MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 2.0: POLICY INTEGRATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

A CASE STUDY ON THE 2030 AGENDA AND POLICY COHERENCE FOR DEVELOPMENT

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A Case Study on the 2030 Agenda and Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development

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[1] Title inspired by Carbone (2008) *Mission Impossible: the European Union and Policy Coherence for Development*
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Für meine Familie. Als Dank für ihre Unterstützung und unerschütterlichen Glauben an mich.

ABSTRACT

Since 1957, the European Union (EU) is operating at the international level with the goal to eradicate poverty in the context of sustainable development in a coherent and consistent way. For this purpose, it adopted the concept of policy coherence for development (PCD) to ensure that non-development policy sectors take the objectives of development policy into account. In 2007, PCD was integrated in EU primary legislation in Article 208 TFEU, providing a legal basis and obligation to fulfil. In the continuation of expansion as a global actor, the EU started to pursue sustainable development through the engagement at international conferences on the topic. Eventually, it resumed a leading role during the negotiations of the 2030 Agenda. With the ambition reaffirm this role in the implementation process, the EU faces the complex challenge of integrating the policy framework of the 2030 Agenda, and with it the newly introduced concept policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD), which builds on the previous PCD experience.

This thesis applies a theoretical framework based on insights of environmental policy integration (EPI) theories through four theoretical dimensions: (i) normative framework, (ii) political will, (iii) institutional setting, and (iv) resources, capacities and procedures. It argues that the EU has started off as a leading negotiator of the 2030 Agenda, yet has not followed suit with implementation 'at home'. It finds that the EU is running at risk to step into the rhetoric-reality gap – where high expectations do not match the reality – due to its *sui generis* character and structural complexity.

Keywords: European Union, policy coherence for (sustainable) development, 2030 Agenda, (environmental) policy integration

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAAA	Addis Ababa Action Agenda
ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific countries
COP	Conference of the Parties
CPI	Climate Policy Integration
DG	Director General
DG DEVCO	DG Development and Cooperation – EuropeAid
DG ENV	DG Environment
EC	European Commission
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
EEAS	European External Action Service
EEC	European Economic Community
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EDF	European Development Fund
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EP	European Parliament
EPA	Environmental Policy Appraisal
EPI	Environmental Policy Integration
EU	European Union
EU SDS	European Union Sustainable Development Strategy
IA	Impact Assessment
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MEP	Member of European Parliament
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NVR	National Voluntary Review
ODA	Official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCD	Policy Coherence for Development
PCSD	Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development
REFIT	Regulatory Fitness and Performance
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SFDRR	Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDI	Sustainable Development Indicator
TEU	Treaty Establishing the European Union
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
UN	United Nations
UN-GA	United Nations General Assembly
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
2030 Agenda	Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

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Und jedem Anfang wohnt ein Zauber inne,
Der uns beschützt und der uns hilft, zu leben. [2]
Hermann Hesse

1│INTRODUCTION

The European Union is one of its kind. Its *sui generis* character has been subject to challenge the widespread characterisation of international organisations. *Sui generis*[3] – meaning of its own kind, unique or in a class by itself - attributes setting the European Union (EU) apart from other international organisations in global politics (Portela & Raube, 2011, p. 234). As a union of currently 28 and soon to be 27 Member States, is has gone far beyond its beginnings of an economic union towards a common market, a shared currency and most importantly towards shared values and principles. The European Union has established itself on the international level and Moravcsik (2017) claims that "Europe today is a genuine superpower and will likely remain one for decades to come". He further indicates that Europe's ability to employ "soft power" to persuade other countries to change their behaviour is unique.

Moravcsik (2017) observations provide an entry point for this thesis research since one of its major research interests is to investigate the complexity of the international actor EU. Today, although struggling challenges such as imperfect institutions and policies, threats of rising right-wing populism, migration influx, and staggering economic growth and austerity, the EU still manages to keep Europe at peace and united. It presents itself as a single actor and united entity at the international level. Early on it decided to engage with other countries from around the world to establish diplomatic and economic relations with them. What started as the attempt to coming to terms with the EU member states' colonial past, quickly developed into founding bilateral relations with countries worldwide. This process also promoted the institutionalisation of development and international cooperation in the EU treaties and dates back to the formal establishment of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957.

Since then, the EU has extended its bilateral relations all over the globe and started to participate in multilateral agreements as well, adding multiple normative complexities to its own structure and policies. The EU's primary and overarching goal in development cooperation is to "eradicate poverty in a context of sustainable development" (Council of the European Union, 2006) – a goal it took on after resuming the role of the world's largest aid donor (Council of the European Union, 2017b; Europa, 2017g). To attain this goal, the EU introduced a first normative complexity[4]: the

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[2] "And every beginning holds a magic, which protects us and helps us to live" (Hesse, 1987, p. 119). Translated by author.

[3] Agreement of some scholars shows that the EU has *sui generis* character, attributing it to the fact that the European Union cannot be regarded a nation state (it is less than such), but it is more than an international organisation. It is hard to put a label on the EU with regards to traditional international relations theory (Boşilcă, 2014; Moravcsik, 1998; Phelan, 2012; Stroß, 2017; Wallace, 1999).

[4] Definition by author: Here, normative complexity is defined as the increasing degree of complexity that an actor's self-imposed adoption of norms and values entail for the design and achievement of policy goals

concept of Policy Coherence for Development (PCD). PCD aims at making EU development cooperation policy more coherent by demanding that non-development policy sectors take the objectives of development policy into account. After initial struggles to mainstream the concept amongst its EU Member States and in EU policy as well, the concept of PCD was integrated in EU fundamental law by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, with further reinforcement in by the Treaty of Lisbon in 2007 (European Commission, 2016g). The EU Treaty definition of PCD reads: "Union development cooperation policy shall have as its primary objective the reduction and, in the long term, the eradication of poverty. The Union shall take account of the objectives of development cooperation in the policies that it implements which are likely to affect developing countries" (Article 208(1), TFEU). Although there is no explicit reference to PCD, the implicit implications of the article gave legal footing to the concept and therefore made it concept ought to be adhered to – presenting the EU with a complex policy framework introducing various norms and values. The PCD policy framework was hence represented and channelled in EU's development policy tools, the 2006 European Consensus on Development and the 2011 Agenda for Change (Council of the European Union, 2006; European Commission, 2011b).

Over the past decades, PCD also raised interest in the academic world which is keen to understand how the EU deals with the addition of the complex PCD policy framework (Adelle & Jordan, 2014; Bodenstein *et al.*, 2016; Carbone, 2008, 2012; Carbone & Keijzer, 2016a; Keijzer, 2012; Picciotto, 2005; Sianes, 2017; Siitonen, 2016; Verschaeve *et al.*, 2016). By academics, PCD is broadly defined as "taking account of the needs and interests of developing countries in the evolution of the global economy" (Carbone, 2008, p. 234). Policy makers and academics alike observed the establishment of a PCD tradition in EU policies over the years, mostly in forms of institutionalising the PCD framework and introducing policy mechanisms such as PCD reporting and impact assessments. Although the EU made significant progress in fulfilling its legal PCD obligations, scholars started criticising the low impact and little effectiveness of PCD and the fact that it promises more on paper than it delivers in practice (Carbone & Keijzer, 2016a; Verschaeve *et al.*, 2016). This raises important questions of why and in what ways is the EU struggling with the PCD complexity and if the EU runs the risk at stepping into, what Smith (2013) called, the rhetoric-reality gap. The rhetoric-reality gap describes the phenomenon when self-set expectations and intentions (on paper) do not correspond with the reality (the actions in practice) (Carbone & Keijzer, 2016a, p. 35; see also the "capabilities-expectations gap" by Hill, 1993).

The PCD policy framework is only one example illustrating the EU evolution as an international actor that makes an impact on development prospects for countries around the world. Another example is the EU's increasing engagement in sustainable development efforts. The EU started to participate at international conferences and to become involved in multilateral agreements relevant for sustainable development as early as the 1990s[5]. Different approaches to sustainable development have been introduced by the international community since the first definition of sustainable development was stated in *Our Common Future* (Brundtland Report) of 1987 (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Other international processes followed in which the international community tried to enhance sustainable development by means of environmental protection and poverty eradication. By ways of stressing a single agreement amongst other crucial ones, it was the United Nations (UN) who adopted the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000, aspiring at halving extreme poverty, halting the spread of HIV/AIDS, and ensuring environmental sustainability to be attained in a fifteen-years period by 2015 (UN, 2000). The EU, an

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[5] In 1994, The EU participated at Convention on cooperation for the protection and sustainable use of the river Danube (DRPC) as first multilateral engagement on sustainable development (Europea, 2017)

intergovernmental organisation with observer status at the UN, and the EU Member States which are all members to the United Nations, made it their task and ambition to achieve the eight MDGs and integrate them in their own policies. Policy instruments, such as the abovementioned European Consensus on Development and Agenda for Change, partially constituted the tool kit to do so – including the policy framework of PCD.

In 2012, the UN invited its members and intergovernmental organisations to the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development to discuss a post-2015 development strategy and how to move on from the MDGs. By then, the UN General Assembly had adopted the resolution (A/65/276) upgrading the EU to an enhanced observer status, allowing EU representatives to speak on behalf of the EU and its Member States in the UN (EEAS, 2017). This enhanced observer status equally enhanced the EU's possibilities, including the presentation of proposals, interventions and participation in the general debate.

Three years later, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (hereafter the 2030 Agenda) and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was adopted by all 193 member countries and the intergovernmental organisations. The preamble of the 2030 Agenda is structured along the lines of the five P's – people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership – covering the three dimensions of economics, environment and society equally. The adopted 17 SDGs are stated to be indivisible in nature, universally applicable and interconnected in a way that intends to 'leave no one behind', but to create synergies between developing and developed countries and between the different policy sectors (UN, 2015b). During the intergovernmental negotiations of the 2030 Agenda in the UN open working-groups, the EU resumed a role as a leading negotiator, stating that:

> The EU has played an important role in shaping the 2030 Agenda, through public consultations, dialogue with our partners and in-depth research. The EU will continue to play a leading role as we move into the implementation of this ambitious, transformative and universal Agenda that delivers poverty eradication and sustainable development for all (Europa, 2017a, first sub-heading, last paragraph).

With the ambition to implement the 2030 Agenda in its internal and external policies, the EU added another policy framework and yet another layer of complexity to its policies. Part of this additional complexity is constituted by means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda and by the introduction of the concept policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD). Although the concept of PCSD is not officially defined by the UN, it builds on the policy framework of PCD and extends it from development to sustainable development. As PCSD is laid out in the sub-target 17.14, it remains interesting to see how the international community, particularly the EU, is planning to accomplish PCSD as part of the wider 2030 Agenda.

This thesis research concentrates on the EU's strive to play a leading role in the implementation and integration of the 2030 Agenda. Since it focuses on the EU policy integration efforts in its internal and external development policy generally, and on the added complexity of PCSD specifically, it applies the theoretical framework of environmental policy integration to analyse such integration efforts (Jordan & Lenschow, 2010; Lafferty & Hovden, 2003; Nilsson & Persson, 2003; Nilsson & Persson, 2017; Persson, 2004, 2009; Runhaar *et al.*, 2014). The question guiding the research of this thesis is therefore: **How does the EU seek to** (move from PCD to PCSD and) **integrate the SDGs in its internal/domestic policy and external development policy and how can this process be understood through applying a theoretical lens of environmental policy integration (EPI)?**

The research is motivated by the normative complexity that the introduction of the two policy frameworks, PCD and the 2030 Agenda, entails. It applies the theoretical insights gained from

environmental policy integration (EPI) by establishing four theoretical dimensions which are adapted to the case study of the two policy frameworks, PCD and the 2030 Agenda, through the inclusion of complimentary PCD concepts. Previously, EPI was mainly applied in the context of integrating environmental objectives in certain policy sectors (see studies by Brendehaug *et al.*, 2017; Dyrhauge, 2014; Oberthür, 2009; Simeonova & van der Valk, 2016). This thesis aims to add to the EPI body of literature in analysing an international normative framework like the 2030 Agenda cutting across sectors, and strives to make first steps towards a body of literature on PCSD, which is currently missing in academia and merely covered in empirical studies by think tanks and research institutes (for example ECDPM, DIE, ODI)[6], and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), a firm supporter of PCD and an advocator for the adoption of the PCSD concept (Gregersen *et al.*, 2016; King, 2016; King *et al.*, 2012; Knoll, 2016; Mackie *et al.*, 2017; OECD, 2003, 2015a, 2016, 2017b; Stafford-Smith *et al.*, 2016).

The research topic is narrowed down to the different EU institutions and their role in the process to integrate Agenda 2030/SDGs and to the possible move from the policy framework PCD to the concept PCSD. This thesis argues that the European Union has started off from the promising position of being a leading negotiator of the 2030 Agenda, yet has not followed suit with implementation 'at home'. It claims that the EU is running at risk at stepping into the rhetoric-reality gap, due to its *sui generis* character and structural complexity.

Outline

Following this short introduction, this thesis research proceeds according to the subsequent outline. Chapter two provides background information about the international actor the European Union and two policy frameworks. It introduces the empirical research case, and then proceeds to the European Union and its institutional set-up, (i) the policy framework PCD, and (ii) the policy framework of the 2030 Agenda. Chapter three presents the puzzle that triggered this research and clarifies the research question and research objective. Chapter four introduces the insights on EPI theories and establishes the theoretical framework and its guiding four principles. arrive at the main research question guiding this paper. Then, chapter five elaborates on the methods employed before, during and after the data collection and data analysis. The remaining three chapters are dedicated to the empirical findings and the discussion on the policy integration process of the 2030 Agenda holistically (Chapter Six), and a possible integration of the PCSD concept succeeding the current PCD policy framework (Chapter Seven). Chapter Eight discusses the empirical findings and sets them into a broader perspective, while it also reflects on the suitability of the theoretical framework. The last and concluding chapter nine recaps and summarises the thesis' findings, acknowledges its limitations, and lastly gives recommendations for further research.

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[6] European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE) and Overseas Development Institute (ODI).

The second chapter provides concise background information that is necessary to understand the empirical case this thesis is investigating. Figure 1 illustrates how the two policy frameworks of policy coherence for development and the 2030 Agenda influence the actor, the European Union. Since the policy framework of PCD developed in the early 1990s, it is placed closest to the EU with a shorter arrow, with a closer and longer impact. The second policy framework is the 2030 Agenda adopted in 2015, as one of the latest add-ons. The case is based upon the actor – the European Union – constituting the unit of analysis. Its history with a focus on the evolution of development cooperation policy and the EU's institutional set-up are explained. This information is needed to grasp its sui generis character and understand how the two other policy frameworks exert influence. The first one, policy coherence for development, is a concept that has been endorsed by the EU for the past two decades. Although PCD is firmly institutionalised since then, academia claims it has produced few results

FIGURE 1 ILLUSTRATION OF EMPIRICAL CASE (BY AUTHOR)

(Carbone & Keijzer, 2016a). This thesis introduces the concept of PCD and sheds light on the academic literature in EU context. It connects the concept of PCD to the newly introduced one of policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD). The chapter then proceeds to the second policy framework – the 2030 Agenda. The historical run-up and major milestones in environmental politics and policies are presented and connected to the previous policy framework of PCD and to the EU as an actor.

2|1 THE ACTOR: THE EUROPEAN UNION

The European Union took its first steps as the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1950, in the aftermath of the Second World War. Cooperation between European countries was principally aimed at preventing another such disastrous conflict. "Ensuring a lasting peace appeared necessary" as stated in the ECSC Treaty (ECSC, 1951). Reconstruction and particularly economic development were the major tasks. And economic affairs and policies were the first to united the European countries and to find common ground and shared principles. Little did the founding fathers Schuman, Monnet, Spinelli and Adenauer – to name but a few – know how much the European project would grow and mature; surpassing an economic union and advancing to a political and partly monetary union of shared principles and values (Europa, 2017f).

Already six years later, the ECSC recognised the importance of external development. With the Treaty of Rome, which established the European Economic Community (EEC), Member States priorities their relation to their former colonies and launch of the European Development Fund (EDF) in 1957

(Europa, 2017f; EEC, 1957). The following section on the development and international cooperation in the EU elaborates further on the (historical) process.

2|2|2 EU Development Cooperation

For this research, a short recap on the EU's engagement at the international and global level helpful to understand the EU's development and evolution itself and therewith the growing importance of the coming two policy frameworks to be introduced. Since it is beyond the scope of this paper to shed the light on every important step along the Treaty process, the focus lies on significant events important to understand their significance in relation to the two policy frameworks – the integration of sustainable development policy concerns and the endorsement of the concept policy coherence for development in the context of the EU's international cooperation and development policy.

The establishment of the European Economic Community (EEC) was a starting point to form international relations with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (CAP) of which some were former colonies of certain Member States. The Yaoundé Convention (1963) was adopted to define the relationship with these former French colonies; while the Lomé Convention (1975) set out the relationship to mostly former colonies of Great Britain as well as with some Sub-Saharan African countries. In 2000, the Lomé Convention was succeeded by the Cotonou Agreement, which transferred accountability for development actions to ACP countries in a time frame of the next 20 years (Europa, 2017f). Relations also expanded to include Asian, Latin American, and Mediterranean countries and the Middle East, as well as to the Eastern (European) neighbourhood.

EU primary legislation, most importantly the TEU (1992), also known as the Maastricht Treaty, and TFEU (2007), the Lisbon Treaty, have firmly established development cooperation as an integral part of its external policy. Ever since, the EU has been active in publishing policy documents to outline and clarify their stand and strategy on development. With regards to development cooperation, the EU has shared competences[7], as laid out in Article 4 TFEU meaning that both the EU and its Member States can adopt legally binding acts in this policy sector. The 2005 European Consensus on Development defined common principles within which the EU and its Member States will implement their development policies which were updated with the adoption 2011 Agenda for Change (Europa, 2017b). In 2017, the EU revised the European Consensus on Development for the first time, integrating sustainable development endeavours at the heart of development cooperation: "It is a blueprint which aligns the Union's development policy with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." (Europeaid, 2017a, first paragraph)

The EU's interest in sustainable development dates back to the early 1990s., the EU started to emphases the importance of sustainable development. The Cardiff Process was initiated in 1998 as a reaction to the acknowledgement that the EU institutions were too segmented and hierarchical to produce coherent policies. It was decided that the various Council configurations shall adopt their own strategies to integrate the environment and sustainable development (Persson, 2004). In 2001, the Goteborg European Council clarified that the EU shall pursue the global objective of sustainable development; in response the Commission "recognises that in the long term, **economic growth, social**

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[7] The competences of the EU are defined in the Articles 2-6 TFEU. Shared competences are granted in the areas of the internal market, social policy, economic, social and territorial cohesion, agriculture and fisheries, environment, consumer protection, transport, trans-European networks, energy, area of freedom and justice, public health, research, technological development and space, development cooperation and humanitarian aid (see Article 4 TFEU).

cohesion and environmental protection must go hand in hand."[8] (European Commission, 2001, p. 2). A year before, the adoption of the Lisbon Strategy was a measure to address the economic growth stagnation in the EU and to renew social and environmental commitments to sustainable development. The 10-year plan was the de facto strategy for sustainable development until the adoption of the Europe 2020 Strategy in 2010.

Institutional set-up of the European Union

A brief overview on the European Union's institutional set-up is helpful and given in the following short section. It elaborates on the three main and major European institutions – the Commission, the Council of Ministers, and the European Parliament – to explain its role next to the other three.
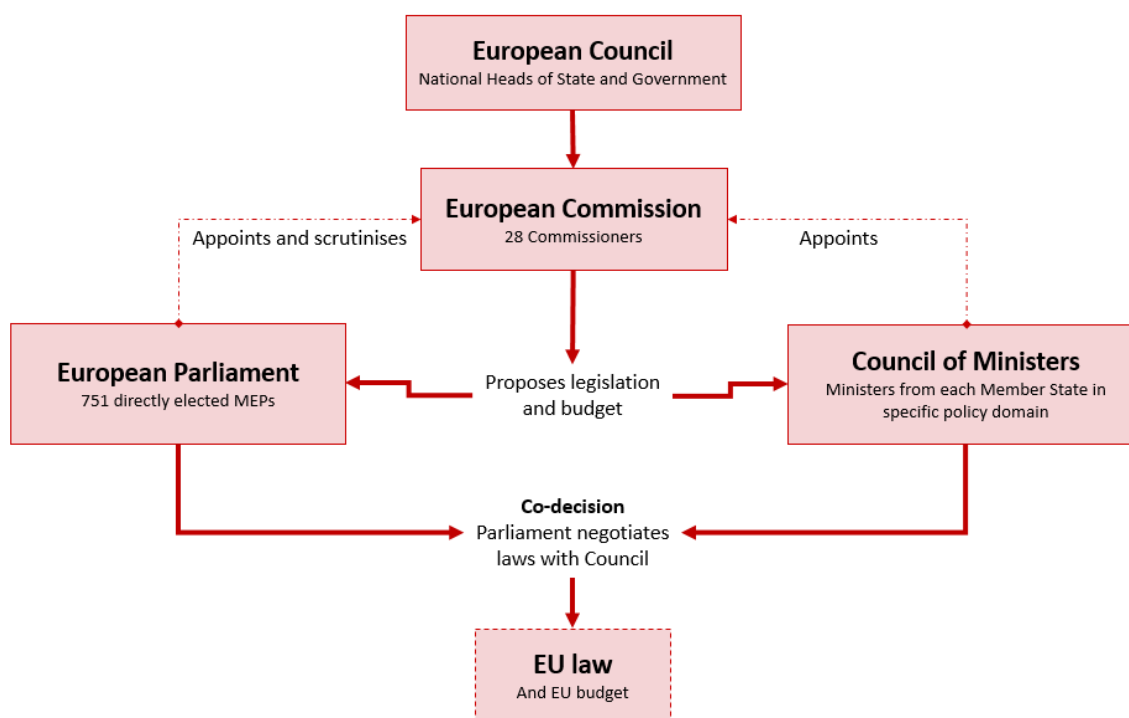
FIGURE 2 EU POWER STRUCTURE (ADJUSTED FROM BBC (2014))

The European Commission

Often perceived to be the executive body of the European Union, the European Commission (EC) is the central decision-making body. Together with the Council, it shares most of the power. Nugent (2010) portrays the Commission as the one institution which provides clear leadership due to the frequent inability or unwillingness of the other EU institutions to do so. He states that it is "at the very heart of the EU system" and points out its exclusive and non-exclusive powers of initiative (Nugent, 2010, pp. 105, 121). The Commission's role is to promote the general interest of the EU by proposing and enforcing legislation. It is also responsible for the management and implementation of EU policies and

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[8] Original emphasis.

the allocation of the EU budget. It is often seen as the EU's politically independent executive arm, as it is draws up proposals for new European legislation, and implements the decisions of the European Parliament and the Council of the EU. Together with the Court of Justice, it also enforces EU law. An additional aspect is the representation of the EU internationally and the participation on the international level on behalf of the EU.

