wat ik jammer vind, is dat we elkaar weten te vinden wanneer het een kans is om ons te profileren, maar er zijn weinig projecten waarbij er naar een programmatische aanpak wordt gekeken om de SDGs ook goed te laten aansluiten bij de jongeren, hiervoor bestaat de structuur niet. Er zijn een aantal voorbeelden waarbij dat heel goed gaat, BZ heeft een project met het DKB om jongeren in andere landen aan te sporen om hun nationale plannen wat ambitieuzer te maken, dat is wel een programmatische aanpak en wordt met het JKB gemaakt en wordt ook gekeken naar samenwerking en coördinatie. Dat is voornamelijk gericht op klimaat en niet de bredere duurzaamheidsthema's. Hoewel ik dus met het JKB aan de lijn zat en ze ook aangeven meer te willen doen met circulaire economie omdat het flink bij kan dragen aan de klimaatdoelstellingen, maar dat moet zich nog verder ontwikkelen. Ik denk dat dit ook geldt op het lokale niveau, waar je de laatste vijf jaren ziet dat er meer inzet is van steden, regio's en bedrijven om internationaal samen te werken om samen te werken en de SDGs bieden een kader om hierbij gezamenlijk op te trekken.</i></p>
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	<p><i>Maar hoe dit kan door de SDGs te integreren in nationaal beleid is lastig, omdat niemand echt weet hoe dit moet of goed kan, ook omdat het deels nieuw is. Het is alleen moeilijk om jongeren echt structureel, programmatisch aan te pakken. Mensen zijn er niet zo van bewust dat het er niet echt is.</i></p> <p><i>Je kan bijvoorbeeld een Jeugdadviesraad instellen voor jeugdontwikkeling, en jongeren kunnen op basis van een ontwikkelingsagenda prioriteiten stellen en zo een SDG-manifest schrijven met dat wat belangrijk is voor jongeren en wat jongeren kunnen doen om bij te dragen aan de SDGs en jeugdontwikkeling een belangrijk aspect te maken van de duurzame ontwikkelingsagenda. Er moet een goede balans worden gevonden hoe jongeren hun deelname goed in kunnen steken, want er moeten acties uit komen, waarbij het weer lastig is om in te schatten hoe dat kan worden meegenomen in ons beleid of hoe het bijdraagt aan ons beleid.</i></p>
<p>Kun je wat vertellen over de kenmerken van de stakeholders die worden betrokken bij duurzame consumptie en productie en het Actieplan voor circulaire economie?</p>	<p><i>Dat zijn met name Nederlandse bedrijven die enthousiast zijn die over het verder brengen van de circulaire economie, zoals de Dutch Sustainable Growth Coalition en grote bedrijven zoals DVM, die spelen daar een belangrijke rol in. Ook provincies die vooruitstreven en dit ook willen, wat ik merk dat het heel vaak gaat om mensen en groepen die het met elkaar eens zijn om iets anders te gaan doen. Dat is logisch, maar je vraagt je wel af of je niet ook een grotere groep moet bereiken om het echt te gaan doen realiseren. Naar mijn idee bereiken ze niet de gehele groep. Het is natuurlijk ook de vraag hoe je mensen betreft die hierbij niet betrokken willen zijn of een andere mening hebben hoe de wereld er over 30 jaar uit zou moeten zijn, dat is weliswaar minder mate in Nederland, maar er zijn genoeg mensen die dit gesprek of thema bullshit vinden. En het is natuurlijk logisch dat mensen of bedrijven juist samen willen werken met hen die het met hun eens zijn, of enthousiast zijn, die ook kritische vragen om het beleid verder te helpen en vooruitstreven. Maar niet om het tegen te werken. In Nederland is men niet zo bang voor die kritische geluiden, dat maakt de doelgroep en de kenmerken van de mensen die deelnemen wat groter dan in andere landen. Die vragen worden ook gewoon beantwoord, waardoor de groep wat groter is. Maar het gaat vooral om</i></p>

	<p><i>de mensen die betrokken willen zijn, als je niet betrokken wil zijn, hoef je je er ook niet bij aan te sluiten. Dat is natuurlijk overal zo, er zijn overal een aantal stakeholders die denken: laat maar. Ik denk wel dat de agenda een meer participatieve aanpak voorstaat, waardoor ook zij die er weinig mee hebben zich ervoor in zouden kunnen zetten en dan vraag ik me af hoe die mensen die er niet in geloven wel überhaupt mee had kunnen nemen.</i></p>
<p>Kun je wellicht ook iets vertellen over de verantwoordelijkheden die de stakeholders hebben die deelnemen aan dit proces of die zich verbonden hebben aan de SDGs of de doelstellingen.</p>	<p><i>Ik denk dat je hier genoeg over kunt vinden in het Actieplan voor de Circulaire Economie, dus je kan daar het beste naar kijken. Daar wordt uitgelegd hoe de samenwerking met stakeholders worden gedaan en hoe projecten worden gedaan. Je kan het beste kijken naar het Uitvoeringsprogramma en het Actieplan, daar staan namelijk ook wel projecten in en wat de verantwoordelijkheden van de bedrijven zijn en hoe ze bijdragen aan de transitie.</i></p>
<p>Hoe zou je het proces omschrijven, is het een open proces of een strikt proces?</p>	<p><i>Dat vind ik een lastige vraag, ik kan daar niet heel veel over zeggen omdat ik daar niet direct bij betrokken ben geweest. Wat ik wel kan zeggen is dat Nederland in de Raad van Bestuur zit van het Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy, PACE is de afkorting, daar kan je online meer informatie over vinden. Daar zitten we in met organisaties als Apple, UNEP, Phillips en andere grote bedrijven en samen, zo werken we wel erg open en samen met andere partners en landen. Het enige dat je moet doen om in het deze cirkel of het leadership te komen, is dat jouw organisatie of land ambitieus is in het realiseren van de circulaire economie. Dat was eerst opgericht onder het World Economic Forum, sinds 2017 is het in Nederland gevestigd in Den Haag, onder het WRI, daar steken we veel energie en tijd in en op basis van verschillende apps en tracks wordt daar systeem mapping gedaan over waardeketen van verschillende sectoren en hoe we die kunnen verduurzamen, wat de huidige stand van zaken is en hoe we het nu doen en hoe we het beter kunnen doen. Ik kan me voorstellen dat we op basis daarvan dat de uitvoering van ons actieplan ook zo is. Trouwens, ik probeerde je nog te linken aan andere collega's die hier specifiek bij betrokken zijn, maar zij waren te druk en konden je niet helpen. '</i></p>

<p>Dat is geen probleem, jullie hebben het waarschijnlijk drukker dan ik. Kan je iets vertellen over de methoden van beleidsimplementatie die worden gebruikt op het gebied van CE en ook voor Duurzame Consumptie en Productie?</p>	<p><i>Ik zou je daarvoor aanraden weer naar het Actieplan te kijken, we hebben mensen die zich bezighouden met marktprikkels, die zitten op wet en regelgeving, mensen die zich bezighouden met public procureren, en gewoon daar specifiek op gefocust zijn. Dat soort dingen worden door veel mensen opgepakt, daar besteden we best veel tijd en energie aan, alleen durf ik niet precies te zeggen hoe ze dat doen omdat het heel gericht en technisch is. Ook omdat ze allemaal wel anders en technisch is. Voor public procurement zitten wij met UNEP in een groep voor overheden met een agenda die ook internationaal proberen overheden hun acties te versterken en kijken hoe we duurzamer en beter kunnen doen, ook bij Rijkswaterstaat. Ik zal nog wel even contact opnemen met een collega die hier wel nauw bij betrokken is, als je dat wil. Dan vraag ik hoe het technisch precies in elkaar zit en of er een voorbeeld van kan worden gegeven. Maar je moet weten dat veel van wat wij doen voor beleidsimplementatie is natuurlijk ook via de EU bepaald, dat vertalen wij dan weer door naar acties in Nederland.</i></p>
<p>Als je dat wil doen, dan erg graag. En ik had wel door dat voornamelijk de EU leidend is in veel acties. De EU is natuurlijk ideaal om gestructureerd en zonder te grote hindernissen naar de doelstellingen toe te werken. Hoe zou je het proces van implementatie willen karakteriseren voor duurzame consumptie en productie, als een top-down proces, multilevel proces of een bottom-up proces?</p>	<p><i>Ik zou denken dat multilevel moet zijn. Als het top-down zou zijn, zou het niet werken, want als je beslissingen top-down maakt dan neem je stakeholders onderin niet mee. Bij bottom-up is de kans groot dat je het draagvlak wat de overheid nodig heeft, niet hebben, en dat heb je ook weer nodig en het is ook wel raar als mensen op elkaar aan het wachten zijn. Ik denk dat veel dingen ook wel tegelijkertijd kunnen gebeuren. Ik denk dat de private sector een eigen rol heeft, die is anders dan die van de overheid. Net zoals met innovatie, wat vaak uit de private sector komt en als je merkt dat de private sector iets ontwikkeld heeft en vraagt naar de overheid, zie je dat de overheid er ook bij betrokken wordt en erin mee gaat. En dat is natuurlijk het hele principe van de SDGs, van de whole-of-government approach, omdat het juist multilevel moet zijn, omdat er op verschillende niveaus meer moet gebeuren. Het enige risico wat je dan ziet is dat er meerdere keren hetzelfde werk wordt gedaan op verschillende niveaus en dat je uiteenlopende initiatieven krijgt die niet goed op elkaar aansluiten en dat er niet genoeg coördinatie is om überhaupt terug te komen naar die doelen en die targets om de</i></p>

	<p><i>doelen te bereiken. Daarom zat ik wel in dubio, want bij multilevel moet je dat wel een beetje opgeven of dingen die je in moet leveren zeg maar, omdat het op zoveel verschillende niveaus doorgaat en gebeurt. Dat is het ingewikkelde ervan. Maar van de drie, ik denk dan ook dat we daar nu in zijn, er is in Nederland nu een CE-actieplan, er is in de EU een CE-Actieplan, vanuit bedrijven zijn er actieplannen om circulair te zijn, dat geldt voor Mkb's en ook voor multinationals, dus ja het gebeurt nu multilevel en wat ik dan merk is dat het heel lastig is om een goed overzicht te krijgen en te zien welke stappen je als overheid dan moet zetten. Dat is het lastige bij zo'n aanpak, dat je misschien de verschillende stippeltjes op de horizon hebt die niet altijd even duidelijk zijn.</i></p>
<p>Ja dat kan ik me heel goed voorstellen. Kan je iets vertellen over de politiek, de rol die zij hebben voor SDG 12 of CE om te realiseren?</p>	<p><i>Wat ik zelf heel fijn vindt bij de CE, wat ik jammer vind, is dat wij best veel doen op de SDGs maar dat er weinig politieke ownership is, ik vind dat zonde en zo'n CE Actieplan is dan een manier om bij te dragen of een visie te hebben waar wij naartoe willen werken. Ik vind het goed dat er dan een visie is van: wij gaan ons gebruik van grondstoffen in 2030 halveren. Ik denk dat wij in Nederland ook juist de ruimte hebben om zo'n visie te etaleren, we zitten in een stabiele omgeving en zijn ook een rijk land. Als die positie op politiek niveau hierop ontbreekt, is het minder goed mogelijk om je land te motiveren om hier belang aan te hechten. Hoe gaan ze nou om met klimaat, want dat is gewoon een heel belangrijk onderwerp en een lastig bespreekpunt. Hoe zorgen we ervoor dat we ook nu weten te blijven investeren in ons klimaat en dat zijn natuurlijk politieke keuzes: ga je steun geven aan een vliegmaatschappij zonder groene voorwaarden of is dat helemaal geen bespreekpunt, uiteindelijk kunnen ambtenaren daar alles over adviseren, maar uiteindelijk blijft alles een politieke keuze. De opties voor beleid moet ik opschrijven, met pro's en cons, maar de politici maken uiteindelijk de keuze. En het is juist fijn dat op een thema als circulaire economie een duidelijke visie is. En dat maakt het makkelijker, want je moet de visie wel vertalen naar je eigen werk, maar je weet hoe je activiteiten daaraan bijdragen en hoe een actie</i></p>