For this, a strong political leadership is necessary. This is provided by a team of 28 Commissioners – called the College of Commissions – and led by the Commission President, who is currently Mr Jean-Claude Juncker. It is composed of the President of the Commission, his seven Vice-Presidents, including the First Vice-President, and the High-Representative of the Union for Foreign Policy and Security Policy and 20 Commissioners in charge of portfolios (Europa, 2017e). Daily business in the Commission is carried out in the various Directorates-Generals (DGs) which are departments responsible for a specific policy area.

The European Parliament

The European Parliament (EP) consists of 751 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). It is the only EU body that is directly elected by the European population (more than 500 million citizens) every five years. It has legislative, supervisory, and budgetary responsibilities. It is the EU's law-making body and passes Eu laws together with the Council of the EU and based on the proposals of the Commission. In contrast to national parliaments in the Member States, the EP is not as strong as those national legislatures. Nevertheless, it controls and supervises the executive (the Commission), where it has eight main supervisory powers and channels at its disposal.[9] In total, it composes up to seven different parties from the whole political spectrum, plus additional non-attached MEPs of which most follow a right-wing populist and hard-right extremist views (Nugent, 2010).

The Parliament conducts its day-to-day work by means of plenary sessions and prepares legislation in the standing committees. Currently, there are 20 standing committees which are divided into various policy sectors or domains. From there, the MEPs explore ideas with the Commission and examine the Commission's proposal for legislation. The standing committees are able to review those proposals and to appoint a rapporteur who reports on this working relationship and its outcomes.

The Council of the European Union

The Council of the European Union, also often called the Council of Ministers (hereafter the Council) shall not be confused with the European Council (see below). Although both share a similar name, their configurations are very different. The Council takes different configurations according to the different policy sectors it covers. An initial number of 20 different configurations has been reduced to a number of 10 throughout the years (Nugent, 2010).

The Council's major tasks, within each configuration, is the negotiation and adoption of EU

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[9] Nugent (2010) enumerates the following eight supervisory channels (i) vote of consent on the subject of the Commissioners-designate, (iii) ability to dismiss the Commission College by two-thirds majority, (iv) under Article 233 TFEU, the EP discusses the annual general report submitted by the Commission, (v) the Commission submits to the EP and the Council the accounts of the preceding financial year annually, (vi) the remits of EP standing committees are broad enough to attempt to exercise supervisory functions (vii) establish temporary committees of inquiry to contraventions or maladministration (Article 226 TFEU), (viii) ask questions (written or verbal, in question time or with debate) (p.186-188).

laws, coordination of Member States' policies – depending on the level of EU competences[10]. It develops the EU's Common foreign and security policy (CFSP), which it defines and implements based on the guidelines set by the European Council. In cooperation with the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, it ensures the unity, consistency and effectiveness of the EU's external action (ibid.).

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Other important institutions include the European Council (representing the heads of governments and states), the Committee of the Regions, the Economic and Social Committee, and the EU legal entity, the European Court of Justice. These institutions are involved in the policy integration as well, but they do not have any direct powers in the legislative processes. Therefore, they were subordinated to the investigation of the three major governing institutions – the Commission, the Council, and the European Parliament, which exert the most direct power and influence on the policy integration process.

2|2 POLICY FRAMEWORK: POLICY COHERENCE FOR DEVELOPMENT

Policy coherence for development has a long-standing history and its first endorsement by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) goes back nearly 30 years (Verschaeve *et al.*, 2016). Sianes (2017); (Verschaeve *et al.*, 2016) describes the concept as "one of the catchwords in the international debate on development aid since the 1990s" (p.135). PCD received attention both from the academic and the policy-making world, with the idea at its core that all "non-aid policies of donor countries have an impact on developing countries and therefore should take into account the latter's needs and interests (Forster & Stokke, 1999; Keijzer, 2012; Siitonen, 2016, p. 1). Others describe PCD more broadly, as to "take account of the needs and interests of developing countries in the evolution of the global economy" (Carbone, 2008, p. 234; OECD, 2003, p. 2).

The two exemplary definitions point at the first problematic issues around PCD. Academics and the body of literature have not been able to agree on a concrete definition of PCD. Sianes (2017) criticises the fact that "there is still not an agreed definition on the theoretical significance of the concept of PCD or the actions and decisions best suited to promote it" and that academics are not using a "univocal concept" (p. 136). This observation, along with the following points to be made, is

[10] The competences of the EU are defined in the Articles 2-6 TFEU. The EU has exclusive competence in the customs union, on competition, monetary policy, common fisheries policy, common commercial policy, and the competence to conclude international agreements (see Article 3 TFEU). Shared competences are granted in the areas of the internal market, social policy, economic, social and territorial cohesion, agriculture and fisheries, environment, consumer protection, transport, trans-European networks, energy, area of freedom and justice, public health, research, technological development and space, development cooperation and humanitarian aid (see Article 4 TFEU). It has the competence to support, coordinate or supplement actions of the Member States in the following areas: human health, industry, culture, tourism, education, vocational training, youth, sport, civil protection (see Article 6 TFEU). And lastly, the EU has competences to provide arrangements within which Member States must coordinate policy in the areas of economic policy, employment, and social policies (see Article 5 TFEU).

the point of departure for the conceptual significance of PCD in this thesis.

Firstly, the state of the art in PCD literature serves as a start for this departure, followed by settling down PCD in a European Union context. The first steps of PCD scholarship were taken in the attempt to corroborate a (theoretical) framework. Forster and Stokke (1999) started by identifying three categories of policy (in)coherence in a European context. They point out (i) a possible incoherence between the legal development policy objectives and the actual external policy of the EU(for example of the trade policy, foreign and security policy), (ii) a possible incoherence between the EU's development policy and its internal policies (for example CAP, economic policies etc.), and lastly (iii) a possible incoherence between the EU's development policy – the EU here seen as an individual actor at the global level, and the development policy of single of multiple EU Member States (p. 11). This observation already adds more understanding to the complex nature of PCD.

In a different approach, Hoebink (2004a) consulted the dictionaries first, which clarified coherence to be synonymous with consistency – "Consistency and coherence of thought and statement therefore mean free from self-contradiction" in order to arrive at two levels of perceived coherence (p.185). He then identified coherence in a narrow and in a wider sense. The former referring to the internal degree of coherence, which demands consistency among the various development policy objectives; the latter demands coherence between different foreign policy processes and development cooperation policy. Additionally, external consistency is achieved when development policies are coherent with policies in other fields.

Hoebink (2004a) was followed by Carbone (2008) whose paper entitled *Mission Impossible: the European Union and Policy Coherence for Development,* made clear that the EU's attempts to act as a cohesive force in international relations and therewith endorsing the concept of PCD, were intricated by the EU's very own nature and the persistent differentiating views on the appropriate form of European governance. He confirms that the principle of policy coherence has been the object of a contentious debate in the EU'S external relations and called it a mission impossible due to, amongst others, the following reasons: (i) coherence, on EU level, requires that the EU "shall take account" of its development policy objectives, whereas the word coherence itself is not mentioned as such. Then, (ii) emphasis in the Treaty of Maastricht was given to the process, rather than the results/outcomes which presents an opportunity for strong policy domains, such as trade, CAP, or finance to supersede "soft policy" as which development policy was regarded (Carbone, 2008). Lastly, (iii) the Article 208 TFEU left room for interpretation regarding intergovernmental policies and their relation to development policy, since it applied to supranational policies only.

The initial driver to adopt the policy discourse of PCD was to increase the returns of official development assistance (ODA) while the available aid volumes were decreasing (Carbone & Keijzer, 2016b). The approach of 'do-no-harm' was therefore also extended to non-aid policies and PCD was seen as a complementary factor of aid policies (Carbone & Keijzer, 2016b; Siitonen, 2016). With the adoption of the MDGs, ODA spending increased significantly, as the Millennium Declaration and especially the first seven MDGs served as suitable justification (King, 2016). The 2000s also meant considerably more effort by the European Union concerning the PCD policy framework.

Firstly, it is important to recall the PCD trajectory in the EU context. As elaborated in the previous introduction of the EU as an international actor at the global level and its engagement in development policy and cooperation, it endorsed the concept of policy coherence for development as early as the 1990s (Adelle & Jordan, 2014; Carbone, 2008; Hoebink, 2004b; Keijzer, 2012). It was a self-induced policy framework, that added exceptional complexity and expectations to the EU. With the adoption and ratification of the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992, PCD and established itself into more than just a

concept but in soft policy framework. According to the EU policy documents to be analysed, all EU policies (whether internal or external), which might have possible implications for developing countries, should take into account these implications for the EU's development cooperation and its objectives. It becomes clear that the EU adopted a 'do no harm' approach to no harm developing countries with its non-development policies. The institutionalisation of PCD through the Maastricht Treaty introduced the three principles for the functioning of development policy, often referred to as the three Cs: complementarity, coordination, and coherence (Carbone, 2008, p. 330; Hoebink, 2004a). This was further enforced in Article 208 of the Treaty of Lisbon in 2007 (TFEU, 2007; Carbone & Keijzer, 2016a; Europa, 2017d). The EU's definition of PCD in the Treaty reads the following "take account of the objectives of development cooperation in the policies that it implements which are likely to affect developing countries" (Art. 208, TFEU). The academic world broadly describes the concept of PCD as "taking account of the needs and interests of developing countries in the evolution of the global economy" (Carbone, 2008, p. 234; Europa, 2017e; OECD, 2003, p. 2). Its definition is dependent on its application to different contexts. The EU formally expressed the following PCD definition:

> The EU seeks to take account of development objectives in all of its policies that are likely to affect developing countries. It aims at minimising contradictions and building synergies between different EU policies to benefit developing countries and increase the effectiveness of development cooperation (Europa, 2017d).

The adoption of PCD, therefore, aims at a broad range of goals. Unlike the earlier notion of development (policy) where the main focus lays on giving aid to developing countries. PCD expands the notion of development and its scope to non-development policies. When PCD started to take off, it was firstly seen as PCD was seen as complementing aid efforts by extending "broader development processes through 'do-no-harm' approaches" (Carbone & Keijzer, 2013, p. 31). It aims at encompassing all possible implications of *all* other policy domains and their impacts on development. Accordingly, PCD is striving to create coherence in policy that is greater than the simple sum of all external and internal policies. Policies shall be planned and implemented in a coherent and consistent way, even if they are not directly aimed at or related to development (for example in the policy domains of agriculture, transport, or trade).

In the past 25 years, the EU has encouraged its Member States to accept and actively pursue the complex policy framework PCD. EU Member States have their own coordination mechanisms in place to ensure policy coherence for development in their national policies and at the EU level (Europa, 2017d). The pursuit of PCD is, by its very own nature, not a simple one to be achieved (Carbone & Keijzer, 2016b; ODI *et al.*, 2013; Stocchetti, 2016). Nonetheless, also other international organisations have acknowledged the importance of it. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), alongside the EU, has led the way for the establishment of PCD. The OECD presents the following, more detailed definition:

> Policy coherence for development means taking account of the needs and interests of developing countries in the evolution of the global economy. It involves the systematic promotion of mutually reinforcing policy actions across government departments and agencies creating synergies towards achieving the agreed objectives, such as promoting knowledge-based economies in poor countries through the appropriate use of information and communication technology (OECD, 2003, p. 2).

The EU and the OECD have been successful in establishing PCD in the international (World Commission on Environment and Development) community. In 2007, the European Commission started to monitor the progress on PCD in the EU and its Member States in the form of biennial EU Reports on Policy

Coherence for Development for the first time. One of these reports outlines that "Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) is a priority for the European Commission and mechanisms and procedures to avoid contradictions and build synergies between different EU policies" (European Commission, 2015a, p. 3). The last Progress Report on Policy Coherence for Development was published in August 2015, right before the MDGs were to be achieved and the international community was discussing a possible post-2015 framework for international development. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda and with it the introduction of the concept of policy coherence for sustainable development pose another challenge to the EU. This complexity is also the guiding puzzle under investigation in this thesis.

2|3 POLICY FRAMEWORK: THE 2030 AGENDA

The 2030 Agenda, by its full name *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, is a follow-up plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. It builds on the United Nations Millennium Development Goals – eight goals that were adopted in 2000 and to be achieved in 2015. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals were agreed upon by the 193 countries who negotiated the agenda. In its run up and negotiation, the 2030 Agenda was therefore often referred to as the post-2015 Agenda, until a momentum created its own name (reference interview, add other references).

This section gives a short historical overview listing the most important steps of the process building up to the adoption of a post-2015 development agenda. It focuses on the vital events and conferences that led to the 2030 Agenda, which was adopted by all EU Member States and is now a policy framework to be integrated in the EU. The historical setting and context of sustainable development can be traced back to as early as the 1970s. A short overview of the progress, including the most crucial stepping stones, is laid out. The evolution of sustainable development helps to understand how and why the SDGs were adopted in 2015. It also emphasises the unique character of the 2030 Agenda and why it is treated as a policy framework on its own in this thesis.

In 1972, the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, often also referred to as the Stockholm Conference, was the UN's first major conference on international environmental issues. It marked a turning point for international environmental politics (United Nations, 1972). The outcomes of the conferences included a list of 26 principles, covering topics ranging from human rights to natural resources and environmental hot topic – such as environmental education, - policy, and - research.

The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) was established as a result of the United Nations General Assembly resolution 38/161 in 1983, and commissioned to publish a report on the environment and a horizon scan to the year 2000 and beyond. *Our Common Future* – commonly recognised as the Brundtland Report– coined the term sustainable development for the first time and proposed strategies to achieve such sustainable development.

> Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable - to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept of sustainable development does imply limits - not absolute limits but limitations imposed by the present state of technology and social organization on environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities (United Nations, 1983, p. 24).

The WCED advanced the understanding of global interdependencies and the relationship between economics and the environment. It significantly influenced the international attention and the acceptance of the need to take action. *Our Common Future* laid the foundations for the convening

Earth Summit in 1992.

The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Earth or Rio Summit, was a yet unprecedented UN conference both in scope and in size. Twenty years after having taken the first steps in environmental protection and establishing international environmental policies in 1972, the Rio Summit negotiations culminated in the 21 Agenda, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, and the Statement of Forest Principles. It created the body of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) with the task to monitor and report on the implementation of the agreements and a review was to be made every five years.

The Millennium Summit, although not strictly seen as a sustainable development conference, initiated the process on agreeing on eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 (UN, 2000). In pursuing the eradicating of global poverty, universal education and the fight against HIV, amongst others, also included a goal on the environment. MDG 8 was calling for a global partnership and for "protecting our common environment" (UN-GA, 2000, p. 6).

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) took place in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002. Ten years after the first Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the Johannesburg Declaration called on all countries "to take timely actions to ensure the effective follow up and implementation of the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation" (UN-GA, 2002).

Ten years later, in 2012, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, also called Rio+20, invited the international community to a follow-up conference on the Millennium Development Goals. It decided to discuss the post-2015 agenda and launch a process to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Additionally, it agreed to establish the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) to channel the processes on sustainable development (UN, 2017).

In 2015, the 2030 Agenda and with it the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted. It represents a new type of international agreement, since it is universal in its application (to both developed and developing countries), interconnected and indivisible in its goals, aiming to leave no one behind. These characteristics of the 2030 Agenda demonstrate the values and norms it transmits, as well as its normative complexity. Building on the MDGs, the new 17 SDGs cover the three dimensions of sustainable development, namely the environment, the economy, and society (UN-GA, 2015b).

With regards to the EU, it started to endorse the concept of sustainable development since the signing and ratification of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997, and its commitment was reiterated in Article 3(3) TFEU (European Community, 2007). This legal footing presented the opportunity to fully endorse the concept of sustainable development and start adopting it as a policy framework. After the introduction of a European Union Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS), the EU has become engaged in the field of sustainable development across all sectors, as reflected by the 10 Commission Priorities. In 2015, it stated that it will integrate and implement the 2030 Agenda in its EU policies (Europa, 2017a).

1972 Stockholm Conference	• taking stock of human impact on the environment
1987 World Comission on Environment and Development	• Our Common Future • definition of sustainable development
1992 Rio Summit	• 21 Agenda • Rio Declaration on Environment & Development
2000 Millennium Declaration	• adoption of 8 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be achieved by 2015
2002 Johannesburg Summit	• different stakeholders (heads of government, NGOs, private sector) built partnership initiatives to achieve the MDGs
2012 Rio +20 Summit	• launch process to develop a post-2015 framework • establishment of High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)
2015 UN Sustainable Development Summit	• adoption of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

FIGURE 3 EVOLUTION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

3 | THE PUZZLE: INTEGRATION OF TWO POLICY FRAMEWORKS?

The problem at hand is constituted of the policy actor, the European Union, and the two policy frameworks it endorses: Policy Coherence for Development and the 2030 Agenda. This thesis research combines all three of them to investigated how the European Union is planning to implement the 2030 Agenda in its own policies and what mechanisms and tools does it make use of in doing so.

The EU has put in place an enormous set of values and principles that build a normative framework to be considered in EU policies, in internal and external policies respectively. The ratification of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and with it Article 208 officially endorsed the concept of policy coherence for development (PCD) and embedded it as a legal obligation and the need for strong political commitment (European Commission, 2015b). The concept of PCD developed and evolved into a policy framework from then onwards determined the (soft) policy efforts and formulation of internal and external policies. The institutionalisation of PCD added enormous complexity due to its scope and its further embedding into EU secondary legislation (see the European Consensus of 2005, and the Agenda for Change in 2011). This complexity becomes apparent in the biannual reports on PCD issued by the European Commission. The last one, published in 2015, acknowledges that there is no internationally agreed definition of PCD, but that the EU definition is the one adopted in Article 208. After the realisation that PCD has produced few results and academics point out that "most EU Member States have paid lip-service to the importance of PCD without translating commitments into more coherent (national and supranational) policies", the EU has decided to add yet another additional level of complexity – namely the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and its policy framework (Carbone & Keijzer, 2016a, p. 31).

The 2030 Agenda presents yet another policy framework which introduces the three dimensions of sustainable development and a set of values and principles that need integration and implementation. This added complexity puts a lot of stress and strain on the European Union itself and its different institutions and Member States in general, if they are serious about implementation.

One aspect of this added complexity is shown by the set of 17 SDGs and their sub-targets. The 2030 Agenda explicitly dedicated one of the seventeen goals to the implementation of the SDGs. Goal 17 reads to "strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development" (UN-GA, 2015b, p. 28). The means of implementation is standard UN language for rich countries to provide resources to developing countries to support their implementation. Policy coherence for sustainable development can consequently be regarded as such means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda (Knoll, 2016). One issue of goal 17.14 is that it merely states to pursue PCSD, however does not provide any definition or clarification of the concept itself. This challenging demand to move from PCD to PCSD brings about the following problem: with the introduction of the small but importance-weighted word 'sustainable', the concept comes along with greater complexity. There is the risk of loss of focus as PCSD is means of implementation while at the same time an ultimate goal to be achieved in itself. The concept of PCSD is attempting to bring unite the previous focus of PCD on development cooperation and external relations with the notions of sustainable development to include all three integrated and equally important dimensions of economy, environment and society. The unitary focus of PCD is diffusing to more universality of the PCSD concept and nature.

The EU additionally faces the problem caused by its very own *sui generis* nature: as a political and economic union and international institution, it has made significant progress in the institutionalisation of PCD for the past two decades (Carbone & Keijzer, 2016a). As it identifies itself

with the values enshrined in the 2030 Agenda it can be argued that it a 'moral' self-set obligation to implement it as such – including PCSD. The problem/challenge the EU faces is first, whether to formally and officially move from PCD to PCSD and second, but most importantly, how to implement the 2030 Agenda across all of its policy domains and Member States?

An additional problem is that the scientific community is lagging behind in research into the concept of PCSD. The EU itself and the OECD made significant contribution to the body of empirical data and documents on PCD, and so have researchers across different policy domains (Gregersen *et al.*, 2016; King, 2016; King *et al.*, 2012; Knoll, 2016; Mackie *et al.*, 2017; OECD, 2003, 2015a, 2016, 2017b; Stafford-Smith *et al.*, 2016). Currently, the OECD is a pioneer in its 'political' struggle to underline the importance and implications of PCSD (OECD, 2015a, 2015a, 2015b, 2016). It is the only international body to attempt to define and establish the concept on the international level yet by issuing annual reports on PCSD. Instead of centring their reports on a specific policy domain (as done in various preceding PCD reports), a cross-cutting issue such as illicit financial flows, green growth and food security could be the central theme of investigation in light of the PCSD concept. Another publication by the ECDPM emphasises that practitioners of PCSD (or previously practitioners of PCD) "cannot simply assume that their audience will be favourably disposed towards the principle they advocate", which is pointing at political sensitivity and political resistance of a move from PCD to PCSD (Gregersen *et al.*, 2016, p. 28). The puzzle of the two different policy frameworks and the exponentially added complexity to an international organisation such as the EU with its sui generis character and immense bureaucratic and governmental complexity is now under investigation and guided by the following research question.

3|1 RESEARCH QUESTION

How does the EU seek to (move from PCD to PCSD and thereby) integrate the 2030 Agenda in its internal/domestic policy and external development policy and how can this process be understood through applying a theoretical lens of environmental policy integration (EPI)?

Sub-Research Questions

- How does the EU seek to move from PCD to PCSD, if so at all?
- What are the ways in which the different EU institutions are involved in the policy integration efforts of the 2030 Agenda?
- What are the insights for theories on EPI that the EU experience with the policy integration of the SDGs can give?

3|2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

In overarching terms, the main research objective is to clarify how the European Union is planning to implement the SDG framework in its own policies and what mechanisms and tools does it make use of in doing so. One element of this effort that this thesis research particularly focuses on how it works with the concept of PCSD. It provides an early contribution to what may emerge as a body of literature

on PCSD, and add to the existing PCD literature. In its application of the theoretical framework of EPI and its borrowed PCD concepts, it aims to show how EPI can be applied in the context of an international agreement such as the 2030 Agenda. The main research question and the sub-questions are guiding this paper's focus and its research.

This chapter introduces the theoretical framework and all conceptual dimensions which guide this research and help to analyse the empirical case study of the two policy frameworks in the context of the EU. The theoretical starting point lies in the theoretical insights of policy integration approached in a holistic manner. From there, it proceeds to the theoretical framework of this thesis – environmental policy integration (EPI) – and a literature review of the state of the art, and motivates why EPI was chosen as the applicable theoretical framework. The establishing of four dimensions derived from EPI follows. Additionally, this theoretical framework borrows conceptual insights from policy coherence for development (PCD) to support and complement the EPI theory. The four dimensions help to comprehend how the theoretical framework is operationalised.

4|1 POLICY INTEGRATION

The term integration is widely used across all different policy domains as well as across professions. In its most simple and plain meaning, 'to integrate' is defined "to combine two or more things in order to become more effective" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2017). This broad definition makes clear that the strive for integration is an often-presented goal and connotated positively.