	<p><i>ervoor kan zorgen dat het grondstoffengebruik in Nederland gehalveerd wordt. En als een actie daar niet aan bijdraagt, dan weet je: dat ga ik dus niet doen. Op bijvoorbeeld jongerenbeleid is er niet zo'n visie en dat maakt het moeilijk, omdat je niet weet waar je naartoe wilt werken. In de CE kan je bijna alles meten, komt veel terug en weet je dus ook beter wat je moet doen om die doelstellingen te behalen. Dat is ook fijn aan de SDGs, landen die geen visie hebben, waar veel problemen zijn, en je als overheid zo'n agenda overneemt, dan creëer je een hele andere sfeer waarin en waarnaar ambtenaren naar moeten werken en dan kan je ze er ook op afrekenen als het doel niet behaald wordt en waardoor dit komt.</i></p>
<p>Dus op deze manier zijn de SDGs doelen voor je beleid in de toekomst waar je heel concreet naar toe kunt werken?</p>	<p><i>Ja precies, want als je ernaar kijkt zijn ze heel erg gericht op resultaat en het maken van impact. Alle doelen zijn de outcome en als je als overheid kijkt naar de output en dat terug beredeneert naar de input en de activiteiten, dan kom je uit op een plan op een plan voor duurzame ontwikkeling en je kan ook prioriteiten stellen om op te focussen. Zodat er een richting komt hoe je iets aanpakt. Dan merk je ook dat één doelstelling van de SDGs alleen kan worden gerealiseerd door het te combineren met andere SDG-doelstellingen. Dus dat is het mooie van de SDGs.</i></p>
<p>Wat doet de Rijksoverheid om integratie en beleidscoherentie op de thema's van de SDGs te waarborgen en dan voornamelijk binnen de overheidsorganen?</p>	<p><i>Je hebt natuurlijk de taskforce van de SDGs, met de contacten binnen de verschillende ministeries om samen te bespreken hoe de vooruitgang van de SDGs gaat. Dat is een heel belangrijk platform. Daar zit ik niet zelf in, dus ik weet niet hoe goed of slecht dat gaat en of de kansen gerealiseerd worden. Dat is een belangrijke tool, maar wat daar uitkomt komt niet zo 1,2,3 terug in mijn dagelijkse werk. Dat is wel jammer.</i></p>
<p>Hoe hoop je dat dan te zien, of hoe verwacht je dat dat terugkomt in je werk?</p>	<p><i>Ja klopt. Ik weet niet zo goed hoe dat werkt. Ik hoor er veel van, second-hand, het komt weer terug op het punt waar de coördinatie moet liggen en ik denk dat dat niet bij BZ zou moeten liggen. Ik denk dat wanneer dat bij Financiën of een Planningsministerie terecht komt, dat je dan een heel andere rol hebt. Want idealiter pak je dit aan bij de begroting, dat je je begroting op de SDGs baseert. Dat doen wij niet en je ziet bij landen die dat wel zo doen, dat ze</i></p>

	<i>veel meer met de SDGs bezig zijn en hier ook makkelijker over kunnen rapporteren.</i>
De laatste twee vragen: Op welke manier opereert Nederland en met welke doelstellingen in de EU en in andere internationale netwerken of platforms op dit thema?	<i>Ik denk dat ik best veel voorbeelden al heb gegeven, de Europese Plastic Pact, ons werk in New York, misschien goed om daar nog even op te focussen. Wij probeerden daar echt de milieu gerelateerde SDGs hoger op de agenda te brengen, dat is lastig omdat de netwerken hiervoor niet echt bestaan, daar probeerden we voor te pleiten op zo'n SDG-agenda juist op die lastige issues om over de SDGs te praten op cross-border thema's. Wat bijvoorbeeld ook komt bij duurzame consumptie en productie, wat wij heel erg nodig hebben is een mondiaal akkoord over hoe wij omgaan met onze natuurlijke hulpbronnen. Die kans is waarschijnlijk miniem, maar ik ben wel blij dat we een land zijn dat het belang daarvan ziet.</i>
Dan de laatste vraag: Wat is de rol van de EU hierin?	<i>Wat belangrijk is, is dat wij in internationale fora onderhandelen als de EU. De enige fora waarin wij dat niet doen, zijn de G20, als wij daarin zitten en ook in de WTO zullen wij waarschijnlijk niet altijd in EU-vorm onderhandelen. Wij zijn verder altijd één verenigd front. En het is een interessante dynamiek, als jij als Nederland, stel dat wij iets van een Afrikaans land willen waar we geen ambassade hebben of niet heel veel geld in stoppen, apart, is de kans groot dat de EU dat wel doet. Op het moment dat dan de EU wordt gevraagd om dat land iets te vragen, geeft dat een heel andere dynamiek. Het is een soort van rare escalatie dat je strategisch kunt gebruiken om landen te overtuigen hoe belangrijk iets is. En wat ook heel fijn is, aan de EU en ook niet fijn. De EU kan echt in ons voordeel werken als een blok van 28, nu 27, die achter iets staan, maar het kan ook onze positie heel erg versoepelen. Want stel dat wij heel erg iets willen en een ander Europees land wil dat niet, dan kom je uit op een soort van middenweg waar niemand heel blij mee is maar ook niemand heel ontevreden mee is. En als je dan met de G20 in gesprek gaat, dan is je positie al veel zwakker als je gaat onderhandelen. Daar moet je ook rekening mee houden in de G20, dat wij veel meer de rode lijnen aan onze kant moeten stellen en daar zijn wij niet altijd even goed in omdat we heel erg compromis gericht</i>

	<p><i>zijn. Wij zoeken samenwerking en het compromis op, vooral bij natuur en milieugerichte SDGs werkt dat niet altijd. Daar zitten grote verschillen tussen verschillende lidstaten. Daarmee zorg je ook voor verantwoordelijkheid en betrouwbaarheid, maar dat betekent wel dat landen die negatiever erin staan veel meer sway krijgen en dan is het de rol van de Europese Commissie om te zeggen: dat gaan we niet doen, daar komen natuurlijk ook andere sprekers ter sprake zoals Frankrijk en Duitsland.</i></p>
<p>Heb jij nog vragen of opmerkingen voor mij?</p>	<p><i>Mag ik je scriptie lezen als die klaar is?</i></p>
<p>Ja natuurlijk, als ik mijn scriptie af heb ik zal ik die naar jou sturen en als je wil kan ik je ook nog de uitwerking van ons gesprek laten lezen. Ik ga het anonimiseren, maar ik denk dat het wel handig is als je het dan nog een keer leest. En zal je de vragen nog door kunnen sturen naar jouw collega?</p>	<p><i>Ja, erg fijn als ik het nog kan lezen. En ik stuur het ook door naar mijn collega, zonder jou mee te nemen in de CC, zodat ik geen info doorgeef aan jou en ik link jullie als ik bevestiging van hem heb. Hoe lang heb je nog?</i></p>
<p>Ik denk nog een ruime maand en in augustus heb ik mijn eindgesprek, dus er is nog tijd. Heel erg bedankt voor je tijd voor het interview.</p>	<p><i>Ja geen dank, no worries en ik zie ik ook erg graag je scriptie wanneer het klaar is.</i></p>
<p>Nogmaals bedankt en tot ziens, doe!</p>	<p><i>Jij ook bedankt, dag!</i></p>

18. Annex 12: Interview Czech Republic

Date	May 12 2020
Interviewee	Policy officer from the Czech Ministry of Environment
Duration	1:01:36
Recording device	Zoom
Melle	Interviewee
I think we are ready to start	<i>Okay, thank you for your interest. I understand your questions and your background, I have prepared answers to the questions.</i>
Last week I talked with the national coordinator of SDG 12, and she told me that in essence there is little to no strategy, no vision from the government on how to work with this SDG, so I am interested in your expertise and also would like to know what other EU Member States are doing with SDG 12.	<i>I am responsible for the economic part of the SDGs, because we have a coordinating office for the Agenda 2030 for the Czech Republic under the Ministry of Environment. It used to be a government office, but now it is under the Ministry of Environment because it mainly falls under our tasks, other ministries are in touch, we have a vocal point network. At each ministry, we have a vocal point for sustainable development. Usually, we consult and coordinate our activities in that sense. However, it is mainly paper work and it is mainly about coordination and evaluation as such. Activities that have a direct impact on the economy are usually made without these big coordination mechanisms. Of course, you usually must have political will to do something, as officers from the public sector we try to coordinate ourselves and make something useful, but in the end, it is always based on the political will. SDG 12 is part of my work here, and it is perfect right now, because we are finishing with our zero draft of Agenda 2030 evaluation and review right now. We do have some information on how it works, what works and where we are standing. So that is pretty good right now. I have to say that on the indicators and such it is not that bad, but we are still lagging behind the EU-15 and other developed nations. Because over the last year we had large industrial sectors and heavy industries and that blinked to some inefficiencies in our supply chain and our resource efficiency. Our material and resource management are better than it was, we have had improvements in the last 15 years of about 35%, but it is still 2 times higher than in</i>