In the realm of public administration and governance, policy integration can be understood as "the management of *cross-cutting* issues in policy-making that transcend the boundaries of established policy fields, which often do not correspond to the institutional responsibilities of individual departments[11]" (Meijers & Stead, 2004, p. 1). The emphasis of cross-cutting issues is arguably the key word here and the reason why integration is widely pursued. Integration transmits conventional boundaries which have been institutionalised in public administration for a long time. In policy integration, one or more policy aspects or drivers are combined with other (policy) aspects in order to become more effective, more coherent, more consistent at addressing and tackling a cross-cutting issue. Although the result of more effectiveness, consistency or coherence is very much open to debate, policy integration generally requires more combined and joint effort in various areas – ideally triggering more communication, coordination and communication (reference). The process of policy integration may occur between different levels – vertical integration – or between different policy domains – horizontal integration (to be elaborated further in a separate section, (Meijers & Stead, 2004). The rising demand to pursue and achieve greater policy integration originates from the cross-cutting issue which needs to be integrated into other policy areas since the original policy domain is not able to address the issue on its own.

4|2 ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY INTEGRATION

> The picture that emerges from our analysis suggests that EPI represents a far stiffer challenge to the policy *status quo* in Europe and nationally in the member states than even the most environmentally progressive 'front-runner' states of the EU currently seem capable of overcoming (Jordan & Lenschow, 2000, p. 110).

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[11] Author's own emphasis

The tradition of environmental policy integration and its scholarship reaches back as far as the late 1980s (Meadowcroft, 2007). Even twenty years from then, policy makers and academics alike have struggled to agree on a clear definition and to establish an EPI tradition that serves the purpose of the cause the mainstreaming of environmental concerns and the environment generally into all sectors on all levels (Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen *et al.*, 2017; Runhaar *et al.*, 2017). The following literature review provides the scientific relevance of applying EPI as a theoretical framework. It provides a short evolutionary overview of EPI's development and motivates the establishment of four recurring dimensions for this case study with the EPI literature of the past thirty years. In addressing conceptual inadequacy for the application on the case study, the four dimensions are complemented by PCD concepts.

4|2|2 STATE OF THE ART IN EPI

The EPI literature has grown significantly in recent years. One of its major foci has been the European Union and its attempts to integrate environmental concerns into other policy domains. Runhaar *et al.* (2014) argue that "EPI aims to avoid conflicts between environmental and other policy objectives and to enhance environmental policy […]" (p. 233).

In academia, contemporary scholars find in agreement that Underdal (1980) was the first scholar to coin the notion of policy integration in the context of marine policy (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016; Lafferty & Hovden, 2003; Everts Meijers & Stead, 2004). In general terms, Underdal (1980) clarifies the word 'to integrate' as the process of unifying and putting parts together into a whole. "Integrated policy, then, means a policy where the constituent elements are brought together and made subjects to a single, unifying conception" (Underdal, 1980, p. 154). Further, he specifies three basic requirements an integrated policy shall meet to be clarified as such: comprehensiveness, aggregation and consistency (ibid.). All three constitute policy integration which serves the general purpose to improve (policy) outcomes and the "internali[s]ation of externalities" (p. 163). The research is narrowed to the EPI literature because environmental aspects are one of the central dimensions of sustainable development, although not the only one (Candel, 2017; Jordan, 2008; Liberatore, 1997; Nilsson & Persson, 2003; Runhaar *et al.*, 2014). Given that the environment is merely one of the three dimensions highlighted in the 2030 Agenda, both the social and the economic dimension can be found through the addition of PCD concepts. The concept of environmental policy integration (EPI) became more widely known in the late 1980s, more specifically after the publication of the Brundtland Report in 1987, which called for the integration of environmental and ecological concerns in other (policy) areas (Biermann *et al.*, 2009; Persson, 2009). *Our common future* was calling for an integrated approach to the common future of the environment and the planet (WCED,1987). Global warming, environmental degradation, and climate change are only some of the cross-cutting issues affecting every living creature on the planet. It was the first time that the international community was calling for environmental integration and sustainable development.

Environmental policy integration (EPI) requires that "environmental factors are taken into account in the formulation of all policies across different sectors" (Liberatore, 1997, p. 107). Here, environmental concerns are literally integrated into other policy domains to address the cross-cutting issue of climate change and environmental degradation. It is vital to keep in mind the two sides of the EPI-coin. EPI is, on one side, the objective or the desired outcome – the goal – of policy-making. While on the other side it is also the process of environmental policy integration itself that shows the

potential to achieve change at the same time (Lafferty & Hovden, 2003). This two-folded feature of EPI helps Lafferty and Hovden (2003) to arrive at the following two-dimensional definition of EPI, which is:

1) the incorporation of environmental objectives into all stages of policymaking in non-environmental policy sectors, with a specific recognition of this goal as a guiding principle for the planning and execution of policy;

2) accompanied by an attempt to aggregate presumed environmental consequences into an overall evaluation of policy, and a commitment to minimise contradictions between environmental and sectoral policies by giving principled priority to the former over the latter (Lafferty & Hovden, 2003, p. 9).

The wording of the first dimension which demands to incorporate *environmental objectives* is crucial as it is not limited only to environmental aspects but open to include any environmental or sustainable development policy outcome (Persson, 2009). Nevertheless, it is the fact that this incorporation shall be a guiding principle, essentially *the* guiding principle in the whole policy cycle of any policy in the making. This claim by Lafferty and Hovden (2003) ties into the second dimension of their approach, which explicitly calls for principled priority to be given to environmental objectives in other policy domains (ibid).

In contestation to this claim, Persson (2004, p. iii) argues that the conceptual difference becomes visible when looking at the question whether "the weighting criterion of giving principled priority to environmental objectives" is attached to EPI or not; is it regarded as an output or a process. In a later article, Persson (2009), asserts the importance of examining the different levels where EPI can be applied. In her research, she points out four conditions applying to EPI in the context of bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA). She demonstrates that "EPI can take on very different meanings" and that it arguably involves more "'high-politics' decisions and questions" (Persson, 2009, p. 409). Besides the different levels where EPI can be applied, there are various principles that contribute to the character of EPI. For example, Nilsson and Persson (2003) clarified the importance to distinguish EPI as a normative and an organisational framework. Favourable institutional settings enable EPI in the policy process, whereas the normative framework offers the needed 'soft' guiding tools to achieve integration.

Serving the purpose of this paper, EPI offers an appropriate lens of analysis to investigate the SDG implementation efforts of the EU. The 2030 Agenda links the international level – the UN arena and an international agreement – to an intergovernmental level like the one of the European Union, showing that international arrangements have increased power (Arts & Tatenhove, 2004) . This lens of analysis provides a large spectrum of different perspective and principles, which are established in the following.

Why environmental policy integration?

The theoretical insights of EPI theory allow to establish four dimensions serving the as the analytical lens of this thesis. The four dimensions are derived from the body of literature. EPI theory can be found in different contexts and various applications. It allows researching the integration of environmental aspects in a specific policy field, such as tourism, spatial planning or nature conservation (see studies by Brendehaug *et al.*, 2017; Dyrhauge, 2014; Oberthür, 2009; Simeonova & van der Valk, 2016). Also, the theory is applied as an inquiry to observe how an actor or a (political) entity deals with the cross-cutting problem of environmental degradation and climate change in the pursuit to integrate environmental concerns in policies and institutional settings (see studies by Baker *et al.*, 1997; Kivimaa

& Mickwitz, 2006; Nilsson & Persson, 2003; Nilsson & Persson, 2017; Nunan *et al.*, 2012; Persson, 2004, 2009; Schout & Jordan, 2005, 2008). Another branch of EPI literature proposes integration strategies while addressing the shortcomings and fragmentation of EPI literature and policy integration literature in general (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016; Lafferty & Hovden, 2003; Everts Meijers & Stead, 2004; Runhaar *et al.*, 2014).

The extensive research the abovementioned scholars conducted determines certain aspects necessary or advantageous for the (successful) integration of environmental concerns. These aspects are assembled into four dimensions, which are introduced in the following sections of this chapter. As the paragraph below on the critique of EPI shows, the theory has to be adjusted or replenished for the purpose of this thesis' research. Therefore, the four dimensions integrate certain concepts of policy coherence for development (PCD) where EPI falls short to offer explanation, or where the empirical case demands more conceptual freedom (see first dimension).

Since this thesis research investigates the integration of the 2030 Agenda in the policies of the European Union, a first step was to turn to policy integration theory generally; and to environmental policy integration specifically as a second step. The complementing of EPI theory with PCD concepts prepares the ground for the analysis through the set theoretical lens and adds to the body of literature of both EPI and PCD. In contrast to previous studies where EPI was applied in a global environmental governance setting (see Moreover, EPI as a theoretical framework is tested in the application on the international level of the EU as an (international) actor engaging in the integration of a universal sustainable development agenda.

4|3 ESTABLISHING FOUR DIMENSIONS – OPERATIONALISATION OF EPI FOR THE EMPIRICAL CASE

After the literature review and presentation of the state of the art in EPI, the insights from this exercise allow for the establishment of a theoretical framework for this thesis. The structure of the four dimensions is inspired by the publication of Nilsson and Persson (2017, p. 36) *Policy note: Lessons from environmental policy integration for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda*, in which they draw lessons from experiences with environmental policy integration (EPI) and discuss to what extent they apply for an integrated approach for policy implementation around the SDGs. This paper establishes the four dimensions based on the EPI literature review exercise. With regards to the normative complexity of the two policy frameworks under investigation, some conceptual insights are borrowed from PCD and complement the insights on EPI theories.

This thesis, in the establishment of four dimensions derived from EPI theories and conceptual insights of PCD, contributes to the body of literature on EPI by showing how the theoretical concepts of EPI are applicable for the investigation of the policy integration process without prioritising one (environmental) dimension.

First Dimension: Normative Framework

The contested notion of principled priority of environmental concerns is a characteristic that allows for a derivation of the first major dimension for EPI, namely that it offers a **normative framework** (Lafferty & Hovden, 2003; Persson, 2004). EPI inherently entails such normative framework in the way it is constructed and applied in policy-making, and then again analysed in academics. It portrays EPI to

be a set of norms, encompassing the ones favouring or protecting the environment. A normative framework establishes a rational for the integrity of the environment and paves the way for the legitimacy of EPI as a (normative) concept (Nilsson & Persson, 2003). It attaches weight to environmental concerns and objectives in their relation to other sectoral policy objectives. For example, Jordan and Lenschow (2010) observe that an agenda for EPI has been set on EU and OECD level with certain policy instruments and jurisdictions in place. However, they criticise that those are soft policies only, lacking legal enforcement and normatively influential obligation.

Another contribution to the body of literature on EPI was made by Runhaar et. al. (2014) who approach the definition of EPI differently. They clarify EPI to be "the incorporation of environmental concerns in non-environmental policy sectors" while "avoid[ing] conflicts between environmental and other policy objectives" (Runhaar *et al.*, 2014). They claim that the EPI literature, so far, has fallen short to introduce EPI strategies which have the potential to make environmental policy integration work in other domains, without giving environmental concern the principled priority. Their proposed theoretical framework for EPI strategies is a fusion of the frameworks of Lafferty and Hovden (2003) and Kivimaa and Mickwitz (2006) to assess the performance not only in the decision-making stage of the policy cycle, but – for this paper more importantly – also in the implementation stage (Runhaar *et al.*, 2014). The paper draws conclusions form the existing EPI literature and outlines additional principles. In comparing previous studies, Runhaar et al. (2014) find that political will, connected to it power and resources – ultimately institutional settings – are often lacking, if existent and apparent at all, finding that the lack of the previous makes it difficult to impose normative environmental concerns through a developed strategy.

In the establishment of a normative framework as the first dimension for this thesis' theoretical framework, it is necessary to complement this first normative dimension by insights of the PCD policy framework. As the integration of the 2030 Agenda and PCD is under question, it becomes evident that prioritising environmental concerns is counter-intuitive to the universal 2030 Agenda, which units the three (sectoral) dimensions of the environment, economy and society. Therefore, this theoretical first dimension of a normative framework is complemented by the insights of PCD in the EU context at the end of the following section.

Second Dimension: Political Will

The former, **political will**, is highly important for the mainstreaming of environmental policies implicitly and environmental objectives across other sectors explicitly. Therefore, it constitutes the second of the total four dimensions. The EPI literature shows wide spread agreement that political will poses a challenge to EPI and its mainstreaming of environmental objectives into other sectoral policies (Candel, 2017; Jordan & Lenschow, 2000, 2010; Lafferty & Hovden, 2003; Liberatore, 1997; Everts Meijers & Stead, 2004; Nilsson & Persson, 2003; Nilsson & Persson, 2017; Nunan *et al.*, 2012; Oberthür, 2009; Persson, 2009; Runhaar *et al.*, 2014; Schout & Jordan, 2008).

The lack of political will and the lack of willingness to give priority to environmental concerns, combined with a lack of commitment or authority is a point for critique on EPI of the before mentioned scholars. The integration of environmental objectives, often also called mainstreaming, can be impeded if the top leaders or authorities do not show conviction, willingness, nor endorsement of the importance to protect the environment. Consequently, the second dimension is closely associated with the first dimension of the normative framework. Soft influential power attributed to environmental concerns have an increased chance for impact (disregarding whether this impact is positive, negative,

or neutral) only in combination with political commitment. Both combined transmit a sense of urgency and legitimacy to strive for and to practice EPI is created. Jordan and Lenschow (2010) find that "greater policy integration does often require political leadership from above (hence the discussion about 'political will', 'commitment' and 'vision' […]" (p. 153). However, Russel and Jordan (2009) remark that bursts of political leadership do not automatically result in a flow of coordination. High-level commitment throughout the policy-making process is equally needed in combination with the two following dimensions to be established.

Another feature of EPI, namely the one of being a multi-level challenge, effects policies at virtually all levels – local, regional, national, international (Jordan & Lenschow, 2000; Persson, 2004). This necessitates a strong willingness and commitment of the top leader and authority at the respective level. A key challenge and task for the principle of political commitment is to communicate that EPI is not only *environmental* policy integration yet most importantly environmental policy *integration* that transcends policy domains and is cross-cutting through all turf mentalities and sector compartmentalisation. The latter is a concept also known as policy silos[12], is equally important as a consideration in the policy integration process and is elaborated more deeply in the following principle.

Third Dimension: Institutional and Organisational Setting

Institutional and organisation setting is a well-studied principle in EPI and has been identified to be a key influential principle at the early stages of the emergence of EPI. It can be traced back to the first attempts to integrate environmental concerns institutionally. In the case at hand of the EU, Treaty processes have been put in place – at least theoretically and on paper – to ensure the respect and integration of environmental concerns. As Lenschow (2002) outlines "EPI represents a first-order operational principle to implement and institutionalise the idea of sustainable development" (p.6). This institutionalisation can take different kinds of forms and shapes and a first step is to realise the potential of co-ordination and communication.

Peters (1998) points out how vital the role of co-ordination is in policy making and how strongly it is connected to the effectiveness of the outcome of a policy. He describes the self-interest of participants in the policy process as part of the 'invisible hand' that can guide the co-ordination process to exchange resources and increase overall capacities. The overall governmental architecture and the interaction between different stakeholders and actors are crucial. This is where so called institutional barriers to change begin to surface.

Runhaar et al. (2014) identify institutional barriers as one major challenge to successful EPI. These barriers are often very context-specific and vary across spatial and temporal scales and they are often sector-specific. They quote Hajer (2003) whose point of departure for a theoretical framework on EPI strategies is a so-called "institutional void" where EPI struggles within to create "institutional entrepreneurs" who advocate for EPI's legitimacy (Runhaar *et al.*, 2014, p. 240). This institutional void can be explained by the de facto transcending nature of EPI and that its inherent feature is not to belong to a particular policy domain. Yet, it should be a fundamental part of all policy domains.

Schout and Jordan (2008) formulate the reality candidly by stating "it would be naïve to assume that officials from sectoral councils will automatically give the environment equal attention. […] the implementation of horizontal objectives demands a continuous interaction between policy

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[12] Policy silos can be defined as sectoral or system thinking in a specific policy domain (or silo).

officials from different sectors and at different levels" (Schout & Jordan, 2008, p. 963). This is where, in practice and in theory, policy silos and silo-thinking are encountered again. Some argue that silos are conducive to accountability, transparency, and visibility. They offer concentrated expertise and strong mandates (Mackie *et al.*, 2017; Persson, 2016). It is crucial that the institutional setting of a policy sector (read policy silo) is not broken down if it provides stability, reliability, and structure. Mental silos which inhibit co-operation, co-ordination and smooth communication should however be addressed and, if necessary, be broken down. Suggestions along the lines of better communication between the silos or "teach[…] silos how to dance" could tackle inflexibility and increase co-operation (Niestroy & Meuleman, 2016, p. 11).

Fourth Dimension: Resources, Capacities and Procedures

The last nonetheless equally important dimension deals **resources, capacities and procedures** and focuses on system thinking and knowledge sharing within EPI and (assessment) procedures. Runhaar *et al.* (2014) connect this dimension closely to the previous one of institutional setting. They find that institutional and social barriers have often been observed in previous studies. This is mostly a consequence of missing cognitive capacities and resources. Such capacities and resources typically enable knowledge-sharing and systems thinking, as pointed out by Nilsson and Persson (2017). Cognitive and analytical capabilities within the policy domain, but also across different policy domains constitute another important principle in EPI.

To make the concept of EPI more tangible, different methods and instruments have been developed to measure its successes or failures. Environmental impact assessment and the general inquiry of effectiveness of any type of policy is a highly delicate endeavour, although necessary to make EPI better perceptible and to increase its legitimacy and presence. A tool to do this is environmental assessment; a procedure that ensures that environmental implications of decisions are taken into account before the decisions are made. On the European level, these tools can be found under the names of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Environmental Policy Appraisal (EPA) or Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). Russel and Jordan (2009) speak of *ex ante* policy appraisal used to identify potential spill-over effects of sectoral policies on cognate sectors. SEA is one of the primary instruments for cross-government and cross-sector coordination on sustainable development.

Regarding reporting and monitoring, the concept of PCD can also help to understand this last dimension of EPI and again offers insights to borrow and complement the developed theoretical framework. In the case of PCD, monitoring processes have long been institutionalised and biannual PCD Progress Reports were published since its adoption in 2005 (Europeaid, 2017). The significance of impact assessment for the policy integration process cannot be underestimated, as it is institutionalised to increase accountability and present results. However, both EPI and PCD, show how the difficult the reporting and monitoring process can be (Carbone & Keijzer, 2016a; Liberatore, 1997; Nilsson & Persson, 2017).

Jordan and Lenschow (2010) openly disapprove of the unstrategic and soft application of policy appraisal or SEA. They point out that the everyday practice of SEA has not had very much impact on the strategic direction of most sectoral policies. This paper aims to determine how this last dimension can help to understand the difficulties of coordinated policy-making and can help to address the "wicked problems" that transcend sectoral policy responsibilities (Russel & Jordan, 2009, p. 1203).

After the establishment of the theoretical framework based on the insights of EPI theories and the complementation by PCD concepts, the four dimensions are applied to the findings gathered during the data collection. This chapter explores the research methods for data collection and analysis. It introduces the methods of data collection and the data itself, including desk research, policy documents, and interviews. It clarifies the method of data analysis and acknowledges first limitations of the data in the section on positionality and political sensitivity. The methodological framework, in combination with the theoretical framework and the concepts used, provide a solid foundation to respond to the research question.

5|1 DATA COLLECTION

The data collection methods can be divided into three separate but complementary methods. These include desk research, policy document analysis, and semi-structured interviews. The following sections elaborate on each method briefly.

Desk Research

The desk research was a first step to make informed choices which direction to choose and how to proceed with the research. It involves a compilation, also called a synthesis, of existing literature in the research landscape on the theory and the topic itself. A synthesis and the knowledge of 'what is out there' is vital to draft the research in a way that it is as complete as possible while encompassing the conceptual and theoretical framework, methods used and the relevance of the research.

Desk research is the identification of material relevant for the research. It can take a broad shape where primary and secondary material is considered. Desk research is part of a first orientation phase to start becoming familiar with the literature and the research that has already been conducted.

Policy Documents

For the purposes of this thesis and with the intention of answering the research question, policy documents are a key source of understanding. In this specific EU context, they serve as a reference point for background research. But most importantly, policy documents may be regarded as policy tools or instruments to realise such policies. In this paper's case, the most important policy documents are composed of official UN publications and EU primary and secondary legislation, as well as EU preparatory acts. UN publications are merely narrowed down to the documents which were leading up or directly preceding the 2030 Agenda. A similar criterion applies to the EU (policy) documents, although major policy documents preceding and preparing the planned integration of the 2030 Agenda into EU legislation has had a longer run up.

The crucial EU policy documents for this research may be categorised into different types of documents. The differentiation of these types is crucial to understand the documents' status and weight as a preparatory act in the EU legislation landscape. Table 1 clarifies the different type of documents issued by the EU institutions and the way they are referred to. Policy documents by the

Commission, for example, follow the pattern of COM (2016) 739 final. Here, COM is referring to the Commission as the issuing institution, (2016) to the year the policy document was adopted, and lastly 739 final as the document number and the indication that it was the final version published. Similar ways of referencing were adopted by the other policy document issuing institution, whereas the pattern is less consistent. In those cases, the references contain the information on the issuing institution; either the EP or the Council.

TABLE 1 EU POLICY DOCUMENTS (ADAPTED FROM EUR-LEX (2017)

Preparatory Acts	Author	Descriptor	Type of Document
Sector 5	European Commission	**PC**	**COM:** Proposals and other acts adopted in the framework of a legislative procedure
	European Commission	**DC**	**COM:** Other COM documents: communications, recommendations, reports, white papers, green papers
	European Commission and High Representative	**JC**	**JOIN:** Joint proposals, communications, reports, white papers and green papers
	European Commission or European Commission and High Representative	**SC**	**SWC:** Staff and joint staff working documents (impact assessments, summaries of impact assessments, staff working papers). Until 2012, identifier SEC (now used only for internal documents of the European Commission, which are not published on EUR-Lex)

Triangulation of data in terms of policy documents selection is given by following (i) the recommendation and referring of the interviewees, (ii) by using the official EU website as a reference (iii) by the policy documents themselves which refer to other important documents (iv) and lastly by relying on the literature review and the documents that have been cited by scholars in the field.