	<p><i>Germany for example. We have some inefficiencies everywhere, just to give you a broader picture.</i></p>
<p>Thank you, I will now start with the questions:</p> <p>Does the Czech Republic have an SDG strategy or a strategy to realise SDG 12?</p>	<p><i>We don't have a strategy dedicated to SDG 12. Not just for SDG 12, and in fact, part of the SDG 12 is the 10 Year Plan for Sustainable consumption and Production which we do not use as well. This is reflected in our other policies, which is why we don't use that specifically. And right now, we are mainly focused on the Sustainable Production side, not that much on the consumption side. That is because consumption side in Czech Republic side is mainly focused on household, because most of our industrial products are exported, so we don't really cover the consumption that much. For household, it is linked to the GDP and the well-being, greening and sustainable consumption takes place, but really, really slowly. For us, for the SDG part or sustainable development, we have the broad strategical framework for sustainable development: Czech Republic strategy for 2030, which is also available online. That is our national take at sustainable development and we also have another document that covers implementation of the SDGs, implementation of the Agenda 2030, because the SDGs are not always the national priorities. So we have two documents, we hope to get rid of it in the next three/four years to have only one, because it can sometimes make some issues when we all talk about the SDGs, but right now we have this and we also did an evaluation on the implementation right now and to that, we don't implement targets from the SDGs that are not deemed as a national priority or relevant for our economy or nation. So sometimes a few targets, for example SDG 14, we don't really have any water inland, we don't have a sea, so it is not really necessary for us to work on it big. From that perspective, we sometimes have different views on the SDGs. In the EU it is pretty much similar, but with developing countries or even the US, our view on the SDGs is very different. But we are the EU, we are the biggest push towards where the sustainable development comes from. We are not pioneering, we are trying to not lag behind, we try to be in the middle. Striving towards the targets, but also not as frontrunners.</i></p>

<p>That is the next thing I would like to ask, because you referred to the circular economy action plan as a policy that contributes to SDG 12. I think in that regard you also have an extensive circular economy approach to contribute to Sustainable Consumption and Production.</p>	<p><i>Our circular economy approach makes up for almost 70% of our SDG 12 coverage. And it's mainly based on the EU objectives and the EU measures. So, we currently, Action Plan was since 2010, have new Action Plan, Communication from the Commission, first one was mainly about waste. This one is about products and something that we hoped to take place, because from the industry we saw the push to really do something with the plastic industry as such. And Europe brought perspective helps, it is easier for us to convince others to do something when it is EU wide, especially regarding products, because you need to take into account the competitiveness and that is really important here.</i></p>
<p>Which policies are included in the Czech approach to realise SDG 12 and how do these policies complement each other?</p>	<p><i>Right now, we have the Waste management Plan, which covers the next four years, from 2020-2024. And in waste management plan, there are several sections like the waste prevention policy, and other different parts that are more soft measures towards waste prevention. In whole of EU is not simple, because waste still increases, so we are not really efficient in there. Then there also is the Secondary Raw Materials Policy, which is mainly about secondary raw materials and their market. Which was really small six years ago, it is bigger now, but still smaller than we want. And right now, we have the shift and changed the focus from broad market for secondary materials to specific material focus, for example we have special dialogue with association for glass manufacturing and how they should recycle, with plastic manufacturing and such. We have like 10 resources that we are covering under this policy. Cooperation with stakeholders and associations. And then what is linked is our national plan for resource efficiency, which comes from EU directive for energy savings and energy efficiency. So, it is mandatory for us, but it makes really impact here, together with eco-design and energy efficient wash machines and so on. And this year, or since last year, we will publish it next year, we are preparing our circular economy strategy. Our circular Czechia 2040, with cooperation from our government, European Commission and OECD. We are right now at the point where we have our</i></p>

	<i>macroeconomic impact assessment and such and we are trying to prepare for the draft of our policy. Our coverage from the strategy.</i>
Okay. My next question would be: what are the main policy targets, but I think you said they are mainly derived from EU directives.	<i>Mainly, mainly from EU directives. Usually on the waste. We don't have own targets based; they are always based on EU directives. And in the waste sector we don't do gold plating, we are not too ambitious there. For the secondary raw materials policy, we have the promotion of the circularity of the use of raw materials, we are now at 7% from our materials in the economy that have some sort of circularity and we intend to double it in the next period.</i>
And that is by when? The next period is 2025 or?	<i>I think it is for a 10-year period. We also of course have the energy efficiency targets, energy savings in buildings and energy efficient targets and so on. It is for 99% covered by the EU targets.</i>
How did you set targets to be achieved?	<i>Well usually it is covered by legislation. We strive to achieve the targets and try get there, but it needs to be through legislation. We also use cooperation, so for example right now we have a new scheme for voluntary commitments for energy savings where there is an umbrella framework from the minister of industry and trade with associations of manufactures and they always have an agreement under which a specific firm can commit themselves towards energy savings, that makes some sense to them because they are in touch with our officers at the ministry and we communicate our proposals and new laws, everything to them. And they count their own savings and we use those savings towards our national target for energy savings. We try to promote this cooperation right now; it is quite new for Czech Republic right now. It is since March and we will see how it goes, it was inspired by the Netherlands.</i>
How has Czechia developed an SDG strategy or a strategy to achieve Sustainable Consumption and Production?	<i>We don't have the dedicated strategy; I have to say that we had some policy before. We framed these policies that we had that work to SDG 12 under strategy twelve, because we already had these policies before.</i>
Compared to the Netherlands, Czechia does have an SDG strategy, how have you managed	<i>Well, first we have those two pillars here. SDG strategy that is focused on the public sector and what the public sector can do towards the SDGs.</i>