TABLE 2 ANALYSED POLICY DOCUMENTS

Issuing Institution	Document Title	Document Type	Publication Date
European Commission	Communication from the Commission – Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth	(COM (2010) 2020 final)	03-03-2010
	Communication from the Commission– Increasing the impact of EU Development Policy: an Agenda for Change	(COM (2011) 637 final)	13-10-2011
	Communication from the Commission– A decent life for all: from vision to collective action	(COM (2014) 335 final)	02-06-2014
	Communication from the Commission– Better regulation for better results – An EU agenda	(COM (2015) 215 final)	19-05-2015
	Communication from the Commission – Better Regulation: Delivering better results for a stronger Union	(COM (2016) 615 final)	14-09-2016
	Communication from the Commission – Next steps for a sustainable European future – European action for sustainability	(COM (2016) 739 final)	22-11-2016
	Staff Working Document: Key European action supporting the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals Accompanying the document European action for sustainability	(SWD (2016) 390 final)	22-11-2016
	Communication from the Commission– Proposal for a new European Consensus on Development – Our World, our Dignity, our Future	(COM (2016) 740 final)	22-11-2016
European Parliament	Regulation 2017/1601 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 September 2017 establishing the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD), the EFSD Guarantee and the EFSD Guarantee Fund	(L 249/1)	26-09-2017
	European Parliament resolution of 12 May 2016 on the follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda	(2016/2696 (RSP))	12-05-2016
	Report on EU action for sustainability	(2017/2009 (INI))	19-06-2017
	Report on the revision of the European Consensus on Development	(2016/2094 (INI))	01-02-2017
Council of the European Union	Council Conclusions: General Secretariat of the Council – A sustainable European future: The EU response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	(10138/17)	20-06-2017

	Joint statement by the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission on European Union Development Policy: 'The European Consensus'	(2006/C 46/01)	24-02-2006
	Joint Declaration by the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission – The new European Consensus on Development - Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future	(2017/C 210/01)	30-06-2017
United Nations	Addis Abba Action Agenda	(A/CONF.227/L.1)	15-07-2015
	Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015: Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	(A/RES/70/1)	25-10-2015

Interviews

The last method for data collection was in form of conducting semi-structured interviews with experts in the field and EU officials in the different institutions. On the specific sub-topic of PCD and PCSD, experts from the OECD were interviewed and consulted.

Contact was mainly established via email and through personal contacts and an expanding network. Although some initial difficulty was encountered in the beginning, once contact was established with the first EU officials, they were willing to recommend further contact to other persons or even to make introductions. This way of sampling, commonly known as snowball sampling, is defined as a technique for finding research subjects. One subject gives the researcher the name of another subject, who in turn provides the name of a third, and so on (Vogt, 1999). Snowball sampling was beneficial to expand the network and to find ways of extending the sample population to include interviewees who could not be identified through mere online research. Inherently, the interview questions were modified according to the (institutional) affiliation of the interviewee and to the position they occupy. Semi-structured interviews are characterised as such as they are more open than structured interviews and allow the researcher to respond to the individual interviewing situation at hand. Follow-up questions to obtain further information or clarification were easy to pose due to the semi-structured character of the interviews.

Twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted in total, most of them in the time period of July-September. The interviewees cover eight nationalities (Dutch, French, Swedish, Italian, Australian, Spanish, Finnish, British), nine of them men and three women.

TABLE 3 LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

	Function	Organisation	Date	Means	Reference Code
1	Researcher	ECDPM	July 5, 2017	In person	(Reseacher 1)
2	Researcher	Wageningen University and Research	July 14, 2017	In person	(Researcher 2)
3	EU Official	European Commission	August 22, 2017	Skype	(EU Official 1)
4	Senior Advisor	OECD	August 24, 2017	Skype	(OECD Official 1)
5	Intern, PhD Researcher	OECD	August 24, 2017	Skype	(OECD Official 2)
6	EU Official	European Parliament	August 30, 2017	Call	(EU Official 2)
7	EU Official	European Parliament	August 30, 2017	Skype	(EU Official 3)
8	EU Official	European Commission	September 1, 2017	Call	(EU Official 4)
9	Strategic Advisor	Council for the Environment and Infrastructure	September 20, 2017	Call	(Strategic Advisor 1)
10	EU Official	European Commission	September 21, 2017	Tele-conference	(EU Official 5)
11	Strategic Advisor	Council for the Environment and Infrastructure	October 4, 2017	In person	(Strategic Advisor 2)
12	EU Official	European Parliament	December 5, 2017	Written reply via email	(EU Official 6)

In addition to the desk research, policy documents and the interviews, the participation at the *25th EEAC Annual Conference: Towards the 2030 Agenda and beyond: European cooperation within a new citizens–science–policy interface* (2017) also provided data in forms of key note speeches – most importantly the one of Gilles Gantelet who is the Director of the European Commission (DG Environment); panel discussions, table discussions and informal networking and interviewing – in total, short informal interviews with one representative from the EU Commission, one representative from the German Council for Sustainable Development, and one representative of the European Environmental Bureau.

The political sensitivity of the research subject was an additional challenge. At the start of each interview, the interviewees gave their consent to be recorded for the purpose of going back to the interviews and the collected data. However, most of them, particularly some of the EU officials, preferred not to be quoted word by word and to not state their full name. Anonymity was ensured and the methodology was adapted accordingly, only stating the information of their occupation (i.e. EU official, strategic advisor, research etc.) and the institution they are working for. The thesis adapted a reference code that can be found in the list of interviewees (Table 3).

5|2 DATA ANALYSIS

The data that was collected by means of the three methods of desk research, policy documents and interviews give sufficient material to proceed to the phase of data analysis. For this stage, the interviews were transcribed *verbatim*. This step is essential to prepare the following step – categorisation and coding.

The data collected is then analysed by means of categorisation and coding. Both are a part of a process of attaching labels to lines of text so that the researcher can group and compare similar or related pieces of information. In addition to the interview transcripts, also the researcher's (field) notes are an indispensable part of the data and give a first indication what has been emphasised during the interview.

This research applies the qualitative data analysis by Saldaña (2009). In his *Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, he outlines the functions of codes and coding. He defines a code in qualitative inquiry to be "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldaña, 2009, p. 3). The process itself is not a very precise science but primarily an interpretive act (p. 4). Coding is therefore considered a crucial step of the data analysis, as it *is* part of the analysis itself.

To support the process of coding, the qualitative software ATLAS.ti. It is a computer-aided qualitative data analysis software which helps to analyse data systematically. Friese (2014) claims that such computer-aided analysis increases the validity of research results since it allows the researcher to go back to the raw data while developing theoretical thoughts. It therefore decreases the chances of conceptual errors and allows for a more direct and easier interaction between the researcher and the (raw) data. In addition, the validity of the research is ensured by the method of data triangulation by cross-checking and evaluating the data gathered during interviews with the data collected during the literature review and policy document analysis (Fletcher, 2016).

Positionality

"In qualitative analysis there is a strong emphasis on describing the world as it is perceived by different observers" (Dey, 1993, p. 37). This shows how a researcher, regardless of the efforts to preserve objectivity, runs the risk of stepping into the researcher's bias trap. Data analysis by means of categorisation and coding relies heavily on the researcher's interpretation of what is deemed important and relevant. Naturally, this diminishes the objectivity to a certain extent. Even if the researcher is determined to remain as objective as possible, the interpretation of what is deemed important and relevant for the research is very much a subjective one. It shall therefore not be

disregarded but taken into account when analysing the data and finalising the findings in the empiric chapters.

In acknowledging the limitations of the data, the thesis indicates that interviewees were selected based on a criterion that, regarding their occupation and/or sectoral belonging, assumes the interviewees share values and norms in common and in accordance with sustainability, the environment, development, and/or sustainable development. As a sample population for qualitative research, at least concerning their occupations, tasks and professional or personal interests, the interviewees form a rather homogenous group. However, for this first research of an exploratory nature, it was unavoidable to turn to the more obvious and direct proponents of the 2030 Agenda. For further research, EU officials of other, non-directly related policy sectors – such as trade, finance, or economics.

6| Empirical findings – Integration of the 2030 Agenda

This chapter presents the empirical findings analysed with the help of the insights of the developed theoretical framework. In order to answer the research question of how the EU is seeking to (move from PCD to PCSD and thereby) integrate the 2030 Agenda in its internal/domestic policy and external development policy and how can this process be understood through applying a theoretical lens of environmental policy integration (EPI), the empirical findings chapters are structured along the lines of the four dimensions of the adopted theoretical framework. This structure aids the operationalisation of the insights for the theoretical framework.

In addition, it breaks up the research questions into two separate parts. The first empirical findings chapter, therefore, approaches the first part of the question and concentrates on the holistic integration of the 2030 Agenda in EU policy. Analysed are the findings obtained from the literature review, the coding exercise of the policy documents and the interviews, as well as lastly the general output of the interviews and policy documents. It follows the structure of the four dimensions and starts with the first one, the normative framework. To ensure more clarity and to support the story line, each dimension section closes with a short summary of the findings and points for further discussion. Chapter eight discusses the findings of both empirical chapters and elaborates further on the implications of the findings.

This thesis acknowledges the difficulty of clearly allocating and assigning some of the findings to a single dimension. In those cases, the finding was mentioned in the dimensions where it has the greatest significance, although its implications are also important for one or more other dimensions.

6|1 First Dimension – Normative Framework

The integration of the 2030 Agenda into EU external and internal-domestic policy can be tackled and achieved through numerous and different approaches. One of them is the approach of a normative steer in which the European Union resumes its position as a "normative power Europe" (Diez, 2005; Manners, 2002, p. 236).

Particularly in its foreign policy and external development policy, the EU is known to have its policies informed by and conditional on a catalogue of norms and (European) values, such as the rule of law, the consolidation of democracy and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms (see Articles 6 and 11, TEUVanheukelom, 2012). The European Union has, early on, concentrated its evolution by emphasising common and shared values of its Member States. Although it is evident that the EU came about due to economic collaboration after the Second World War, its emphasis on lasting peace on the European continent is one of its prioritised aims. With regards to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, this influence is reflected in the five Ps of the Agenda, encompassing people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership and with the active engagement as a lead negotiator in international agreements (EU Official 3, 4; 5). The EU asserts its international position by openly stating that "[t]he EU played a leading role in a series of landmark international agreements that collectively re-cast the way forward for international development and cooperation for the next 15 years." (European Commission, 2016h, p. 2). The insights of the established theoretical framework of EPI analyses this statement in the following first section of the empirical analysis of the normative dimension.

EU as a lead negotiator

One of the first major findings on how the EU is seeking to integrate the 2030 Agenda when applying the lens of the first normative dimension of the developed theoretical framework is that the EU made sure its most deeply rooted and most important values and normative principles find a place at the heart of the 2030 Agenda. Several EU officials, as well as other interviewees, have pointed at the "leading role" of the EU during the run-up negotiations of the 2030 Agenda.

The European Union has adopted an influential role when it comes to the normative steer of the SDGs. According to the interviewed EU officials, the EU had a considerably influence on the post-2015 negotiation process which was launched at the Rio +20 Johannesburg Summit agreements (EU Official 3, 4, 5).

> The UN Summit in September was the culmination of a lengthy, inclusive intergovernmental negotiation process in which the EU played a leading role. A Commission Communication on the Global Partnership, and subsequent Council Conclusions demonstrated the EU's constructive engagement (European Commission, 2016h, p. 3)

Being a lead negotiator of the post-2015 framework and what then became known as the 2030 Agenda, the EU followed a planned-ahead and well-thought-out strategy. The EU negotiators, which mostly were coming from the involved Commission DGs Environment and DEVCO, ensured that EU common values and normative principles are reflected and incorporated in the 2030 Agenda (EU Official 3, 4; 5).

> But, let's put it that way: negotiations are always a give and take. And it's a compromise between different parties of the negotiations. But, looking at the Agenda in its entirety, looking at not every target and every aspect of each and every target, it reflects very strongly the European values and the European policies as they are and were at the time of the negotiations. (EU Official 4).

In the internal negotiation of the EU mandate to be put forward at the post-2015 negotiations, it was reported that the EU strongly exerted itself in the field of environment and sustainable development (EU Official 5). They were making an effort to produce tangible and enforceable targets in those two fields particularly.

After the adoption of a EU Sustainable Development Strategy in 2001, the EU has acknowledged the vital importance of sustainable development and its stance in the future at an early stage. The revision of the Sustainable Development Strategy, which initially only included the two pillars of economic growth and social cohesion, a third pillar of environmental protection was added and demonstrates the EU's endorsement of environmental protection as part of sustainable development (European Commission, 2001). It recognised that sustainable development should put equal weight on the three dimensions – economic, social and environmental. As the introduction of the insights of the EPI theory clarified, the EU has a track record in integrating and mainstreaming environmental objectives into other policy sectors, although the success of such is open for debate. In contrast to classical insights of EPI theory where environmental concerns and objectives are highlighted and prioritised (although academics have been in debate about said prioritisation), the EU has abstained from making one of the three dimensions a priority. However, it used its position as leading negotiator to ensure that the 2030 Agenda reflects the values, norms and principles of 'normative power' EU. Interviewees indicated that such influence becomes evident in the structure of the 2030 Agenda, which builds sustainable development around the five Ps – people, planet,

prosperity, peace and partnership – capture the encompassing, universal, transformative and integrated nature of the 17 SDGs and the 2030 Agenda (UN-GA, 2015b, pp. 1-2).

Normative direction of the 2030 Agenda

The lessons that the insights of the theoretical framework can provide on the first dimension is that the 2030 Agenda provides a normative framework in which all elements – whether dealing with economic, environmental, and social, objectives – are equally important. No single dimension of these objectives should be highlighted, nor prioritised. The 2030 Agenda and its indivisible and universal set up aims to prevent exactly this. As Nilsson and Persson (2017, p. 37) observe, "Integration in the context of the SDGs can thus be understood better as a matter of *harmonization*[13] i.e. to bring different policy objectives on equal terms across the government [...].". This thesis research confirms this view and sees the normative steer of the 2030 Agenda as a demand to the international community *not* to cherry pick any SDG and *not* to prioritise and of the three dimensions or any of the abovementioned objectives.

> As a possible risk and things that should be avoided is to see [...] cherry picking, only you know the goals that are easier to reach the ones on which they have done more steps forward. This is something that we have to avoid. (EU Official 3).

Although neither discourse analysis nor framing are part of this thesis' methodology, both deserve mentioning particularly in the theoretical dimension of a normative framework. The whole rhetoric of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda intends that "no one must be left behind" to underline the vital preconditions necessary to make it a success (UN-GA, 2015b, p. 7). Therefore, it is evident that the whole 2030 Agenda itself is a policy framework with great *normative* complexity. Instead of prioritising one of the three dimensions, or leaving room for cherry-picking of single or multiple SDGs, it puts weight on its universal and indivisible character and the inherent need for collaboration, coordination and (global) partnership. Admittedly, some of the interviewees disclose *not* to cherry-pick is often times hard since the EU has more policy tools and instruments in certain policy sectors than in others (see European Commission, 2016i).

In this case, the first mapping exercise of the Commission connected each of the 17 SDGs to its current 10 Priorities and explicitly listed the latter's contribution to the former. This policy document shows that the EU is also linking the normative implications of the 2030 Agenda – such as interconnectivity, indivisibility, and universality – to its currently existing policy instruments and frameworks, in order to adapt the 17 SDGs to its own EU context (EU Official 1; EU Official 4). Additional findings concerning this vital policy document will be further elaborated below under section 6|4. Similarly, the interviewees pointed out that EU Member States struggle alike. Some of them are exceptionally prepared for multiple SDGs, while they have a lot of catching-up to do for other ones. However, the EU is keen to integrate and implement the holistic 2030 Agenda indivisibly and universally, without leaving anybody behind (here referring to both external partner (developing) countries and its very own Member States) and without prioritising any of the SDGs.

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[13] Authors emphasis

Lack of common sense of responsibility

The normative steer of the indivisible 2030 Agenda clearly states that no single SDG should be prioritised, nor that there is a possibility of its full implementation without integrating all SDGs – without exception, indivisibly and universally. It takes the work of *each* and *every* policy domain and the dedication of all EU committees, departments and directories – irrespective of their institutional belonging or sectorial status – to integrate the SDGs. Such a sense of common responsibility and shared dedication by all is currently missing, as reported by several of the EU officials and non-EU officials. They voiced concern about the low level of interest and concern, and indeed awareness about the 2030 Agenda in very general terms. It became evident that there is a need for a change in the perception and commitment of EU officials working in the different DGs and policy domains. Numerous interviewees pointed out that the 2030 Agenda is still perceived to be more of a developmental and environmental agenda and should concern only those two policy sectors rather than an overarching policy framework that needs to be integrated across sectors and policy domains (EU Official 1, 2, 5)

> Because in the Parliament sometimes I still have the impression that the discussion around the agenda is considered a development discussion. But it's not. Because as you know one of the most innovative aspects of the UN Agenda is that it's universal. It means that also our members are fully, should be fully engaged in the implementation in the respect of the goals and targets. (EU Official 3).

Again, this finding points to the above mentioned one on the normative direction of the 2030 Agenda and its indivisible and universal nature. Every sector is addressed in an equally urgent manner, and the SDGs are interlinked and interconnected in a way that every sector is indispensable for the policy integration process. Various studies have pointed to the interlinkages and the synergies the agenda creates to appeal to each and everybody to get engaged in the integration and implementation process (Hackenesch, 2016; Le Blanc, 2015; Niestroy, 2016). Moreover, this point expands beyond any sectorial responsibility and beyond any national border. When investigating the integration efforts of the 2030 Agenda by the EU, the *sui generis* character of it must be taken into account in the analysis, which is elaborated on further.

The EU is highly dependent on its Member States. Although it has only limited or no competences at all to influence its Member States' actions (in accordance with the principles of proportionality and subsidiarity), it points out innovative and progressive ways and means of how individual Member States try to live up to their commitment to the non-binding 2030 Agenda. It encourages the practice of knowledge-sharing between the different Member States in order to 'leave no one behind' amongst its own countries and to create a bigger sense of belonging together that, ideally, transcends the European boundaries and creates a feeling of global responsibility and 'togetherness'. This is another strategy to tackle the problem of a lack of common sense of responsibility, among the Member States, but also among the different policy sectors.

> And on this I have to say people from the UN have been very very clear on that fact that the 17 goals are interlinked and they cannot be divided. So, the progress on one or another area depends on every and each one of the other areas. So, we have to move them together in a way. (EU Official 3).

It is not a mere development or environmental agenda, but such a one that creates synergies between the different sectors, it interconnects them to demonstrate the reality on the ground – namely the growing interconnectedness of the world. Inevitably, a lack of common sense of responsibility implies

avoiding taking actions. However, the EU is well aware of this and has started initiatives or has put policies and policy instruments in place to pre-empt or tackle the lack of common sense of responsibility. Among such policies, the most important policy instruments are the various Commission Communications, the *Better Regulation Guidelines*, the *Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy,* and important Council Conclusions reinforcing the Commission Communications. They aim at the harmonisation of efforts and depict the insight the EU has gained over the past decades: greater coherence between the policies is needed, more coordinated and common efforts that lead to a joined-up action across internal and external policies (EEAS, 2016). It increases the common sense of responsibility and possible spill over effects between (i) sectoral policies, (ii) the EU institutions (iii) the different levels (contributing to horizontal integration) and lastly (iv) the Member States. Still, the EU is struggling to enhance spill over effects or use them at its own advantage. With regards to development cooperation, the 2030 Agenda poses a challenge to coherence efforts, as some SDGs add potentially competing new goals to development cooperation. Bodenstein *et al.* (2016, p. 4) identify this as "thus exacerbating collective action problems that are inherent to the EU's construction".

Reputation and Perception of the 2030 Agenda

In connection to the previous sub-section, this section is dedicated to the delicate reputation and perception of the 2030 Agenda. In various interviews, it was mentioned that the 2030 Agenda is still mostly seen as a concern of the committees or departments of the environment and development sectors. One of the limitation of this thesis is that it focused on exactly those policy sectors which are the most engaged in the integration of the 2030 Agenda, or those which were part of the negotiations of it. Nevertheless, it is one finding that it is precisely those sectors which have the strongest drive and motivation to integrate and implement (EU Official 1, 3, 4, 5). As the policy document analysis showed, most of the committees or departments referred to are the ones of environment and development, occasionally also the ones of external action. It shows that the reputation of the 2030 Agenda is still framed along the lines of only one of the three dimensions, namely the environmental dimensions and partially the social dimension which covers the eradication of poverty in development policy. This short section is strongly in line with the previous one, as the perception and reputation of the 2030 Agenda as a mere development and environmental agenda contributes greatly to the lack of a common sense of responsibility.

Interviewees and policy documents both point towards the major engagement of those policy sectors, whereas other vital sectors such as finance and trade, are much less engaged and less often mentioned as the driver of integration. EU officials working in the non-development and non-environmental sectors are less concerned with the integration because they fear restrictions or regulations, in short disadvantages. Besides the lack of common responsibility to integrate the 2030 Agenda as what it is, namely an indivisible and universally applicable agenda transcending policy sectors to address cross-cutting issues, it can still not shake off the reputation of a development agenda. In combination with the finding of the previous section and the following section on the principle of proportionality and subsidiarity indicate the obstacles the EU needs to address and eventually overcome in order to progress in the integration and implementation process.

Principle of subsidiarity and principal of proportionality

The principles of subsidiarity and proportionality both have legal footing in the EU Treaties and are established in Article 5 of the Treaty on the European Union to govern the use of European Union competences. The principles determine when the EU may be allowed to get involved in certain policy sectors (see footnote 5). Article 5 define the two principles in order to ensure that the European Union is not able to exceed its competence in areas which belong to the Member States alone, or partially – here referring to shared competences of the EU and the Member States.

The principle of subsidiarity lays out that the EU "shall act only if and in so far as the objective of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States" in an area where the EU has no exclusive competences (Article 5, TEU). This is the case for policy sectors falling under the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda. The principle therefore determines the level of intervention when it comes to shared competences. It aims at guaranteeing that the Member States take actions themselves at the lowest (for example at regional, communal level etc.) level possible.

The principle of proportionality, similar to the subsidiarity principle, supports the view that the EU "shall not exceed what is necessary to achieve the objectives of the Treaties" (ibid.). One EU official phrased the obligations in this way:

> The way the EU works looks a lot like it's a state. But it's not, it's not a country. And the SDGs are meant for countries. Countries have signed, the EU has also signed. But the EU has a different responsibility. So, you could say, normally, and here comes in the famous subsidiarity principle, where countries can do things by themselves, the EU should not be involved. So, there are many areas where the EU has nothing to say, or no power. But, that's one point. It's not so easy to say okay let's implement the SDGs at EU level. On the other hand, the EU has many policies and legislations which might be contradictory to the SDG goals at times. So there is a challenge here. (EU Official 1)

In the empirical case of the 2030 Agenda as a policy framework, the two principles guide the EU's ability to exercise power and influence on its policies and their respective policy sectors. Policy documents, as well as interviewees, equally acknowledge the importance and the weight these two principles carry (Council of the European Union, 2006, 2016; European Commission, 2001, 2010, 2016c, 2016e). Their normative connotations define EU involvement when necessary and proportionate. It shows how the *sui generis* character of the EU and its normative values and principles do not always make it powerful but also rigid and inflexible. Again, the EU heavily relies on integration efforts and enhancements of the Member States, since it does not have the needed competences to act and interfere in certain policy sectors. Development cooperation, for example, is a sector of shared competences. Every step and policy measure taken needs to be carefully assessed and determined if it is in line with the principle of subsidiarity and proportionality. Both principles have a considerable impact on the whole policy cycle (EU Official 1, 4, 5). The EU is not a nation state. As an economic and (arguably) political entity of 28 soon to be 27 Member States, it deals with greater complexity than all other signatory parties to the 2030 Agenda which are nation states in a classical sense. This fact should not be forgotten and often is a much bigger contributing factor to the slow, timid, bureaucratic *sui generis* character of the EU which makes it exceptionally hard to govern in comparison to ordinary nation states.

Summary and points for further discussion

The section above showed that, according to the claims of the interviewed EU officials, the EU had an impact on the 2030 Agenda a normative direction, aiming for an advantageous starting position for policy integration. Integrating EU values in the 2030 Agenda indicates that the EU had its own interests in mind. As one of the lead negotiators during the post-2015 negotiation, the EU inserted itself as equally concerned with all three dimensions of sustainable development, and as a party willing to foster and facilitate partnership.

However, its leading role in the negotiations raised the bar high to secure this leadership role in the integration and implementation process, too. The EU is working on maintaining its position and on living up to its self-set expectations, in fear to step into the 'capability-expectation' gap, which Hill (1993, p. 315) defined as "not [to be] capable of fulfilling the new expectations already (and often irrationally) held of it. This is true both of the number and the degree of the expectations.".

Even though the EU has prepared a fruitful ground of departure to integrate and implement the 2030 Agenda by ensuring it contains European values such as democracy, rule of law, and human rights, it has not managed to live up to its own self-set expectations of a speedy and smooth integration. The EU is struggling to mobilise a common sense of responsibility and dedication across sectors, running risk to step into the rhetoric-reality gap (Smith, 2013). The EU is trying to maintain its leading position by adapting the normative direction of the 2030 Agenda to its own EU context, in the attempt to smoothen the policy integration process. In addition, it needs to be discussed what the EU claims it is doing in terms of integration efforts, and what is happening in practice. Analysing the findings in light of the theoretical insights of the developed EPI lens complemented by PCD concepts shows that the normative dimension is key in preparing a fertile ground for policy integration. Nevertheless, normative foundations and directions are still only soft power policy tools. The integration of a framework like the 2030 Agenda needs more than like-minded policy makers to become a success.

6|2 SECOND DIMENSION – POLITICAL WILL

As the insights of the developed theoretical framework show, the second dimension of political will, particularly channelling political ownership and leadership, is immensely important for the pursuit of both, the concept of policy coherence for development, and the integration of environmental objectives and concerns of the EPI theory. These insights equally extend to the 2030 Agenda and its integration in the EU.

Just as Nilsson and Persson (2017) point out in their policy note, this thesis finds in agreement that "the lack of political will remains a concern with the SDGs, but it has more to do with the lack of will, perhaps particular in high-income countries, to exchange existing national policy frameworks by imposing a (voluntary) global agreement." (p. 37). The fact that the 2030 Agenda, as a policy framework, needs to be integrated on European Union level and into EU policy, adds yet another layer of complexity to the already complicated, complex and bureaucratic public administration system of the EU. Despite this, the EU has acknowledged the risk of sluggish and lengthy integration and addressed it by trying to be proactive. In the recognition that political will is essential and crucial for the integration of the SDGs in the EU external and internal policies, the current Commission (2014-2019) constructed institutional arrangements in foresight. Those are elaborated on more closely in the following section on the institutional setting, granting that the subsequent findings make a case for the theoretical dimensions of political will.

Role of political ownership and political responsibility

One of the major findings for this second dimension is that the EU has established a role of political ownership and (political) responsibility for the 2030 Agenda integration process. The policy document analysis, the coding exercise and lastly particularly the interviews show, that political commitment is promoted through a key high-ranking political figure 'owning' the SDG mandate. First Vice-President of the European Commission Frans Timmermans has been appointed and charged with the horizontal responsibility of sustainable development. Mr Timmermans was appointed by Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker. In Juncker's Mission Letter to Timmermans, it reads

> You will also have the horizontal responsibility for sustainable development and ensure the coherence of proposals with this principle as anchored in the EU Treaties and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights (Juncker, 2014, p. 4)

In his Mission Letter, Timmermans receives clear instructions and a distinct mandate to ensure that sustainable development, in its most holistic term, is considered in the work of the European Commission as well as with other institutions. Besides this horizontal responsibility, Timmermans and his cabinet also take care of the work on better regulation within the Commission and ensuring the respect of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. Mr Timmermans is also responsible for the oversight of inter-institutional relations and the promotion of new partnerships with national parliaments (Europa, 2017c). In his position and with those overarching, encompassing and diverse mandates, the Vice-President unites different information strands and working streams. He should be perfectly informed and have a strategy in place that enables him to coordinate the policies accordingly. These preconditions formally commit him to be actively engaged in sustainable development and with it the coordination of the 2030 Agenda integration.

Several EU officials have also observed that Mr Timmermans is not only professionally but also personally convinced of the 2030 Agenda and therefore even likely to commit politically. During the conduction of the semi-structured interviews, different interviewees, independently from one another confirmed the view that the high-ranking political figure most concerned with sustainable development is Mr. Timmermans (EU Official 3; EU Official 4; Strategic Advisor 1; Strategic Advisor 2):

> When the Agenda was decided, and First Vice-President Timmermans […] went to the Summit, and I think there was much more awareness in the central services of the Commission, in the Cabinet, in the Secretariat General, that this thing was big (EU Official 5).

President Juncker issued his 10 Commission Priorities at the beginning of his presidency and since then has been more concerned with the EU's economic stability, the migration crisis or Brexit (Strategic Advisor 1; Strategic Advisor 2). For confirmation of observation, interviewees pointed at the frequency, or more the lack thereof, of Mr Juncker mentioning the buzz words *sustainability, sustainable development, 2030 Agenda* or *SDGs* in his speeches. He was openly criticised by several of the interviewees, whose views were reaffirmed by the observations of DG Environment Director Gantelet[14]. Gantelet confirmed that President Juncker abstains to mention sustainable development and that he is more concerned with the prioritisation of his 10 Priorities than with the prioritisation of the integration of the 2030 Agenda.

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[14] The EEAC Conference on the 2030 Agenda discussed the role of Environmental Councils in the integration of the 2030 Agenda. Mr Gantelet was invited to open the discussion with a speech and explained the Commission's integration strategy from his point of view.

In relation to this, the following excerpt from the Commission Communication on the *Next steps for a sustainable European future: European action for sustainability* outlines the approach of the EU in order to achieve both, the integration of the 2030 Agenda and the adherence to Juncker's 10 Priorities.

> The section below distils the most relevant synergies between the SDGs and the ten priorities. Fully exploiting these synergies between the SDGs and the Commission's highest priorities ensures strong political ownership and avoids that implementation of the SDGs takes place in a political vacuum. (European Commission, 2016c, p. 7)

The referred to section explains how each of the 10 Priorities connect, overlap or at least have touching points with the subsequent SDGs. It can be assumed that the political vacuum mentioned is attempted to be avoided by assigning the corresponding SDGs to each of the 10 Priorities. In turn, the College of Commissioners composing of one Commissioner from each Member State, are allocated to the one or several of the 10 Priorities to ensure (political) ownership and responsibility. As laid out in the Commissioner Communication, this approach spills over to and extends to the 17 SDGs that are covered by them.

This finding paves the way to present the last result of the second dimension on political will. It is dedicated to one of the sub-questions of what are the ways in which the different EU institutions are involved in the integration of the 2030 Agenda and which of them are the most active drivers. So far, the thesis has underlined the prominent position of the Commission, since it is the institution with the right of initiative and the one, besides the Council, issuing the most crucial policy documents for the integration process. Not all of the interviewees were of the same opinion as to which institution is most keen on the integration process, which directs this thesis to another finding.

The EU Institutions and Political Will

The various EU institutions are playing different roles when it comes to the integration of the 2030 Agenda. One of the sub-research questions seeks to find out how the different EU institutions are involved in the process and have been observed to show diverse ways of communication and expressing political will and dedication. Naturally, depending on the affiliation of the interviewee and his or her attachment to a certain EU institution, they arrived at different conclusions; however, all were very critical of the work their respective institution was doing and the results it was delivering. An additional remark is that the original institutional setting, as explained in the introduction of the European Union as a policy actor, only allows for limited engagement or influence of certain EU institutions.

The previous chapters and sections have highlighted the **Commission** and its influential role as legislative initiator and (external) leadership function. It is also vital for the implementation of decisions made by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU. The important Commission communications thematised in this and previous chapters were the first official steps to endorse, commit to and to start integrating the 2030 Agenda. The interviewees acknowledge this in agreement. In addition, one interviewee working for the Commission clarified that:

> We try to ensure what is essential in our opinion for the implementation of the SDGs and ensure the policy coherence, so that we don't have policies that go against each other and go against them. We have one policy that enforces the SDGs and then aspects of another policy that go against the SDGs. The idea is to prevent these things from happening but of course there are always trade-offs that need to be done. (EU Official 4).

However, a majority state that the actions taken so far have been timid and not enough (EU Official 2, 3, 4; Strategic Advisor 1, 2). Some EU officials, partially the ones affiliated or directly working for the Commission said that the Commission is rather careful in its official communication and official channels when it comes to the 2030 Agenda. "The Commission has become a bit timid […] is a bit in a defensive role" (EU Official 4). The interviewed MEPs support this view and voice that they would like the Commission 'to be bolder' than it is ready to be.

This insight can point to three possible explanations of the Commission's actions and behaviour. First, the Commission might be openly communicating its (political) will to integrate the 2030 Agenda, although it is not very keen to act on it accordingly. Second, the Commission is openly committed, but has only limited room for manoeuvre and is somehow restrained. On this option, the insights from another interview indicate that "And you have to ask the question: to what extent is this Agenda really a priority for the Commission. They are picking their fights. Which is fair. They have to." (EU Official 2). The third and last explanation is, the Commission is openly committed and is doing everything it possibly can and has already exhausted all of its resources and powers to integrate the 2030 Agenda. While option one and three would both mean a perseverance of the current *status quo*, the second option offers more comfort and more room for analysis at the same time. When answering the sub-research question which institutions is the main driver in the integration of the 2030 Agenda, the following results have been obtained: numerous EU officials, as well as other interviewed experts in the field, agreed that the second option of open commitment by the Commission with limited (political) leverage is the most perceptible option. The interviews point towards a (politically) committed Commission, which is unable to make 'bolder' decisions. This inability stems from some structural causes.

The current College of Commissioners is, just like the European Parliament, operational in office since the last European Parliament elections in 2014, after which Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker was elected and his College was appointed and took office. European Parliament elections take place every five years. The current Commission has served more than two-thirds of its term, and a new one will take over in 2019. The interviewees indicated that this fact ties the hands of the currently serving Commission to a considerable extent:

> I think the Council wants the Commission to be a bit more bold [sic] than the Commission is ready to be. And the Commission, of course, is a bit restrained by making up and talking about policies that go beyond 2020. That's when there should be the next Commission in place already. So, this Commission, on the other hand, wants to do what it can for the SDGs. But on the other hand, it does want to tie the hands too much of the Commission that is coming in. So, there is a certain level of apprehension for that reason (EU Official 4)

It is unwilling or unable to impose decisions on the coming Commission and therefore deprive it of its own initiative, political innovation and decision-making. This level of apprehension extents to other structural changes that are planned for the next two or three years. The Lisbon Strategy (2000-2010) was followed by the on-going Europe 2020 Strategy (2010-2020) which is to be reviewed and replaced by a new strategy in 2020 (European Commission, 2010). It is the *de facto* strategy for now (EU Official 2, 4, 5). The current Europe 2020 Strategy's head line targets prioritise the economic dimension (boosting growth and employment) as an answer to the economic and financial crisis. Finding itself bound to it, the Commissions room for manoeuvre is arguably small. In addition, the Better Regulation Guidelines adopted in 2015 show that one EU priority is to make EU legislation more coherent while each legislation undergoes the Regulatory Fitness and Performance (REFIT)[15] programme. Surely,

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[15] The REFIT programme is part of the Commission's Better Regulation Agenda, through which 'fitness test' are carried out determining the need for change in EU policies and laws (European Commission, 2017c)

proposed EU legislation aiding the integration or later implementing the 2030 Agenda and involving legislation would also need to be in line with REFIT requirements.

The interviewees were also critical about the role and position of the **European Parliament**. Generally, the EP is keen on the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. It is motivated to be involved in the integration efforts and openly does so by keeping the checks and balances on the Commission and the Council (European Parliament, 2015b, 2016a, 2016b). "And then the Parliament is also generally more ambitious than the Commission at the moment. But that depends a bit." as another EU official clarified (EU Official 1) The analysed and coded policy documents show that the EP demands concrete actions and strategies from the Commission. It pushes the Commission to be more precise and set tangible actions in motion. The European Parliament

> Calls on the Commission to come forward with a proposal for an overarching Sustainable Development Strategy encompassing all relevant internal and external policy areas, with a detailed timeline up to 2030, a mid-term review and a specific procedure ensuring Parliament's full involvement, including a concrete implementation plan coordinating the achievement of the 17 goals, 169 targets and 230 global indicators and ensuring consistency with, and delivery of, the Paris Agreement goals; stresses the importance of the universality of the goals, and the fact that the EU and its Member States have made a commitment to implementing all the goals and targets fully, in practice and in spirit; (European Parliament, 2016a, p. 3).

In this resolution, the EP calls for a Commission communication on the follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda and demands a review of the European Consensus for Development, which should be fully transformed by the paradigm shift brought about by the 2030 Agenda. Due to its institutional powers, the EP is free to give recommendations and opinions, it may also issue reports and demand alterations in legislative proposals. In the context of the integration of the 2030 Agenda, the EP is the driving force to recognise the 2030 Agenda as a chance for concrete and timely actions. For this, it reminds the Commission that the universally applicable and normative nature of the 2030 Agenda presents the opportunity to address other structural issues, such as the overcoming of policy silos, which will be more elaborated in the following section. The EP has also commissioned a special rapporteur for the SDGs to keep a close eye on the integration and implementation process. However, the EP is the most diverse institution in set-up. It does not only house the different political parties on a wide spectrum, it is also divided into different committees according to the different policy sectors and sectoral interests.

Some of the interviewed MEPs openly acknowledged that the committees need to be more in line and more open for collaboration to find common ground better. The EP only has limited powers to influence policies directly (not by rights of initiating proposals), but it does have the power to refuse such legislative proposals and suggest alterations and amendments in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure[16]. Accordingly, the EP is able to influence the integration process of the 2030 Agenda indirectly, by filing opinions and reports and openly criticise Council and Commission for being too hasty and timid on the integration efforts, as this statement shows:

> And we were quite critical with it[17]. Because it appeared to me that it was more focused on listing the existing policies and instruments that you know, different goals and targets that contribute to the reaching of the goals. But what was, according to me, lacking was a vision for the future and how to ensure that all our policies in line with the principle of policy coherence

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[16] For more information on the legislative ordinary procedure as defined by the EU Treaties, please see European Parliament (2017a) and Maurer (2003) for more insights on the EP's legislative powers.

[17] Subject of the conversation was the Commission Communication on EU action for sustainability from November 2016.

for development will be aligned with the new agenda. Which means to go beyond the 2020 Strategy. (EU Official 3).

The next institution involved in the integration process of the 2030 Agenda is the **Council**. Unfortunately, EU officials working for the Council were harder to approach than the ones from the other two institutions. The findings are therefore based on the observations of the interviewed EU officials affiliated with the Commission and the EP, as well as the analysed policy documents. Their views differ in some ways. One of the opinions stated was "So, at the moment, it is the Member States, so the Council. At the moment, it is the council, so the ministers, who are pushing for more integration at EU level of the SDGs" (EU Official 4).

An important policy document that illustrates the vocal political will of the Council to be actively engaged in the integration of the 2030 Agenda is the Council Conclusions of June 2017. The Council:

> Stresses the commitment of the EU and its Member States to achieve the 17 SDGs by 2030, ensuring that no-one is left behind and seeking to reach the furthest behind first; underlines that greater effort is needed by all actors to promote social inclusion […] (Council of the European Union, 2017a, p. 3)

The Council Conclusions also restate the frontrunner role the EU wants to keep and, whereas the Council comes back to the various policy instruments and policy documents that have been published for the integration process (the two Commission Communications of November 2016, the New Consensus, the Global Strategy and Better Regulation Guidelines). Under the heading of 'Next steps towards achieving the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at EU level', the Council:

> Requests the Commission while respecting the principle of subsidiarity to continue steering the EU policy framework to ensure that existing and new EU policies are in line with the SDGs and their targets (ibid., p. 6).

In the next point, the Council takes an even stronger stand by using clear and convincing language in saying that it:

> Urges the Commission to elaborate, by mid-2018, an implementation strategy outlining timelines, objectives and concrete measures to reflect the 2030 Agenda in all relevant EU internal and external policies, taking into account the global impacts of the EU's domestic actions (ibid., p. 7).

These two explementary quotes serve as an indication that the Member States, by speaking with one voice through the Council Conclusion, expect that actions will follow words and that the Commission works towards fulfilling the tasks it has set itself in the Commission Communications preceding the Council Conclusions. This finding indicates that it is not only the interviewed EU officials of the EP and the Commission who would like to see a more engaged Commission, which is willing to take risks and is willing to be a bit bolder in its decisions and actions. Although Council Conclusions have no legal effect, they can invite a Member State or the Commission to take action on a specific issue, in this case the integration of the 2030 Agenda. This kind of vocal and open support for the 2030 Agenda on such a high level is key for a successful integration process and to call on the dedication of all.

Ambiguous political relations

Another short finding section is dedicated to the political will of the central services at the top the Commission. After the previous examination of the roles of Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and First Vice-President Frans Timmermans and their political will, it is important to set this finding into context. This section does not intend to repeat the previously established findings, on the contrary, it offers additional depth by demonstrating the different nuances political will can take in the empirical case of the 2030 Agenda integration at EU level.

The policy documents, official speeches and press releases underline the need for political leader- and ownership at the top, although there is no further elaboration on the implications – besides the self-evident effect of clear responsibility and accountability of the political leader. The nuances of political will to act in the EU context were found in the responses and insightful remarks of the interviewed EU officials. Due to ensured anonymity, they were free to speak up their mind and hint at the rigid density of EU (political) order. The often underestimated bureaucratical, institutional and structural complexity of the EU can be tackled in numerous possible ways. One of them, as described by the interviewees, is by the establishment and maintenance of stiff hierarchies. The concrete positions (in the EU hierarchy) of the interviewees cannot be revealed, however the following quote shows that:

> It's just that we sometimes work so hard on the preparations of meeting. Or international positions of the EU. But you know that the moment it goes to the top, to the central services. They do with it what they want. They might not even have a look at it. At all. (EU Official 5)

There is a rather transparent and comprehensible way to perceive dedication and political will from the bottom to the top, while indications for *vice versa*, from the top to the bottom, is hardly palpable. This argument may seem to be contradicting the previous findings, but is easier to comprehend by providing an example.

The DGs, committees and departments responsible for the integration of the 2030 Agenda at EU level start preparing and working on the integration process at the very bottom in the 'pecking order', including all possible sources of expertise and knowledge. The viable expert suggestions and plans make it one (seniority) level up in the hierarchy and become more refined and concrete the higher they advance and the closer they get to the top level. The central services at the top close to the most superior and most important (political) leaders making decisions and taking command of the next steps, in turn, have a unidirectional, non-reciprocal relation to the less superior. While the lower levels are always held accountable for their work, the top decision-makers, in this case Mr Juncker and Mr Timmermans, are accountable towards?? one another and towards the Council and the EP.

The interviewees implicitly said that they do not know if and how much of their expertise in form of policy briefs and recommendation will make it to the top (EU Official 5, 6). Meaning that whatever the policy-makers have prepared climbing up the pecking-order, they will not know if it reaches the top, and if it does, it is up to the decision-maker to choose how much of it influences the final decision. Similarly, if EU officials at the bottom show a high degree of political will and dedication to the issue of SDG integration, it does not necessarily imply such good-heartedness at the top, even if political will is openly communicated and commanded in a top-down approach.

Political Will of the Member States

EU is largely dependent on the engagement and the (political) commitment of the Member States and on the fact that they do act and do start to integrate the 2030 Agenda, where the EU has no or only shared (limited) competences. The previous sections above explained the role of the Member States in the Council, and the role the two principles of subsidiarity and proportionality play. The Member States have significant influence of EU policies in the various Council configurations. Due to such influence and the *sui generis* character of the EU, the success of the 2030 Agenda integration also depends on the willingness and commitment of its 28 (27) Member States.

> The achievement of many Sustainable Development Goals will also depend largely on action taken in Member States, as in many areas the EU supports, coordinates and complements Member States' policies or has a shared responsibility. In line with the principle of subsidiarity, the EU can in areas outside its exclusive competence only act if the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States at central, regional or local level but can rather, by reason of the scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved at Union level. (European Commission, 2016i, p. 2).

Unfortunately, going more into depth of the political will of the individual Member States is beyond the scope of this paper. However, further research could investigate the different strategies of the EU Member States and examine their national sustainability strategies and how they deal with the big challenge of integrating the 2030 Agenda domestically. As this EU official suggests:

> And we [MEPs] were asking for an overarching European strategy for the implementation of the SDGs. Because I think that for the national strategy for implementation of the different member states we need some kind of coordination and this let's say framework of implementation at the European level. It should not be of the 28, but it should be something that is capable to coordinate the approach of the different member states in implementing the goals. (EU Official 3).

The EP, like the Council, is supporting the idea of an overarching EU strategy for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It remains to be seen whether the new College of Commissioners (from 2019) will propose such a strategy.

Concluding remarks and points for further discussion

The second dimension on the examination of the political will and its importance for the integration of the 2030 Agenda in European Union external and internal-domestic policy shows that political will is crucial to plan and start integrating the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs into Union policy. Although institutional measures have been taken to channel and direct this political commitment, either in form of legal foundations (TEU Sustainable Development article, check again) or in form of political mandates and horizontal responsibility, the true challenge of integrating the 2030 Agenda and its integration implications surface. Yet again, it is the very own nature of the Agenda, which implies both advantages and disadvantages, that poses the greatest challenge for integration. The universality and indivisibility require everyone's commitment and everyone's sense of responsibility and urgency. Dedication is needed throughout the EU, by its EU officials working on the ground preparing briefings and legislations, to the top decision-makers, the various EU institutions and the Member States.

The research shows that there is not enough assertiveness and not enough diligence at this moment to get everybody on board. A clear universal commitment exercised in a cross-cutting manner

and transcending traditional policy sectors is currently still missing. This is due to the lack of true diligence and assertiveness, but caused by not enough awareness across the DGs, departments and committees. This aspect shows that, although there is openly communicated political will and officially established political ownership at the top, the struggle is not to make a commitment as such, but rather the execution and implementation of the acclaimed political will that is crucial in the integration efforts, drawing on the phrase of 'actions speak louder than words'. As the third dimension will show, one of the institutional requirements for the integration of the 2030 Agenda is the channelling of the commitments and the establishment of institutional structures would be first actions to take.