<p>to develop such a strategy and also the implementation of this strategy?</p>	<p><i>And the Czechia 2030, which is a full-fledged framework for sustainable development with stakeholders where you as individual can do something. Those two are separate, but intertwined factors. The biggest work was done on the Czechia 2030, which is a national priority on sustainable development with involvement of many stakeholders, many individuals, public consultations, everything that could be worked with. We have this really broad strategical framework, we have this really nice strategy, but we lack the implementation. Because you envision your steps towards the goal, but those steps are usually pretty problematic for someone and sometimes the wind blows from different directions. So, yeah.</i></p>
<p>What is the advantage of having such a strategy?</p>	<p><i>For us, it is important, because we know what are for us the priority targets, of all 169 SDG targets, which of these targets are already full-filled and what are the problematic targets. That is the reason why are making the evaluation of our progress and it is for us important, because no one else, even not the UNSD, ESDN, or NGOs really measure the progress to the national level. And when you compare Czechia with Mexico or Trinidad & Tobago, it skews to how great we are. But at the end, when you use the national level and when you measure how poor your country is, we know we are how developed we are as a rich country. But when you look at inequality in my country, and how poverty is measured here, then you see that it is not really that great. So we thought and think that the national policy for the SDGs is pretty important, because you want to measure yourself and you want to make meaningful progress and meaningful measures, not just proclaiming progress, but we know that overall it is not always that great and we want to know what is lacking. Well sometimes it is because we are lacking the data as such.</i></p>
<p>That is a very clear answer. Concerning the next question, I read it in the strategy as well, but maybe you can elaborate on it a bit more: Which stakeholders have been involved in the process of establishing a strategy to implement the SDGs or SCP specifically?</p>	<p><i>Well, we have cooperation with government council for sustainable development. We have green NGOs, we have stakeholders from industry, stakeholders that cover gender and equality, so we have the biggest associations that cover all the SDGs on behalf of the biggest NGOs under one umbrella. And at least once a</i></p>

	<p><i>year we discuss with them the progress and what we are making and what they deem appropriate. It is of course different from our view, because it is a public sector view, but we need their input because otherwise we are torn apart from the reality. So, it is not for us to strive for sustainable development from an ivory tower, Right now. On the level of policy development, the biggest event is the stakeholder participation is by design and by commenting the proposals, our SDG strategy and measures. The problem right now is that the NGOs are not really involved in the implementation phase, because as public sector we make measures that only public sector can make. The cooperation with the private sector, private associations or labour unions, we are not used to this type of cooperation and as other questions will cover it is not really enforceable, this kind of cooperation. We can deal with someone, but when someone thinks differently a year later, then we don't have the instruments to push them to our agreement and of course there is always a big push from the public as well that needs to be all-between. We cannot lean towards one part or group just to realise the goals. We try to be indifferent to them, show neutrality. Sometimes that is the problem, because you have personal interests, interests of associations, interests of the public and the interests of the politicians as well.</i></p>
<p>I think you also covered a part of the next question that I wanted to ask, so I will go the next question.</p>	<p><i>Yes, that is true. But I have to say that the cooperation with stakeholders, the last 10 years, has been better and better. And we are trying to involve more and more, without their involvement the implementation and enforcement does not work well. Targets and indicators without the inside, does not really work. So, their role is mainly in the development phase, but they have a really small role in the implementation phase. They mainly act as reviewers of the progress and comment on what we have done.</i></p>
<p>What are the reasons to involve stakeholders or not to involve stakeholders?</p>	<p><i>Well, you need to involve them, so that they feel involved and you won't receive their opposition at the end. Usually, they are the ones that feel the real impact on the economy, or the environment as such, not us. Each input as valuable. Sometimes the problem lies with those</i></p>

	<p><i>stakeholders with really clear interests, who will always say the same thing. That can cause a problem, when the two biggest stakeholders you need to cooperate with are the biggest opposition for your progressive regimes. That often happens in the Czech Republic, because we still have a really large percentage of landfilling and here we see that the lobby from landfilling and the municipalities and cities which can use the money that we provide for landfilling, that they are the ones that oppose the ideas to stop landfilling or the lower it to a manageable level.</i></p>
<p>What are the characteristics of the stakeholders involved, and what are the competencies and possibilities of the stakeholders to achieve SCP?</p>	<p><i>Usually, they are some official associations, often the biggest one, we sometimes also deal with the smaller ones. So, they need to be important in that specific sector or industry. They should have some public or political power behind them, because they act as another co-legislator in that sense. And usually in our proposals, not always in our regulative proposals, they need to be connected to the sector that is covered. I would not discuss the ideas about waste management with actors from the energy sectors or energy providers. Sometimes it makes sense, when it is covering all sectors or its interconnected. But usually we don't have this holistic approach, and even without this approach our common procedure is usually really big. I think our ministry does not really want to broaden this stakeholder portfolio they are dealing with. That is problematic for us, because we as coordinator for sustainable development strive for a more open-minded approach towards using associations with young people, niche organisations that can say something important, but that is really problematic in our system.</i></p>
<p>What are the different responsibilities of the stakeholders involved to contribute to SDG 12?</p>	<p><i>Well, I would say that from the stakeholders it does not really happen here. That anyone would have responsibility towards a target or objective, the biggest responsibility would be for our collective system. In waste management this would be a collective system towards packaging as such, to create and manage our infrastructure for the waste separation/collection and recycling, so those are entities that were made by law and they can</i></p>