6|3 THIRD DIMENSION – INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

In order to integrate the 2030 Agenda into EU external and internal policy, the insights of the established theoretical framework require the investigation of the institutional setting. The purpose is to find out whether institutional arrangements have been planned, introduced, established or altered to aid the integration of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

Conversation with several interviewees from the EU institutions and analysis of the provided EU policy documents has shown that several institutional measures have been taken to start integrating the 2030 Agenda. First and foremost, the Commission Communications on the *Next steps for a sustainable European future: European action for sustainability* explains how the EU started to prepare its institutional set-up for the integration of the 2030 Agenda. The Communication mentions so-called work streams, two of them in total, which provide for the necessary first steps to start the integration process. The interviewees confirmed the importance of those two work streams: the first work stream is "to fully integrate the SDGs in the European policy framework and current Commission priorities, assessing where we stand and identifying the most relevant sustainability concerns." (European Commission, 2016c, p. 3). The second work stream is dedicated to "launch a reflection work on developing our longer term vision and the focus of sectoral policies after 2020, preparing for the long term implementation of the SDGs" (ibid). Both work streams have been put in motion. The first work stream has already taken off in form of pending policy reforms, reviews or renewals – for example the New European Consensus for Development and the Better Regulation Guidelines. It also points at the necessary requirement to undertake an in-depth gap analysis to see where the EU and its policies stand. The second work stream focuses on the long-term endeavours the EU is planning to undertake to envision future sustainable development strategies.

The interviewed EU officials were all, implicitly or explicitly, involved in the EU integration efforts for sustainable development. Either through their political affiliation and expertise in the EP, or through their work in committees and working groups in which they hold an SDG mandate or are known for their (policy) expertise in one of the three dimensions of social, environment or economics of the 2030 Agenda.

Inter-service steering groups

Inter-service steering groups take on a very important task when it comes to the day-to-day business of the EU institutions. The term itself refers to the work of the Commission and, as the name explains, is a group of members of the different Directorate Generals (DG) working together to provide between

(inter) services. The various DGs of the different policy sectors hold inter-service meetings on multiple topics, and depending on the issue at hand set up an inter-service steering group in order to ensure better collaboration and coordination. One of the interviewees stated that the inter-service steering groups are a way of pursuing horizontal integration (Researcher 2).

This very general finding of the existence of such steering groups shows that supportive institutional set-ups are one way of making sure that the different DGs and departments work together, or at least communicate what they are currently working on. Two EU officials explained that the members of DG DEVCO and DG ENV were working together in an inter-service steering group to prepare the EU mandate for the Rio+20 negotiations (EU Official 4, 5). It is also an attempt to overcome policy silos and contribute to a joint and common sense of responsibility. Inter-service steering groups prevent misunderstandings and enable task division. As a platform for communication and collaboration, it also invites the different EU officials to connect the different (policy) puzzle pieces to see how their working efforts come together in the bigger picture. Additionally, the inter-service steering groups present the opportunity to steer a planned policy agenda into a certain direction, which can either support sustainable development efforts in the case of the 2030 Agenda, or can be made more challenging if lobbyists and other campaigners try to steer policies into other directions.

Commission SDG Project Team

The finding on a Commission SDG Project Team is a very valuable one for this thesis, as it shows that institutional measures have been taken to integrate the 2030 Agenda. The previous findings section 6 |2 on the political will dimension showed that one strategy for a smooth integration is political ownership and willingness of the core leaders and/or decision-makers. For the purpose of channelling such political ownership and for the clear communication and task division, a Commission SDG project team was established, which is not mentioned in any official policy documents. The establishment of the Commission SDG Team was explained by an EU official in this way:

> Most importantly, there is something called a project team of Commissioners mostly around the Vice Presidents. […] So, creating a project team is pretty meaningful. It gives a sort of strength. It puts it on the level of the main priorities. And it also creates a sort of commitment. They created one, one on the SDGs. It is chaired by Vice-President Timmermans. And it met a few times, in 2016 and '17. And they will continue to do so. (EU Official 5).

The project team aims to provide a platform for inter-Commissioner communication and to keep track on the tasks and progress the other DGs are making. It is also a way for Mr Timmermans to be up to speed and, again, show real assertiveness for the importance of the 2030 Agenda in such a high-level project group.

Overcoming policy silos

Policy silos occur when policy-makers in a certain policy sector are very concentrated on their work, they become experts and only concerned with their specific policy field. A policy silo describes the phenomenon of a missing vision of how the individual policy sector operates in the over-arching governance process of an institution or a government. Policy makers may run the risk at becoming isolated in their own small little policy field and alienated from the potential benefits of cross-sector

cooperation[18].

When investigating the institutional setting dimension of the developed theoretical framework derived from the insights of EPI theory and the complementation of PCD notions, it becomes clear that overcoming policy silos is one of the major challenges at the EU level, also concerning the EU institutions and their intra- and inter-institutional cooperation. When inquiring about the collaboration and coordination between the different committees and working groups, one interviewee answered:

> Yeah, good question. And that's certainly a problem of the Parliament. I am, what I am trying more and more is trying to make sure that some different Committees are working together. Because, you are exactly pointing at the right problem. That these different committees are really having difficulties and are not always working consistently with each other (EU Official 2).

The 2030 Agenda emphasises the need for cooperation, collaboration and working together greatly. It addresses every stakeholder and every (policy) sector in the same manner. As pointed out in section 6|1, the normative dimension has shown that there is a lack of a common sense of responsibility and a certain perception and reputation of the 2030 Agenda, that could potentially slow down or even hinder the integration process. This point on policy silos is strongly connected to the previous findings.

In the case of this finding, the interviews were most helpful to gather new insights. In broad agreement, all interviewees, disregarding if they are directly affiliated with the EU or not, emphasised the need to overcome policy silos and move beyond strict system-thinking. EU officials of both, the Commission and the EP, confirmed that policy-makers are often preoccupied with their own policy field only and do not work together with people from other committees/departments often enough. Each of the interviewees underlined that collaboration and working together is a prerequisite for a successful integration of the SDGs. On this, an EU official made the following observation:

> I have to say something good is that they really, in the Commission, make an effort to break down the silos and to have an integrated approach. That is not easy, with the different director generals work together. But they really are making an effort (EU Official 3).

Again, the very own nature of the 2030 Agenda helps to prove a point. Instead of setting it up according to policy fields and adhering to old patterns of system-thinking, the negotiators decided to structure the Agenda according to the cross-cutting issues and broad challenges to overcome. In this way, interconnectivity and interdependency are demonstrated, whereas first possible collaboration entry points are suggested by the different (policy) sectors the individual SDG covers

Nevertheless, some researchers warn of the dangers of abrupt abandonment of policy silos. Policy silos are not bad *per se*, although the concept carries a certain negative connotation. As the notion of policy integration has become more popular since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, policy silos have quickly been dismissed as the evil root cause of integration problems. Analysed in light of its positive characteristics, policy silos are a sign that policy-makers have in-depth knowledge and expertise in their respective field. Persson (2016) clarifies that "Specialization has its benefits; it is not just about tunnel vision, but also offers concentrated expertise, strong mandates, and clear lines of accountability". (last sub-heading, first paragraph). Inevitably, policy sectors were created to distribute tasks, further specialisation and expertise and, most importantly, distribute responsibility.

Therefore, this finding on policy silos concludes that policy silos should not necessarily be fully overcome or broken down. Instead, responsible policy-makers can make an effort to become more flexible with regards to collaboration and coordination with other policy sectors, start to share

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[18] Authors own definition.

responsibilities and make policy silos generally less rigid. Persson (2016) argues for more communication and is supported in her view by Niestroy and Meuleman (2016), who propose to "teach silos how to dance" (p. 11). If policy silos provide the necessary structure, reliability, transparency and communication points, mental silos are the ones that prevent change and should be broken down or at least learn how to be more flexible or 'to dance' (ibid.).

Multi-Stakeholder Platform on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the EU

The third dimension of the established theoretical framework which is based on the insights of EPI theory emphasises the importance of the institutional setting to ensure successful implementation. Here, it is important that certain institutional pre-conditions are met that provide a solid foundation to engage in the integration process which will eventually lead the way for the implementation process.

One major institutional setting that has been put in place is the multi-stakeholder platform on the implementation of the sustainable development goals in the EU. This long and sophisticated name breaks down to a high-level platform, also referred to as a high-level Advisory group, bringing together stakeholders from the different segments of society. It involves EU officials, civil society, the private and corporate sector, non-governmental organisations bringing them together in regular meetings to support the integration process. The aim, according to SDG number 17, is to involve and engage everybody and to strengthen partnerships, common understanding and knowledge-sharing. The call for applications to participate in the multi-stakeholder platform was issued in May 2017 with a Commission Decision to invite said stakeholders to advise and support the Commission in the implementation of the SDGs and set up a forum for "exchange of experience and good practice in the field of the Sustainable Development Goals." (European Commission, 2017a, p. 2). Interested stakeholders were able to apply until the end of June. The ones admitted will be appointed until the end of 2019, after which the Commission Decision is up for renewal.

The Commission also made sure that individuals (i.e. EU officials) from the other two bigger EU institutions, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, are involved in the process by nominating two representatives each (one for the platform and one for the management committee) to make sure that the various levels − supranational, national, regional, local − are represented and involved in the (horizonal) integration of the 2030 Agenda.

In the Commission Communication and the following Decision, the high-profile of this platform was defined by appointing the First Vice-President of the Commission as a chair with assistance by a Deputy Secretary-General of the Commission. This high-level engagement and support of the platform shows the dedication to the cause of the integration of the 2030 Agenda. It also guarantees that communication is channelled by and through Mr Timmermans, who should be the best person informed about the on-going activities and measures taken to integrate the 2030 Agenda. In the end, he is the person with the biggest responsibility and accountability of the integration process.

International agreements as 'institutional back-up support'

A problematic point regarding the integration of the 2030 Agenda is the fact that it is not legally binding, in contrast to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The mutual accountability framework of the 2030 is not backed up by binding government undertakings (see Picciotto, 2005, for mutual accountability of MDGs). In conversation with EU officials, it was outlined that the institutional

structure of legally binding international agreements can help with the integration and implementation on non-legally binding ones. In the case of the 2030 Agenda and its adoption year of 2015, a closer look on the internationally eventful year of 2015 shows that the international community has provided society with four major multilateral commitments it can rely on.

The United Nations involves all of its member states in the preparation of this historical year and delivered, in chronological order, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR, in March 2015), the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA, July 2015), the 2030 Agenda (also often abbreviated by its structure around the SDGs, September 2015) and lastly the COP21 UNFCCC Conference in December 2015, which is often referred to as the Paris Agreement (Sassa & Mikoš, 2017). These international agreements are purposefully intertwined and together build a solid foundation to advance resilience, to provide a global framework for financing of sustainable development, a comprehensive agenda for sustainable development, and a take on how to tackle climate change. This strong fourfold framework, although not all legally binding, create a strong and robust, mutually reinforcing international structure. This mutually reinforcing nature should not be underestimated. On the contrary, the interviewees argued that, in the case of the integration of the 2030 Agenda, particularly the legally binding Paris Agreement offers a strong foundation of (institutional) support, whereas the AAAA as an integral part of the 2030 Agenda offers support in terms of (development) finance (C 210/1). It offers guidelines and binding targets in one of the three dimensions of the 2030 Agenda, and together with the two other international agreements makes a strong care to pursue the implementation of all four of them. The Council expresses it in the following terms below:

> [The Council] Calls for an integrated, comprehensive implementation of the 2030 Agenda that builds synergies with the implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction and other international commitments; notes that these multilateral commitments demonstrated the necessity and the capacity of all UN Member States to work in partnership to address global issues; underlines the crucial importance of a rules-based global order, with multilateralism as its key principle and the United Nations at its core for a peaceful and sustainable world; (Council of the European Union, 2017a) p. 5

This 'tagging along' of the 2030 Agenda with the Paris agreement implementation could help its integration and eventually lead to a more comprehensive understanding of why the international community undertook these steps and approach today's global challenges with the fourfold (action) strategy. In terms of the established theoretical framework based on the insights of EPI and the complementation of PCD, it shows how beneficial institutional structures, whether on the local or international level; and the effort to increase coherence among existing policies/agreements can prepare the ground for successful integration and implementation of the latter.

On the other hand, the fact that the international community agreed on these four frameworks could equally lead to an overwhelming integration and implementation challenge or cherry-picking of whole agendas.

Concluding remarks and points for further discussion

The third dimension on the examination of the institutional setting and its importance for the integration of the 2030 Agenda in European Union external and internal-domestic policy shows that the institutional setting is vital in the channelling and structuring of the integration efforts.

The interviews showed that institutional measures included the allocation of SDG mandates o EU officials on the ground working in their assigned committees, as well as the Commission SDG project group on a higher level. Both have in common that they provide an intentional institutional set-up for communication, collaboration and coordination. This cross-cutting collaboration contributes to the need to loosen system thinking and overcome policy silo (thinking). However, the provided institutional structures do not only have positive attributes but could run risk to contribute to policy dilution and present plans and actions that expose the lowest-common denominator outcomes, instead of bold endeavours needed for the integration of the 2030 Agenda. These points and their implications are up for further elaboration in the discussion.

Additionally, the other multilateral frameworks with the intention of mutually reinforcing each other could, on the contrary, lead to an overwhelmed international community not knowing where to start integrating and implementing first.

6|4 FOURTH DIMENSION – RESOURCES, CAPACITIES AND PROCEDURES

Significant steps have been taken by the EU to make sure that the 2030 Agenda is integrated in EU external and internal/domestic policy. The fourth dimension of the theoretical framework developed from the insights of EPI theory and the complementation of PCD concepts underlines the importance of supportive resources and capacities, as well as procedures that help the integration process or provide impact assessment to keep track of such process.

For this purpose, the EU has started a review process of the most important policy tools and instruments that are vital for this integration. The presentation of a revised and renewed European Consensus on Development is the first significant step to update this important piece of legislation which is a policy tool as the same time. Updating the Consensus, as well as the introduction of the Better Regulation Guidelines give proof that the gap-analysis is on the way.

As there are different ways of how the mobilisation of recourses, capacities and procedures assists in this process in both the external and internal policy integration of the 2030 Agenda. Some particularly insightful and important documents to demonstrate the fourth and last dimension are the Commission Communication and the Staff Working Document of November 2016, and the recent publications by the statistical EU department Eurostat. The documents give explicit details on how the EU is planning to start the integration and implementation process and the following findings help to answer the main research question of how the EU is seeking to integrate the 2030 Agenda in its external and internal/domestic policies with regards to the mobilisation of resources, capacities and procedures.

EU SDG implementation strategy

One part of the fourth and last dimension of the developed theoretical framework of the insights of EPI theory and the complementary insights of PCD, is the investigation and taking stock of currently existing policies and in how far they are 'SDG-proof' or at least 'SDG-friendly'. This action can also be described at a gap-analysis to see what is being done where and how and what needs to change, improve, or stop. One first way of doing this is the previously mentioned first work stream proposed by the Commission.

The first work stream means "to fully integrate the SDGs in the European policy framework and current Commission priorities" (European Commission, 2016c, p. 3). As a first step, the Commission started to do exactly as intended: they published an accompanying Staff Working Document where the current 10 Commission priorities are paired up with matching SDGs covering the same or very similar objectives. In the document, the Commission claims that:

> [The] overview below makes clear that the EU priorities, policies, funds and other actions cover all Sustainable Development Goals and provide a significant contribution to their implementation, both within the EU and through EU external action. They put the European Union on the right track to achieve a sustainable European future. Continued efforts and mainstreaming of the S in new policy initiatives will be needed to achieve the SDGs, which are often demanding and have a long-term horizon. (European Commission, 2016i, p. 2)

By expressing that all SDGs are covered by various EU actions and that the EU is 'right on track', the Commission hints at a fact that has been established as a finding during the interviews of the EU officials. Since EU actions seem to encompass all SDGs, the Commission is not planning to generate its own SDG implementation strategy. As found out in the interviews, the EU Sustainability Development Strategy (EU SDS), which was established by a Commission Communication in May 2001, is still the current sustainable development strategy of the EU. The Lisbon Strategy (2000-2010) and the current Europe 2020 are seen as "effective tool[s] for delivering sustainable development in the EU." Although the EU SDS was last reviewed in 2009, and then mainstreamed into the Europe 2020 strategy, it is the *de facto* sustainable development strategy of the EU (European Commission, 2016c; 2016f, second sub-heading). It was clarified that the Commission would prefer to mainstream or integrate the 2030 Agenda in a SDG-friendly manner than developing a separate framework. The Member States, in contrast, have been voicing the wish to have both, mainstreaming of the SDGs into EU policies and a concrete (integration) strategy they can revisit as a constant basis should SDG-implementation questions appear. Probably, this is why the Council included the following statement in its conclusions:

> The Council calls on the Commission to set out by mid-2018 an implementation strategy with timelines, objectives and concrete measures to implement the 2030 Agenda in all EU policies. The Commission should also identify by mid-2018 gaps where the EU needs to do more by 2030 in the areas of policy, legislation, governance structures for horizontal coherence and implementation." (Council of the European Union, 2016, p. 1)

The preceding Commission Communication did not mention such an implementation strategy, whereas the time span between the publication of the Communication (end November 2016) and the Council Conclusion (June 2017). It remains to be seen if such strategy will be introduced in the coming months.

Monitoring EU SDG implementation

This dimension also discusses the measures the EU is planning to take or has taken so far to start a monitoring process toward the integration and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs. Considering the developed theory, it is particularly interesting how the EU is going to tackle the challenges of impact assessment of such an all-encompassing, universal and indivisible agenda as the one of 2030.

For the purpose of monitoring the EU SDG implementation process, the Commission Communications of November 2016 commissioned Eurostat with the development of an EU SDG

indicator set by 2017. Beforehand, the United Nations Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) developed a global indicator framework for the SDGs, containing the 17 SDGs divided into 169 targets and 230 indicators to contribute to the successful implementation. The UN global indicator framework was adopted in July 2017, shortly after the EU Eurostat bureau presented the final version of the EU SDG indicator set end of May 2017 (Eurostat, 2017b; UN-GA, 2017).

> Concerning policy relevance[19], the aim of the EU SDG indicator set is to monitor progress towards the SDGs in an EU context. The indicators selected have strong links with the Commission Communication "Next steps for a sustainable European future". In addition, all selected indicators allow an unambiguous interpretation of the desired direction of change as set out in the relevant EU policies and initiatives (Eurostat, 2017b, p. 3)

As Nilsson and Persson (2017, p. 38) predicted in their policy note, the EU took the adoption of the 2030 Agenda as an opportunity to "revise impact assessment guidelines, both those that focus on environmental issues, and those that have a broader remit, such as those of the EC (2015) [the Better Regulation Guidelines]". This way, EU policies become more aligned with the SDGs to form an internationally harmonised and universal basis for impact criteria.

The last monitoring report of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS) was published by Eurostat in 2015 (Eurostat, 2015). It followed a *Statistical glance from the viewpoint of the UN Sustainable Development Goals* report in which Eurostat discusses sustainable development in the European Union in light of the 2030 Agenda. It clarifies that the current EU SDS biannual monitoring report are based on an EU set of Sustainable Development Indicators (SDIs) and that:

> This publication is meant as an *ad hoc* publication, bridging Eurostat's series of monitoring reports of the EU SDS with future regular monitoring of the SDGs in an EU context, foreseen to start in 2017. It is released simultaneously with the Commission Communication 'Next steps for a sustainable European future: European action for sustainability', which demonstrates the significance of the SDGs for the European Union and explains how the EU contributes to reaching them (Eurostat, 2016b, p. 9).

It acknowledges that it is a mere statistical overview, without aiming to assess the effectiveness of existing policies and presents 51 indicators reflecting the ambitious SDG framework in an EU context. Two years later, the fully developed EU Sustainable Development Indicator set was adopted and the first monitoring report of the SDGs in the EU context was published (Eurostat, 2017). In the 372 pages long report, the progress towards the 17 SDGs is measured goal by goal. It includes one table per goal presenting the corresponding indicators and the progress. Statistical measurement tools and infographics visualise the findings. A web environment[20] was also created, where the key findings are portrayed and country's progress towards the SDGs can be compared. The SDGs have replaced the EU SDS and present the new EU sustainable development strategy.[21]

This finding on the capacities of monitoring the progress towards the SDGs shows that the EU took first significant steps to track the progress, or lack thereof, by publishing a monitoring report annually.

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[19] Original emphasis.
[20] The web environment can be accessed here.
[21] No official EU (policy) statement can be found on this. However, the Eurostat website states "Please note that the EU SDS has been replaced by the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals). These pages as well as the indicator set for the SDS is no longer maintained or updated (last update May 2017)." (Eurostat, 2016a, blue textbox).

Impact assessment – National Voluntary Reviews to the HLPF

A different type of monitoring in the form of impact assessment is the national voluntary review laid out in the 2030 Agenda itself. Under paragraph 79, it reads "we [the United Nations] also encourage Member States to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven (UN-GA, 2015b, p. 33). The national voluntary reviews (NVRs) aim at keeping track of the progresses made by the UN Member States and at sharing the knowledge and expertise that they have developed, including the successes and challenges. All relevant stakeholders; the private sector, civil society and indigenous peoples are invited to contribute to the NVRs; showing that the UN encourages multi-stakeholder engagement and values their experience in the integration process as well.

The EU recognised that the NVRs are an additional international assessment procedure. Although the NVRs are voluntary, the Council states firmly that:

> [It] recognises the primary responsibility of Member States in the follow-up and review at national, regional and global levels of progress towards the SDGs and reiterates Member States' commitment to conduct regular and inclusive progress reviews at the national and subnational levels, where relevant, in a participatory manner; (Council of the European Union, 2017a, p. 12)

The NVRs are publicly accessible on the UN HLPF website as a mean to increases transparency and accountability. The Council, as well as the Commission, encourage the EU Member States to participate in the NVRs framework

> [The Council] underlines the need to ensure that EU and individual Member State progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is reported in the context of the HLPF at regular intervals, including through Voluntary National Reviews. This will contribute to ensuring accountability to citizens; (ibid., p. 13)

Naturally, the EU wants to make use of this additional impact assessment structure, although voluntary, and ensure that its Member States play a leading role in the NVRs process. Several interviewees pointed out that it is of great importance that the Member States are continuously encouraged to do so (European Parliament, 2017c). In 2016, four EU countries (Estonia, Finland, France and Germany) submitted their first NVRs. Nine more countries (Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia and Sweden) followed suit in 2017. For 2018, eight EU Member States (Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Spain) are expected to submit a NVR. Consequently, his leaves seven Member States (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia, Luxembourg, Romania, United Kingdom) without any plans to present a NVR yet.

Resources and capacities – a budget for the 2030 Agenda integration?

One important question when it comes to the fourth dimension of the developed theoretical framework to answer is the one of mobilisation and allocation of financial resources for the integration of the 2030 Agenda.