	<p><i>manage this system. They are independent, NGO's, at the start made from industry, so they were part private but they are heavily regulated so they are NGOs with big government oversight and they have some responsibilities because without them the infrastructure would collapse. That is an example. Usually they are independent, but since January we need to give them grants for the collection of paper waste, because the paper market in the EU collapsed and the money you earned from paper collection and recycling of paper waste was less than the costs involved. It is one time help right now, but it covers four years. So, I think these types of stakeholders, because the members of this collective system they are the biggest industries and biggest producers and they paid for the collection of their own waste. So that's type of stakeholder, because you need to communicate with them everything that covers the waste management, because it involves their own costs, revenue everything and the end also the establishment of those systems. But otherwise, for example consumer right associations or consumer right parties are not really involved in anything, they have a very strict perspective and they don't care in that aspect, until when it is by law that they should cover the right to repair in the future for example, but generally they don't do that much in idea of sustainability and responsible consumption.</i></p>
<p>You said that it is really difficult to hold someone accountable, that they can only be held accountable when it is passed through law. Are there parties or other organisations that can be held accountable for non-compliance when it turns into law?</p>	<p><i>I am not sure we can hold accountable the entities that are associations for the specific business. At the end the problems of non-compliance lie with these businesses. When someone does not comply to our law, he is held accountable by inspection agency, environmental agency or the consumer right agency, when it comes to eco-design or they sell products that are not supposed to be on the market. But on specific case-by-case basis, not that you can say that the industry is in a big problem, that does not work.</i></p>
<p>How do you try to cooperate with all stakeholders and enable all stakeholders to contribute to SCP, they are represented by associations, are there other methods of</p>	<p><i>I think, many times, the stakeholders, are really progressives. I would say that we have two big associations, one is CSR organisation, they are huge but mainly PR and specific topics and</i></p>

<p>stakeholder involvement to have the stakeholder contribute to SCP or strategies that you develop?</p>	<p><i>awareness campaigner and we have the Business Council for Sustainable Development that exists of the 70 biggest companies that make their own reporting, and try to make something to people and environment. Members of those agencies try to make something tangible, because they need to report it. But otherwise if the associations try maybe to do something towards SCP and it is not mandatory, it is not in their DNA. It is not that easy to say that stakeholders always fulfil those goals for example. Sometimes, like in plastic packaging industries, bottles manufacturers for example, they need to do something because we want them to, but also because the competition is very intensive globally and they need to do more. That is really important, they do more than we demand. They are exporters, that is the reason why the internal market in the EU is a huge first mover push for them instead of the national demands.</i></p>
<p>That is what I heard in the Netherlands as well, that large companies or multinationals that act on a global scale are more ambitious than the national government or push the national government to enable them to do more in this specific area. But I hear and see that this sounds familiar.</p>	<p>Yes.</p>
<p>How would you describe the process of cooperation with the stakeholders? Is there a strict process or open process of stakeholder involvement?</p>	<p><i>I would say that cooperation with stakeholders is really open, it is mandatory, it usually comes with the public coverage, so if you don't do it it will hurt somewhere during the process. To that extent, it is a public push. But we have the legal process for the cooperation, with legal entities, like labour unions, and chamber of commerce and industry and federation of industry and transport. Those three are the biggest organisations for employers and employees, so everything that is covered in economic policy, social policy and such, is usually discussed with them. Government, labour unions and industries and they discuss those major topics, that works on a pretty strict basis. Usual discussions during some specific policy, such as secondary raw materials, are not covered by this strict and big framework.</i></p> <p><i>This tri-party works where the proposals and the needs are the greatest, so when you have new economic policy, economic stimulus and</i></p>

	<p><i>financial package they can discuss it when you have new social support and social insurance change, they will of course discuss it. Pensions for example, are discussed through this. But the environment problems, are usually not covered. Although the industrial part is interested in them and we discuss them on other platforms, the labour unions are not interested in it. They often say: okay, you want something green, it makes it more efficient with less people, meaning that there will be less employees: we are not interested. It is not always that simple, but an example. So that is the reason why these huge discussion between the largest stakeholders are often about the social and economic issues. Sustainable Consumption and Production is more than social and economic, there are more actors involved. Our NGOs and activists are proponents of more progressive stances, industry depends, sometimes they also propose more circularity. In energy and resource efficiency the NGOs are incorporated, but not to the extend as producers and manufacturers.</i></p>
<p>Which methods of policy implementation are used to achieve SCP? (incentives, laws & regulations, public spending, behavioural campaigns)?</p>	<p><i>Financial incentives, the main incentives are grants through loans. And there are separate programmes that are, the best example from the household perspective is the energy savings programme and the swap of heating units in households for more energy efficiency with less emission. That programmes runs for almost 10 years right now. It is really important in a few regions, otherwise the emissions would be catastrophic. A few years ago, we added the rainwater programme which covers the costs of rainwater containment in your land and such, right now it has increasing popularity due to the drought. But the costs in that programme steeply rise. The Green Public Procurement is only on the paper right now, it is not that often used, it is not mandatory it is voluntary and our procurers normally don't want more work. It is not as easy just to say: I want the cheapest option. And of course, we make campaigns. We have the enough of plastic campaign, which promotes the no-use of plastic packaging in coffee shops, restaurants as such and we try to promote that. It is our public campaign. Some voluntary approaches, we have a few voluntary commitments networks under the sustainable development platforms where individuals can say: I want to do something for</i></p>

	<p><i>the next year. It has a problem with the evaluation, but we are trying to raise awareness about those issues. We are trying to use a whole mix, but we mainly try to use legislation and regulation and financial incentives on the other side. What we don't really use is tax-levying and such, because at the end the minister of finance is really strict. We want the easiest tax system and any changes lowering the VAT or something, it is not really that popular here.</i></p>
<p>I think this question needs a bit more explanation. The question would be: How have these methods and mechanisms been selected? Is this also being discussed with stakeholders and are stakeholders being involved in this process of selecting instruments for policy implementation.</p>	<p><i>Usually, you make a proposal to change something, we make two or three different ideas how to deal with that, but in the end, it is always the baseline scenario where nothing happens and maybe our first or second proposal which is similar to the proposal that is currently in place. We don't often use completely different proposals; they are rather similar with different impact assessments. The discussion about I don't want to do that one way but another way, those discussion we have, but the proposals are often directed into one specific way and they do not likely change 180 degrees into another way. That is the problem of our approach in general, that is problematic sometimes.</i></p>
<p>You mean that not always the desired or optimal results can be achieved through this?</p>	<p><i>I would say that it is similar as in emission trading, when you have this so-called grandfathering, you can't do something based on the previous results and we use the similar approach as before, because we know it worked. It was not optimal, but it helped us push ourselves towards the desired direction. We mainly use instruments and measures that already worked, we are not really pioneers that dare to experiment. For example, there is a huge experiment right now, that is Germany is really good at the sandbox regulation in the energy sector and we won't have that. And even industry knows that using three implementation approaches in different regions is the best, just to experiment and see which one works best, but we don't do that. Experimentation is something we don't use and something we really should.</i></p>

<p>Is the implementation process a top-down process, a multilevel process, or a bottom-up process?</p>	<p><i>I would say that implementation of our strategies is strictly top-down, but in reality much more is made and is in fact bottom-up sometimes, industry cannot sleep and say we cannot do that, but they will have to adapt to the rules of the EU, especially for the EU, so they change but maybe a little bit slowly with the national goals. Usually we don't want to set some ambitious national goals, but we move to the desired direction, maybe a little bit slowly, but we do that.</i></p> <p><i>So even though you don't have political will, it changes overtime, mainly with the market forces.</i></p>
<p>Yes. That is also what I see from within the EU, that it should mainly come from the market and that governments should have a role, and that they can guide the market actors, but that mainly the market can achieve success in this area.</p>	<p><i>Yes exactly.</i></p>
<p>What are the tasks of the political actors to ensure realisation of SDG 12?</p>	<p><i>Well, without them we don't really have active decision-making. They need to decide if they want to do something and back it up with political will and then it will happen. In the implementation phase they are responsible to push through the specific proposals, specific regulations and such, without legislation process it does not work and you cannot have that. On the realisation of the financial support, mechanisms and such, they don't do micromanagement, but sometimes with political will, the small changes in the system happen, so it's more efficient in the end for the consumer in the end. We had our programme for house renovating for energysavings, but with political will and a different approach, they changed the paperwork around so it is not as previously for the four-eight month period you wait until you hear whether your application is valid or not, but you will receive a message in 3 weeks. So, it helps, it does not help with the amount or the topics that are supported much, but with the small changes the politicians can make something more user friendly and make it more publicly acceptable.</i></p>

<p>How are internal policies developed to support coherent action across the ministries, for SDG 12?</p>	<p><i>Just one example, after discussion with our ministry for foreign affairs they started their programme for green embassies and green projects, like e-bikes for the transport of their own employees. Sometimes it happens, but normally it is not like this. Normally it is more whole-of-government. For the ministries, they can impact our strategies when they decide, but it is not that often. I don't know what to say more about this.</i></p>
<p>I have also seen the structure of the implementation of the SDGs of the Czech Republic, but how does the national government do to ensure integration and policy coherence amongst government institutions?</p>	<p><i>For the government policy, you have government office that acts as coordinator, usually they work as coordinator on the basis of coalition agreement of the political parties. For Sustainable Development and SDGs we act as coordinating unit, and to that we have this official network of government council for sustainable development and the unofficial network of vocal points across ministries, so whenever they do something, we can discuss it internally, and we of course have mandatory comment procedure on each proposal of each ministry and we try make sure that their own ideas and proposals are not against and if possible are really strictly towards the SDGs. But sometimes the SDGs are really broad and they have a different perspective or interest to a policy area than our ministry. So, we try to make sure at the practical level, and at the government level it should be guaranteed by the government and the government council.</i></p>
<p>What happens if stakeholders fail to act? Or basically: how binding are the policy targets and are they enforceable?</p>	<p><i>I would say that usually the national targets are not enforceable, if those targets are based on the EU objectives, then it is really strict and better for that target to be obtained. However, when you mean the stakeholders like NGOs and industries and such, they have some role, but they don't act as the primary implementation network. So in that sense, there is not much to enforce. It is not really that possible, even though when we do not fulfil our national goal. For example, we have energy savings in buildings as a national goal, we don't fulfil it with 30-40% gap, the ones who makes those savings projects are building and construction firms, but we cannot enforce them. It doesn't matter, it is simply the fact that our support programmes do not work that well, so we need to change our efficiency in that sense, example:</i></p>

	<i>we had some 7 different programmes that at the end made the same projects and supported the same projects. It was really not that coordinated. When you have one programme where it was supported by 100 euros and other programmes was supported with 500 euros, you have quite some inefficiencies in there.</i>
Now I have come to my last questions. What is the role of the EU for the realisation of SDG 12? Is an EU strategy for the realisation of SDG 12 desirable?	<i>I would say the EU has a big role to play, because our own targets and objectives are based on those of the EU. And I would say the EU strategy for SDG 12 is already in place, we have the Green Deal, the Industrial Strategy which is with circularity, the product strategy under the circular economy action plan, so I think the EU already made those proposals and many of them will be implemented and I think many of them will be successful. A problem is that we will need EU funds well to be able to reach these objectives. I would say that we are not on the top of the list of the resource efficient countries, we need to do more, we know that, but we will make it steadily for now. We won't make a huge qualitative jump in two-three years now.</i>
Do you have any questions, comments or remarks concerning our meeting?	<i>I think I have said everything I wanted to say on that topic, so if you don't have anything to say or if you don't want to ask or add anything, it is good for me.</i>
I think we covered everything. So, I think we are almost done. But I really want to thank you for your time and willingness to meet with me to discuss the questions.	<i>Yes, it was my pleasure, thank you too. And I look forward to seeing your results. Kind regards, bye!</i>
I will send you my results. Thank you and bye!	