The most significant policy documents – the Commission Communications and Council Conclusion – do not mention the allocation of a budget or any financial resources to support the

integration of the 2030 Agenda. Instead, the policy documents underline the responsibilities of the Member States to make sure that financial resources are made available for their (national) sustainable development strategies and their national integration efforts. Additionally, a Joint Declaration by the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission mentions that the EU and its Member States are working on "budget support to help promote SDG implementation efforts in partner countries" (Council of the European Union, 2017c, p. 19).

A short infographic from 2015 depicts a holistic approach to sustainable development finance, and shows how the integrated approach to key sectors mobilised more financial resources to be spent on sustainable development in general. However, there is no official allocation of financial resources stated in any of the analysed policy documents.

The interviewed EU officials could not give any further information on the question of budgeting or financial resources available. However, the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) is being revised, and a proposal for the new post 2020 MFF with concrete budgeting plans is expected to be published in May 2018 (Europa, 2017b). Additionally, a suggestion for further research is to interview EU officials working on the EU budget and financing (for example DG Economic Affairs and Finance) to gather data on potentially allocated budget for the integration of the 2030 Agenda.

Revision of policy tools and instruments and introduction of Impact Assessments (IAs)

In connection to the previous finding, it is important to shed light on the various policy tools and instruments that come to an end soon (within the next two years, mostly by 2020) or are up to review and renewal soon. The list below gives an overview of those policy tools:

- European Consensus on Development (revised in 2017)
- Europe 2020
- Multiannual Framework adjustments
- EDF Financing Plan for Development
- Better Regulation Guidelines (in place since 2015)
- ACP EU Partnership (Cotonou Agreement) after 2020
- 10 Priorities of the Commission (2014-2019)

Two points can be taken away from this finding. Firstly, it shows that the EU has a lot of different mechanisms and procedures in place that are going to be revised within the next one-two years; some of those revisions are probably being negotiated and prepared now. On the other hand, some significant steps have been taken already; for example, the revision of the European Consensus on Development, and the introduction of the Better Regulation Guidelines in order to design and evaluate EU policies and laws. Secondly, by 2020 the EU let five years of precious time and efforts pass for the integration of the 2030 Agenda. Five years mean considerable time, even for a complex and highly bureaucratic institution as the EU as whole, to understand which arguably raises expectations higher and increases the risk that the EU makes promises it cannot keep – therefore confirming the claim that a rhetoric-reality gap is nothing uncommon to be encountered at EU level.

Concluding remarks and points for further discussion

The fourth dimension of the theoretical framework developed from the insights of EPI theory and the complementation of PCD concepts shows that the EU has started to mobilise its resources to begin with the integration process of the 2030 Agenda. It becomes evident that the EU is very keen on

adapting the 2030 Agenda, as a holistic policy framework, to its own EU contexts. For example, through the publication of EU SDG indicators and the establishment of EU monitoring on the SDGs. Additionally, the numerous policy tools and mechanisms that are connected to sustainable development, in one way or another, are to be revised soon, which presents an ideal momentum for further integration efforts, but also raises the bar and expectations high.

The EU budget deserves a point of critique, since the revision and adaptation of the MFF does not mention sustainable development implicitly or explicitly, nor make a real allocation of EU budget for it. The absence of financial resources and the official and formal allocation of budget to the cause of sustainable development could significantly slow down the integration process.

Additionally, the various gap analyses the EU has commissioned so far, mostly praise the already existing EU policies that allegedly cover all 17 SDGs in the 10 Commission Priorities and only need small adjustments (see particularly SWD (2016) 390 final).

7 | Empirical Findings – A move from PCD to PCSD?

The second part of the guiding research questions is concerned with a particular SDG of the 2030 Agenda, even more narrowed down, a sub-target to help the integration process. As briefly mentioned in the policy framework chapter on PCD, the 2030 Agenda introduced an even more overarching concept that transcends and expands PCD to an unprecedented extend. SDG Number 17 on the strengthening the means of implementation and revitalising the global partnership for sustainable development, explicitly mentions the concept of policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD) under sub-target 17.14 on systemic issues to "enhance policy coherence for sustainable development" (UN, A/RES/70/1 p. 27). Following the established story line and the insights of the theoretical framework constituted of mostly EPI elements and complemented by the PCD concept, the second part of this thesis' research question how the EU is seeking to move from PCD to PCSD, is addressed.

Corresponding to the previous *Empirical Findings* chapter, this chapter adapts the same structure along the established four theoretical dimensions. Likewise, each dimension finishes with concluding remarks and points for further discussion to be elaborated on in the *Discussion* chapter. The four dimensions of the developed theoretical framework analyse help to demonstrate how a move from PCD to PCSD could be analysed and how PCSD could potentially be integrated in EU policies.

Before starting to state and elaborate on the findings, two important findings need to be anticipated and deserve special accentuation: the first one is the fact that the PCD policy framework has a lot of critics, within the EU and outside the EU (academics, think tanks etc.). Some public briefing documents by EU institutions openly state frustrations and problems concerning the concepts. None of the interviewed EU public officials were able to give a clear definition of PCSD, some even struggled to define the PCD concept, although all were aware of its existence. After pointing out that the SDG 17 sub-target merely mentions but does not define PCSD and inquiring whether there is a definition the

European Union works with, none of them could provide a clear explanation of what exactly PCSD entails and how it differs from the known concept PCD. In a similar manner, EU policy documents mention the concept of PCSD in tight connection to PCD without giving a definition of the former. This finding chapter therefore relies on additional (re)sources for material on PCSD, mostly delivered by think-tanks and other intergovernmental organisations (i.e. OECD). Some attempts to grasp and define the concept were stated and are incorporate in the sections below.

7|1 First Dimension – Normative Framework

In the context of the EU, the concept of PCD has developed into a fully fletched policy framework, carried out and practiced by the institutional departments responsible for development cooperation, humanitarian aid and external action. As Chapter 2 and the section 2|2 Policy Framework: Policy Coherence for Development explained, PCD is not only a concept used by policy makers and academics, but has expanded to become a policy framework attached with normative connotations that have developed into norms, principles and values (Carbone & Furness, 2016; Sianes, 2017; Siitonen, 2016; Verschaeve *et al.*, 2016). This brings with it an enormous complexity, which, in application to the multifaceted EU context, adds yet another layer of complexity.

In addition, answering the question of how the EU seeks to move from PCD to PCSD is also motivated by the *sui generis* character of the EU itself. In this normative context, *sui generis* character, however as a form of a system of collective norms and procedural rules that the EU stands for as a very important player in global development (Bodenstein *et al.*, 2016; Grimm *et al.*, 2012). An EU move from PCD to PCSD might have important implications for the global development arena. In attempt to grasp this normative complexity and possible added implications, the first section is dedicated to shed light on this and to explain why a move from PCD to PCSD is an additional multiplied complexity layer on top.

Normative PCD tradition in the EU

The EU officially introduced the concept of PCD with the adoption and ratification of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. After the EU's engagement in development cooperation for numerous decades beforehand, the normative direction of PCD was to take into account the needs of the recipient countries in a cross-cutting and overarching way with regards to non-development policies. An approach to the general understanding of policy coherence is given by EU Official 4:

> So, policy coherence is necessary in order to make sure that we really do the right things and don't do the wrong things. And then that all the policies that we do have a consideration of economic, social and environmental aspects and consequences of those policies. And then, if something goes against one of these dimensions, then the trade-off needs to be at least knowingly reflected and designed. (EU Official 4)

One of such considerations is the 'do no harm' principle belonging to the social domain, which will be elaborated in one of the following sections. This paragraph is not dedicated to restating the historical evolution of PCD in the EU context. It elaborates on the normative complexity that PCD introduced as means of the self-imposed adherence to the concept of 'do no harm'. Firstly, the general EU stand towards development cooperation servers as an entry point:

> Development cooperation is a shared competence between the European Community (3) and the Member States. Community policy in the sphere of development cooperation shall be complementary to the policies pursued by the Member States. Developing countries have the prime responsibility for their own development. But developed countries have a responsibility too. The EU, both at its Member States and Community levels, is committed to meeting its responsibilities. (Council of the European Union, 2006, p. 1)

This statement unites two complex facts the EU is dealing with. Firstly, development is a shared competence (and in accordance with the two principles of subsidiarity and proportionality) the EU and the Member States may act, while the latter can only do so where the EU has not exercise its powers or has ceased to do so – in line with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality (EU Official 1; EU Official 3; EU Official 4). At the same time, the statement appeals that the prime responsibility of the developing countries for their own development, while the EU and its Member States also have a responsibility without defining what it entails. In the case of PCD, the EU decided long ago that its responsibilities lay, among others, in avoiding contradicting and incoherent policies and in applying the 'do no harm' approach, and commissioned its Member States and the Commission to commit to PCD.

The established complex PCD tradition encountered its first struggles in the conceptual confusion and/or the lack of a commonly agreed definition of development and missing empirical evidence on the how, where, and why are EU policies affecting developing countries (Carbone & Keijzer, 2016a) Consequently, political commitment to execute the complex PCD policy framework dwindled, also because the extent to which policies are coherent or incoherent is rather abstract and hard to measure. Often, it is also the absence of measurable results and progress make it problematic to spark a debate on the effectiveness of PCD, and leave considerable room for manoeuvre for both ends of the table: proponents claiming that PCD has made progress, and opponents arguing such progress has been disappointing and slow. It is therefore questionable that the EU will abandon its PCD tradition and endorse the PCSD concept instead, adding yet another layer of complexity to it.

From 'do no harm' to 'beyond aid' and PCSD? – Normative attributions for a move from PCD to PCSD

The Latin phrase of *primum non nocere* translates to 'first, do no harm', and is a principle applied across disciplines, for example in medical science, health and also in social sciences (Bodenstein *et al.*, 2016; Picciotto, 2005). The concept was eventually adapted by many (inter)national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to guarantee that the help or assistance they provide does no harm, therefore imposing an ethical imperative onto development cooperation structures and frameworks. Siitonen (2016) clarifies that "weak (or 'doing no harm') policy coherence, which carries the moral message but remains politically more or less irrelevant" and is one of the critical voices to demand stronger policy coherence or bolder political actions (p. 5)

The interviews with representatives of the OECD, as well as the insights of the EU officials, clarified what a progress, or a bolder framing or shift, from 'do no harm' to 'beyond aid' means. Essentially, 'do no harm' was the ideal foundation to build PCD (Carbone, 2012, 2013; Carbone & Keijzer, 2016a). In the context, of development policy, PCD deals with the conflicts between domestic policies and development cooperation policy that may arise. The principle of 'do no harm' identifies that domestic policies shall take the implications and impacts they might have on developing countries and development cooperation policy into account. Hence, PCD was limited to a comparison between development cooperation policy and one particular sector (OECD Official 1, 2). The 'beyond aid'

principle transcends the 'do no harm' principle in so far as it leaves the (policy) sector of development cooperation and, literally, takes it beyond aid.

This movement from 'do no harm' to 'beyond aid' is justified through the expansion of the global development agenda, brought about through the adoption of the four major multilateral agreements of the year 2015. Bodenstein *et al.* (2016) express that "the global development agenda has itself expanded from discussions centred on economic development and humanitarian aid into an all-encompassing global cooperation arena". (p. 422). In yet another expansion and taking it to yet another (conceptually more complex) level, the 'beyond aid' discourse could potentially go hand in hand with a development of a PCSD discourse. When looking at PC**S**D as a concept, the first conspicuous change is the add-on of the word sustainable. However, the most notable change from PCD to PC**S**D is not the add-on of *sustainable* or the shifted focus to *sustainable development*. It is the drawing out of *development* (in its narrow sense, read development policy) of the former PCD concept, to become PCS**D**, which extends and expands development cooperation (policy) to sustainable development it its broadest sense possible. One EU official expressed views on this:

> To us, here is what it meant. It meant a broader thing, which implies more things. PCSD was not primarily what PCD was about, if you speak to the Secretary General, of the UN I mean, then PCSD is all about the balance between the three dimensions of sustainable development. Fundamentally. Not only about development anymore. (EU Official 5)

Moving towards 'beyond aid' and introducing PCSD momentarily would completely shift focus away from traditional development cooperation as it is known so far, to encompass all sectors to establish cross-cutting synergies in the pursuit for sustainable development (OECD Official 1, 2).

It remains to be seen if this transition would also lead to a re-discussion of the conditionality of aid (see also political conditionality), which imposes normative obligations – for example, rule of law, human rights, democracy – onto developing countries by donor countries. It is a contested concept in the EU, and has led to heated discussion between the Member States and in the EP (EU Official 3; Vanheukelom, 2012). Gregersen *et al.* (2016) therefore find that "the concept of PCSD, embodies exactly the challenge of the SDGs to ensure integrated policy making" (p.4). The following section on the PCSD concept explains this argument further and connects it to the normative attributions to move from PCD to PCSD.

Missing conceptual clarity on PCSD

As mentioned in the introduction, there is no official definition of the concept of PCSD, neither in the 2030 Agenda itself that introduced the concept, nor in the academic and policy-making realm. One insight on how the concept of PCSD emerged, was shared by one of the EU officials who was present at the negotiations of the post-2015 Agenda:

> In the last stage in summer 2014, we were working on the SDGs. There were two co-chairs […]. At some point, for a lot of pressures, there was the concept of policy coherence for sustainable development, that the EU represented. But because it was the SDGs, somehow the name of PCSD came up before the concept.

> So, it [PCSD] came up and there was never a negotiation on what it meant. So, a very strange concept. So, the EU was for PCD and then someone else inserted PCSD. (EU Official 5)

So far, no scientific studies investigated the concept of PCSD, with the exception of notable think tanks that have taken the concept on board with differing analysis results (Gregersen *et al.*, 2016; Hackenesch, 2016; Knoll, 2016; Mackie *et al.*, 2017; Niestroy, 2016; OECD, 2017b). One report published identified target 17.14 on enhancing policy coherence for sustainable development to be "a potentially important target but without more detail it is unlikely to happen" (ICSU & ISSC, 2015, p. 80). The most vocal and strongest advocate for PCSD is the OECD. In its attempt to clarify the concept and to increase and spread understanding, the OECD defines PCSD as:

> […] an approach and policy tool to integrate the economic, social, environmental and governance dimensions of sustainable development at all stages of domestic and international policy making. It aims to increase governments' capacities to achieve the following objectives: 1) Foster synergies across economic, social and environmental policy areas; 2) Identify trade-offs and reconcile domestic policy objectives with internationally agreed objectives; and 3) Address the spill overs of domestic policies.(OECD, 2015b, pp. 3, Figure 1)

Interviewed OECD officials clarified during interviews that there is often a conceptual misunderstanding of PCSD and its implications, even on the EU level (OECD Official 1; OECD Official 2):

> But there is still a lot of misunderstanding, I think, in the development community, on the transition from PCD to PCSD. And recently, I think I read something from Luxembourg, where they say it's important to keep the PCD concept because PCSD is about the domestic domain. And that's a misunderstanding. Because if you look at our definition, at our tool kit and everything we've written, we put high emphasis on the transboundary impact of the policy effects. But Luxembourg is not the only one misunderstanding that. Some people think that PCSD is looking primarily at the interlinkages of the goals and to have a more horizontal coherence, in terms of better integrating the environmental, economic and social dimension. And that's a very important part of it but it's not the whole part of it. And we say that very clearly.(OECD Official 1).

The OECD has been working on the policy tool PCSD for a while and is ahead of other national and international policy makers It was admitted that the OECD, with the establishment of a PCSD Partnership, a PCSD Framework and the publication of PCSD Reports on cross-cutting challenges such as eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity (2017), is trying to generate a move by explaining and promoting the concept of PCSD to the OECD member countries and spread greater clarity.

The EU itself has not adopted a definition yet, although it mentions PCSD its collective efforts to achieve greater policy coherence for sustainable development. Here, one EU official admitted that "we just started to guess what it means" (EU Official 5). In its most recent publication on PCSD, the OECD (2017b, p. 13) clarifies that "PCSD is embodied in SDG 17.14 as a cross-cutting means of implementation" which seems to be enough to motivate an adoption of the concept. Still, not only conceptual clarity on PCSD is currently missing, but there is also a certain conceptual misunderstanding, as depicted by one of the EU officials approaching PCSD in the following manner:

> And then there is policy coherence for sustainable development. So, it's looking at the sustainability of our activities. But it's not always so explicitly communicated or written down. What we want to do also for the policy coherence for sustainable development, is to make sure, this is not something that the Commission is driving but this is mostly coming from the outside, is what we also discussed here. (EU Official 4).

It is more a conceptual discussion on PCSD that needs engagement of all stakeholders and representatives of the institutions that might lead to a broader and more accepted understanding of the concept.

Summary and points for further discussion

The analysis of the collected data on a possible move from PCD to PCSD through the lens of the theoretical framework developed with EPI insights and the complementation by PCD concepts demonstrated that the EU is unlikely to take a bold decision to move from PCD to PCSD. After working on the normative acceptance of PCD for more than 30 years, the EU established institutionalised structures and mechanisms to channel its coherence efforts. The introduction of the concept of PCSD is therefore seen with scepticism and caution. The fact that there is no universally accepted definition of PCSD only adds to this caution.

In turn, the missing conceptual clarity on PCSD makes it hard to anticipate the normative attributions that a move from PCD to PCSD would entail. The review of the PCD literature and the consultation of EU and OECD officials demonstrated that development cooperation has undergone an evolution. The 'do no harm' approach extended to a 'beyond aid' discourse. A move from PCD to PCSD would take development cooperation another step further in its evolution. Although some claim that this is exactly in line with the 2030 Agenda and therefore "the concept of PCSD, embodies exactly the challenge of the SDGs to ensure integrated policy making" it is the challenging of existing policy silos and compartmentalisation that makes PCSD so hard to sell to policy makers (Gregersen *et al.*, 2016, p. 4). In replying if PCD will become and established EU concept applied in practice, this EU official stated:

> You could say it's such a vague, such a general principle, policy coherence. Of course, we need to do that. But it will never. It's not practical enough. I think we have to keep it in the air as a principle. I mean policy coherence between different policy fields, EU policy fields. You can tell that in different ways. Additionally, one is indeed to break down mental silos and to start working together in projects or programmes with a shared responsibility for example. (EU Official 1)

While most interviewees cannot anticipate the implications of adapting the PCSD concept, still, it seems unlikely that the PCD concept will be completely abandoned.

> Because we had Member States split on it. Everybody was lost with it. And some still are. Some said: "no, no no. Don't touch PCD.". PCD, we're half of the way, it's not a big success. But some are very concerned. Some people said "do not lose PCD" and others said "PCD is old, then use PCSD – so, replace.". Where we said PCD now it's PCSD. Because D is SD. So, boom, that's it.

> […] What we are now doing is trying to keep both. So what we are saying is 'we reaffirm our commitment to policy coherence for development as a contribution to the broader PCSD.' (EU Official 5)

It is more likely that PCD will remain the normative policy framework in place while contributing to the broader efforts for policy coherence for sustainable development (Council of the European Union, 2006; EU Official 4). And that it might transition from a normative policy framework to one that applies more coercive measures (Latek, 2017). A point which is up for further discussion.

7|2 Second Dimension – Political Will

As determined and show in the chapters above, political will is another significant driver and necessary condition for Policy Coherence for Development. "The political commitment to Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) was first embedded in the European Consensus on Development of 2006." (Europeaid, 2017, first paragraph).The EU continuously strives for coherence and consistency in its policies, but saw the need for the introduction for PCD to emphasis, firstly, the general importance of coherence between all policies, and secondly, the coherence between internal and external policies. The 2011 Agenda for Change confirmed and strengthened the political commitment to ensuring PCD (COM(2011) 637 final; SWD (2015) 159 final, p. 17). Political will was therefore enforced by formal policies and policy instruments. This empirical finding section sheds light on the political will in the context of PCD and addresses the sub-research question how the EU is seeking to move from PCD to PCSD, if it does so at all. Concerning the general commitment to development cooperation, the following quote by EU Official 5 clarifies that understanding of the importance of development cooperation is raising:

> The overarching one [activity, read measures], which will go by stages, and the development one for pursuing the Agenda in our relations with partner countries, through the Consensus, which is the main implementing act, and then the acts that will follow and that will take inspiration in this. So, the degree of ambition in the case of development is pretty explicit, in the case of the overarching act, I think it's rising. It started a bit slow. But gradually, there's a bit more understanding of its importance (EU Official 5)

As in the previous findings chapter, most of the findings presented are based on the various interviews and on selected policy documents, as well as Additional EU external material from think-tanks and research institutes, and the strong PC(S)D advocate OECD (Carbone & Furness, 2016).

Political will to move from PCD to PCSD

For this section on the political will to move from PCD to PCSD, the most important policy documents regarding the EU development policy are the most insightful ones to consult. The revision of the European Consensus for Development (2006) presents a case where a shift or re-balancing of political will can be observed.

In the Commission Communication of November 2016, the Commission offered a first proposal to revise the 10-year old development strategy. It reaffirms its strong commitment to PCD and promise to take into account the objectives of development cooperation in all external and internal policies. Further it says that "PCD is a fundamental part of the EU's contribution to achieving the SDGs" and notably states the following under points 87 and 88:

> 87. **The Consensus contributes to the requirement to ensure consistency between the different areas of the EU's external action and between these and its other policies**. The policy coherence requirement embedded in the 2030 Agenda implies mainstreaming sustainable development in all related EU policies […].

> 88. **The EU and its Member States reaffirm their commitment to policy coherence for development, as an important contribution to the collective effort towards achieving broader policy coherence for sustainable development**. They will continue to take into

account the objectives of development cooperation in policies which are likely to affect developing countries (Art. 208 TFEU). (European Commission, 2016e, p. 25).[22]

Particularly point 88 is of major interest for this thesis, since it sees PCD as an important contribution to achieve PCSD. Without defining the concept or mentioning explicit efforts, the Communication clarifies that PCD contributes to PCSD. It speaks of collective effort and the aim to achieve policy coherence for sustainable development. Interestingly, the final version of the New European Consensus adopted a different phrasing.

108. [...] Ensuring policy coherence for sustainable development as embedded in the 2030 Agenda requires taking into account the impact of all policies on sustainable development at all levels — nationally, within the EU, in other countries and at global level.

109. The EU and its Member States reaffirm their commitment to Policy Coherence for Development (PCD), which requires taking into account the objectives of development cooperation in policies which are likely to affect developing countries. This is a crucial element of the strategy to achieve the SDGs and an important contribution to the broader objective of Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD). The 2030 Agenda provides new impetus for the EU and its Member States to formulate and implement mutually reinforcing policies. (Council of the European Union, 2017c, p. 22)

The difference in phrasing and framing between the Proposal and the New Consensus shows that there has been a re-thinking and re-structuring of the paragraphs on PCD and PCSD. The Proposal demonstrates a reaffirmation of commitment to PCD while at the same time acknowledging its importance for PCSD and the need for collective efforts to realise PCSD. In the corresponding paragraph of the adopted New Consensus, the subordinate clause on policy coherence for sustainable development is left out. Instead, the subordinate clause now refers to the concept of PCD, while PCSD is only mentioned in the following sentence. The adopted New Consensus connects PCSD to all policies at all levels. It then repeats the Proposal's discourse on firm commitment to PCD and connects it to the reiteration of PCD as a vital part of the 2030 Agenda integration strategy.

This slight alteration in phrasing throws light on how careful the EU is when it comes to PCSD and its official mentioning in policy instruments. Whereas the Proposal gave an indication that the EU might want to endorse PCSD, the New Consensus leaves less room for such interpretations. It demonstrates that the EU wants to stay committed to PCD which it has firmly institutionalised for the past 30 years. This observation of the policy documents is confirmed by statements of the EU interviewees clarifying that the central services at the top are either not fully aware of the concept or simply reluctant to (politically) commit or exert themselves for PCSD. The lack of conceptual clarity and discussion increases the risks, since the implications and effects are not assessible.

Political Will of the Member States

Another insightful finding is the influence of the Member States and their political will on PCD in general, as well as the willingness to move from PCD to PCSD. Here, the interviewees found that the Member States have different positions.

Member States, generally, show varying degree of political commitment to PCD (Mackie *et al.*, 2017). Carbone and Keijzer (2016a) even claim that most of the Member States paid lip-service to the

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[22] Original emphasis.

EU on its PCD concerns. Despite these statements, some Member States did establish institutional mechanisms to adhere to and enforce PCD. The ones with a PCD tradition and well-working (reporting) mechanisms in place are rather reluctant to abandon them for the yet undefined concept of PCSD. On the other side, there are Member States who have struggled with the PCD concept, even with PCD mechanisms in place, and were general less fond of the concept (Galeazzi *et al.*, 2013). Even though they are not particularly strong supporters of a move from PCD to PCSD, they are equally not strongly opposed to it. However, it is acknowledged that most of the Member States followed suit on committing to PCD by setting up institutional mechanisms for reporting, which does not necessarily mean that there is tangible commitment or consistency. Therefore, the Commission called on the Member States that:

> More Member States should develop mechanisms for screening their policies and assessing their impact. Direct and consistent reporting to national parliaments on PCD efforts should be more systematically put in place (European Commission, 2016a, p. 10).

If such consistent reporting measures are put in place, they channel the political commitment and contribute to the overall challenge of PCD in terms of consistency and coherence. The interviewed EU officials and research experts were not able to comment on the willingness of Member States to move from PCD to PCSD. They could only speculate that those who have working reporting mechanisms on PCD in place might have better general knowledge on PCD and more understanding of the newly emerged concept of PCSD. Therefore, they would also be able to better estimate the complexity of the concept and resist the adoption of PCSD.

Concluding remarks and points for further discussion

The findings on the dimension of political will showed that the mobilisation and channelling of political will and commitment for PCD was a major challenge for the EU. Through the institutionalisation of the concept and the inclusion in the EU Treaties, it provided PCD supporters with the necessary legal foundations to endorse the concept and even extend it to a normative policy framework.

Through the legal obligation of Article 208 TFEU, the EU and its Member States are legally required be committed if they do not want to breach their treaty obligations. Some Member States followed suit and took the concept on board in their domestic policies, ensuring reporting mechanisms are in place. So far, it looks like the EU is not ready (and not willing) to move from PCD to PCSD, due to the unknown implications and the significant amount of complexity it would add. It is very unlikely that the PCD policy framework will be completely abandoned in favour of PCSD. The maintaining of PCD will more likely be used to contribute to the broader efforts adding to PCSD.

7|3 THIRD DIMENSION – INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

The third dimension of the theoretical framework developed on the insights of EPI theory with the complementation of PCD concepts emphasis the favourable and advantageous effects of an institutional setting which supports integration efforts. In the case of PCD in the EU, institutional measures were taken as early as the Maastricht Treaty (implicit mentioning of PCD) and formal institutional endorsement followed by the Lisbon Treaty (Article 208 TFEU).

Since then, numerous institutional measures were implemented and enforced, for example the European Consensus on Development of 2006, shortly after the 2005 agreement to follow up on the PCD progress in certain policy areas as direct support to achieve the MDGs (Council of the European Union, 2005a; European Commission, 2005). The adoption of the MDGs gave a momentum to PCD and increased the international awareness of the concept, as it was indirectly mentioned in goal number eight, on global partnerships. The goal recognised the need to address the special needs of developing countries, particularly with regards to economic features (UN, 2000). As a promotor of the PCD concept, the EU (and also the OECD) had the necessary momentum to strive for the concept internationally and convince its Member States of the vital importance and implications (Europeaid, 2017; European Parliament, 2015b). Now, the OECD argues that the adoption of the SDGs created a similar momentum for the concept of PCSD, arguing that "moving from PCD to PCSD is consistent with the transition from MDGs to SDGs." (OECD, 2017a, p. 2). The following sections elaborate on the institutional settings that either favour or discourage such a move.

Institutionalisation of PCD (and PCSD)

The introductory chapter on the policy framework PCD covered most of the concept's evolution and its institutionalisation in the EU.

The EU adopted the policy framework of the complex PCD concept as a self-set task to "take account of the objectives of development cooperation in the policies that it implements which are likely to affect developing countries" (Article 208, TFEU;Europa, 2017d). The aims was to enforce and strengthen the first steps of institutionalisation taken in the Maastricht Treaty, which introduced the three principles for the functioning of development policy, often referred to as the three Cs: complementarity, coordination, and coherence (Carbone, 2008, p. 330; Hoebink, 2004a). The EU's adoption of the 'do no harm' approach, it started to initiate first measures to fulfil the complex policy framework of PCD, and with it its Treaty obligations.

In 2005, the EU initiated a follow-up process, laid out in the European Consensus on Development (2006) – the first of its kind – and the Agenda for Change (2011b) (Frisch, 2008). It further targeted development cooperation and concentrated aid on "those countries most in need" (European Commission, 2015b, p. 17). Both policy instruments meant a firm political commitment to PCD and the strengthening of supporting institutions, transitioning from humanitarian aid and crisis response to long-term development cooperation through "a joined-up approach to security and poverty" (European Commission, 2011b, pp. 11-12). The different EU institutions established PCD inter-service groups, specialised PCD units, an informal EU PCD network[23], and a Standing Rapporteur for PCD. All these institutional mechanisms at EU level show that PCD has a 'institutional back-up' and firmly established itself amongst the different EU institutions.

No legal basis for PCSD

The most crucial finding to answer the research question of whether the EU is planning to move from PCD to PCSD regards the legal foundations, or more the lack thereof, for such a move. Besides the fact

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[23] Examples are the informal EU PCD network and other specific working arrangements such as the Agriculture, Trade and Development network and the intra-sectoral collaboration on the EU Action Plan on Agricultural Commodities (European Commission, 2005, p. 19)

that the normative framework of PCSD is debated due to the missing official definition, it is the lack of legal footing in the EU Treaties that, most likely, hinders progress in the move from PCD to PCSD.

The Chapter 2|2 on the policy framework of policy coherence for development clarifies that it took a few years and Treaty revisions for PCD to find legal footing in the EU primary and secondary legislation. In its beginnings, it was the implicit notion of taking account of the needs and interests of developing countries that provided for indirect legal footing. With the European Consensus on Development of 2006, the concept of PCD had a major momentum and slowly but surely developed into a complex normative policy framework. In the current case of PCSD, there is no possible legal footing that would allow PCSD to be (legally) endorsed. Interviewed EU officials mention this one of the major obstacles that holds PCSD back and makes policy makers struggle to endorse it as a concept. Nevertheless, the evolution of PCD shows that it is possible to overcome such missing legal foundations. Either through major Treaty revisions (of which none are planned up to this point) and through implicit and indirect linkage to existing legal bases.

> As I said, policy coherence for development is in the Treaty, so is sustainable development. And then there is policy coherence so is sustainable development. So, it's looking at the sustainability of our activities. But it's not always so explicitly communicated or written down. […] It's [PCSD is] less used by our central services, again I'm talking about Secretary General. Again, they think we don't need a new concept, the old ones they work and we have a Treaty obligation so we don't need to create new concepts because we're doing it anyways. (EU Official 4)

As elaborated by the official, one of those legal bases, most evidently, is PCD itself. Article 208 TFEU, however, explicitly mentions that policy coherence is required between development cooperation and all other Union policies. The aim of PCSD is to alleviate such stress on development cooperation and extend it to all other policy sectors to increase coherence between then three dimensions of sustainable development – economy, society, and environment. The other legal basis could be created through the connection to sustainable development in general. The Treaty of Amsterdam included the fundamental objective of sustainable development in EU policies as early as 1997, further specified in the Lisbon Treaty under Article 3(3) TFEU (European Community, 2007). The adoption of the EU SDS in 2001. The EU SDS mostly covers the social and environmental dimension of sustainable development, although sustainable development has been mainstreamed into the Lisbon Strategy and Europe 2020. The latter is running out in less than two years and the new 10-year strategy presents a potential opportunity for further endorsement of PCSD. However, it remains to be seen if the EU will take such bold actions.

Inter-institutional disagreement on PCSD

In a similar way as results were found on on-going turf wars between the different institutions on the general integration of the 2030 Agenda, there are on-going turf wars on the more specific integration of the concept of PCSD. Although all interviewed EU officials have heard of the concept PCSD, most of them were unable to define the concept. If attempts were made to clarify a possible definition of PCSD, most of the interviewees identified the additional S for sustainable. Since sustainability, sustainable and sustainable development are accepted buzz words, and therefore a welcome change of the commonly known PCD concept. Most informed attempts to define the concept came from officials more directly affiliated with PCD.

The European Parliament seems to generally support PCD. It regularly voices its opinion on the

matter pf PCD through EP Reports, Opinions, and Regulations (European Commission, 2015a). It has significant institutional mechanisms in place, for example a Standing Rapporteur for PCD, and checks on the other institutions, their dedication and progress. It also ensures that the discussion on PCD perseveres. The Parliament:

> Calls on the Commission and the Member States to reaffirm their commitment to Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) as an important contribution towards achieving broader Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD), as they are vitally important for the successful implementation of the SDGs; [...][24] stresses the need to enhance mechanisms for PCD and PCSD within all EU institutions and policy-making, and to ensure that the principle of policy coherence is respected adequately in regular, public impact assessments and by introducing adequate mechanisms for accountability (European Parliament, 2016a, p. 33)

In recent years, the EP has been more engaged in PCD discourses. In its opinions and reports, it is able to push certain aspects because of its co-legislative powers. The EP also invited external consultants and think tanks to analyse and offer their (academic) expertise on PCD in order to identify structural weaknesses (European Parliament, 2015a).

The preceding dimension on political will for a move from PCD to PCSD clarified that the Commission is resuming a cautious role. In the EP's call on the Commission and the Member States to participate in PCD discussions, it is bolder in its statements:

> Indications point towards the European Commission arguing for PCD to retain its place within a wider PCSD agenda. A European Parliament report on PCD reflects this path indicating that PCD work must be taken forward "to understand better how the concept might fit with the more universal concept of PCSD". (Gregersen *et al.*, 2016)

So far, Attention to PCD in the Council has increased over the years, with more regular interaction among different Council working groups, even if so far, as the DAC peer review pointed out, achieving PCD relies to a large extent on the willingness of the EU Presidency to engage in this area." (European Commission, 2016a, p. 10)

Intra-institutional disagreement on PCSD

Turf wars do not only occur between the major institutions, but also intra-institutionally, within the different DGs, committees and working groups. The institutional structure based on hierarchy and thematic issues does not always provide PCD with a place, but if it does so, it is for the purpose of increasing awareness, transparency and calls for conceptual discussions.

There are various institutional settings in place that favour PCD as such and ensure that it is carried out as planned. One of them, for example, is the standing Rapporteur on PCD in the European Parliament's Committee on Development, who is responsible for "relaying the concerns expressed by member of the public or by the communities" on the matters of PCD (European Parliament, 2015b). The interviewed EU officials confirmed that MEPs are generally aware of PCD and consider it an important concept, while holistic policy coherence is a policy aim more commonly known and more widely spread. During the interviews, some MEPs are proponents and some are opponents of a move to PCSD, fearing that the concept is too vague and too broad to have an impact. However, they

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[24] [...] stresses, in particular, the need for all EU policies, in particular trade, fiscal, migration, agriculture and energy policies, to be consistent with Article 208 TFEU and to not undermine human rights or the ability of third countries to achieve sustainable development

encourage internal discussions and debate on the concept, as it raises awareness and contributes to smooth communication.

Internal discussions were also welcomed by the Commission officials, admitting that the inter-service steering groups do not always find common ground and result in heated debates. They even gave insights that the more specialised unit on PCD is disagreeing on endorsing PCSD and supporting a move from PCD to PCSD. Opponents of a move from PCD to PCSD mostly justify their position with missing conceptual clarity, the added complexity with absent anticipation of implications, the fact that PCSD essentially means that policy silos would have to start 'dancing', while it is clear that sectoral interests and the problem of compartmentalisation still prevail.

Concluding remarks and points for further discussion

PCD has been firmly established and institutionalised in the past 30 years. Although the institutional mechanisms in place could arguably be improved, the policy framework of PCD has come a long way and overcome many legal and structural challenges. On the other hand, it could also be claimed that the central serviced use the lack of legal foundation and conceptual clarity on PCSD as excuses not to endorse it.

> The UN views PCSD as a key factor in facilitating the achievement of the SDGs, and the OECD has taken the concept fully on board. But there are also critical voices which fear that the broader approach could lead to the dilution of the clearly defined legal obligation enshrined in the EU treaties. There was some consensus that PCD needs high-level political engagement to be effective." (Carbone & Furness, 2016, Abstract, p. 2)

It remains to be seen if the EU will overcome the intra- and inter-institutional agreements and the lack of legal basis to further promote and endorse the PCSD concept. The findings showed that PCSD has the potential to insert itself at the EU and international level, but clearer institutional and structural guidance on the concept is needed.

7|4 Fourth Dimension – Resources, Capacities and Procedures

This chapter presents more empirical findings on the EU resources, capacities and procedures in place and analyses them in light of the theoretical framework developed.

In 2005, it committed to follow up on progress in PCD in twelve policy areas, namely: trade, environment, climate change, security, agriculture, fisheries, social dimension of globalisation, employment and decent work, migration, research and innovation, information society, transport and energy (Council Conclusions 9266/05). Although reporting and monitoring mechanisms on PCD are in place, this form of impact assessments (IAs) on PCD assess their impacts at EU level. With regards to the impact of non-development policy on developing countries, neither assessments nor scholarly evidence is available. Scholars, so far, have not managed to identify a way how to accurately measure coherence of incoherence (Carbone & Furness, 2016; Carbone & Keijzer, 2016a; Gregersen *et al.*, 2016; King *et al.*, 2012).

In 2009, the PCD continues to be a priority especially in relation to strengthening mechanisms and procedures and focusing on avoiding contradictions between the development policy and other policies whilst building synergies. The Commission's regular reporting on PCD also shows that the EU and a number of EU Member States are making "notable progress" on meeting their PCD commitments and adhering to efforts to reduce aid fragmentation. (European Commission, 2016a, p. 9).

PCD and its effectiveness are difficult to measure in the various IA the EU has set up, but the added complexity of the S in PCSD would make PCSD would increase such difficulty. Last PCD report was published in 2015, just before the 2030 Agenda was adopted. Another biannual report was due in 2017, but is still awaited.

Strategies or mechanisms for IAs on PCD at EU level are in place (Council of the European Union, 2015; European Parliament, 2015b). However, academics criticise that there is no scientific take on the impact assessment of PCD, since a concept like policy coherence is hard to measure (Carbone, 2008; Carbone & Furness, 2016; Carbone & Keijzer, 2016a; King *et al.*, 2012). Additionally, the interviewees admitted that there is also a missing clarity on what exactly makes a policy incoherent, and that a number of officials are unsure what PCD is concretely aiming at, besides the proclaimed coherence and consistency. They are missing a more practical approach on PCD and clear guidelines for its adherence. One EU official stated the following assumption:

> The best would be a new PCSD report issued by the Secretariat General. But we are far from that. So with them, we don't bring up PSCD anymore. But lately we have good relations with the SecGen and at least we can have a strong link between PCD, as we know it, and PCSD as the overarching track. Because they do accept that the SDGs are universal. And the policies in the EU relate to the achievements of the SDGs in other countries. And they did put PSCD in their new Communication. So, they do accept that. But they would stick to PCD. But, I don't know. I don't know what will happen in the future. It's not my place to say. But what I think might happen, in the future. That PCD reporting could be upgraded closer to future reports, that are expected to come on the implementation of the SDGs. On the form, the time, we don't know. (Council of the European Union)

The statement by the EU official shows that the possible introduction of PCSD as full policy framework would mean a redefinition of monitoring and reporting on PCD. However, this finding is only speculative, and based on the opinion on a single interviewee.

Concluding remarks and points for further discussion

Generally, even if reporting mechanisms on PCD are in place, the absence of IAs in PCD makes it hard to measure progress, success or failure. Carbone and Keijzer (2016a) find that it is hard to increase accountability for reporting on PCD (European Parliament, 2015a; ODI *et al.*, 2013). So far, the EU has an reporting mechanisms in place, however, it does not hold countries or specific policy sectors accountable in cases of reported incoherence. Consequently, the voices grow louder considering a move away from a mere normative soft policy framework to a more binding one. In a EP briefing, Latek (2017) remarks that:

> It can be questioned whether a purely 'normative incentive' – shared values and rhetorical commitments embodied in the European consensus on development – is sufficient motivation for truly collective action, resulting in a coherent and complementary European development

aid. Alternatively, 'coercive incentives', in the form of binding mechanisms and instruments to implement the PCD and the coordination of development policies would be needed – as proposed by the European Parliament (Latek, 2017, p. 6).

Speculation that PCD will keeps its name but then takes on attributes of the PCSD concept, as well as other possible scenarios on the question if the EU will move from PCD to PCSD, are elaborated on further in the discussion.

This chapter discusses the empirical findings through the lens of the developed theoretical framework. It merges the findings on the general 2030 Agenda integration process together with the findings of a possible move from PCD to PCSD as a more specific take on the sector of development cooperation.

It supports the main argument that the European Union started off from the promising position of being a leading negotiator of the 2030 Agenda, yet has not exhausted this fertile ground for departure sufficiently to be bold, communicative, and speedy enough to defend and keep its position by following suit on implementation 'at home'. It discusses the results in support of the claim that the EU is running at risk at stepping into the rhetoric-reality gap due to its *sui generis* character and structural complexity. After a first discussion of the findings, the chapter proceeds to analyse the results in a broader perspective. In the following sub-section, it reflects on the suitability of the theoretical framework and addresses the question of *what insights for theories on EPI can the EU experience with the policy integration of the SDGs give?*

Integration of the 2030 Agenda

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda in 2015 was a major step forward in the evolution of a framework for sustainable development at the international level. Although it is not legally-binding, it means significant changes if the signatory parties do intend to implement it. It entails challenges both domestically and internationally; in unilateral, bilateral and multilateral relations; to the 193 UN members.

All 28 EU Member States are signatory parties to the 2030 Agenda. The EU, as an intergovernmental organisation with enhanced observer status at the UN, set the bar high for its own integration (and implementation) process, due to the influential role it resumed during the run-up to post-2015 negotiations. The conducted research found answers to the main research question of *How does the EU seek to (move from PCD to PCSD and) integrate the SDGs in its internal/domestic policy and external development policy and how can this process be understood through applying a theoretical lens of environmental policy integration (EPI)?* I discuss the findings in this chapter.

The findings established that a policy integration process is a complex and demanding endeavour; a statement that is valid for whole states, specific sectors, different stakeholders involved – it is equally applicable to the EU (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016; Evert Meijers, 2004; Runhaar *et al.*, 2014; Russel & Jordan, 2009; Steurer *et al.*, 2010; Stroß, 2017; Wilkinson, 1997). The unit of analysis – the European Union – was depicted to have a *sui generis* character and complex institutional structure. This exacerbates the policy integration processes, resulting in a slow implementation progress of the 2030 Agenda. The European Union has considerable experience with the adoption of overarching normative policy frameworks and the task to integrate those (Adelle & Jordan, 2014; Brodhag & Talière, 2006; Carbone, 2008; Stafford-Smith *et al.*, 2016; Steurer *et al.*, 2010; Stroß, 2017). However, the 2030 Agenda poses a very particular challenge, as discussed in the following.

Discussing the policy integration efforts of the EU on the holist 2030 Agenda analysed through the lens of the develop theoretical framework, shows that the EU has diverted from its self-imposed expectations to maintain the frontrunner role it resumed during the negotiations. It will not be able to assert itself in this position for the task of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The analysis shows that the EU is struggling with the inherent normative nature of the 2030 Agenda and the normative

directions it is taking. The agenda is largely viewed as a product of environmental and developmental concerns, negotiated through representatives of these two prominent sectors. Although the EU aims at mobilising a common sense for responsibility for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, it fails to address and mobilise the policy sectors, such as the economic, finance, trade, and the agricultural sectors, that are traditionally more rigid to change and less open for trade-offs and (policy) compromises. Although these are the policy sectors where the EU has exclusive competence, it is unable to generate support in the Council and a majority in the EP, to use its powers to initiate structural changes in system thinking.

This argument is reinforced by the findings on the institutional setting and the political will for policy integration. Although institutional measures, such as the allocation of an official sustainable development mandate and responsibility, SDG project groups and inter-service steering groups were taken to make sure political ownership is firmly established, the political will is not exerted in practice. Instead, the EU's *sui generis* character responsible for the transmission of EU values and norms, equally contributed to its structural complexity, inflexibility and bureaucratic rigidity; making it timid and slowly adaptive for change. The two principles of subsidiarity and proportionality both serve as an excuse for cautious policy intervention and integration in sectors with shared competences, like development cooperation. New reforms and revisions, for example the one of the New European Consensus, take nearly two years to be adopted, even though EU representatives present at the Rio+20 Summit were aware of the coming challenges of the post-2015 Agenda. Other procedures and capacities – talking about Europe 2020, the EU SDS, the EDF and the 10 Priorities of the Juncker Commission – take up to five years to reflect or even to start integrating the 2030 Agenda. In line with the capability-expectation gap after Hill (1993), the EU reiterates great political commitment and leadership to integrate the 2030 Agenda in its entirety and raising the expectations, without sufficient institutional and procedural capability in place to meet said expectations timely.

The Commission – the executive body with decision-making capacities, makes use of this EU habit, and uses the EU's structural and procedural mechanisms as an excuse to not take bolder and riskier measures in the policy integration process. Most interviewed EU officials recognised that these EU structures will eventually not contribute to the creation of cross-cutting synergies or the 'dancing of policy silos' (EU Official 2, 3, 4, 5, 6). On the contrary, it showed that policy silos will not be overcome anytime soon, since it would mean that traditionally powerful policy sectors such as trade and finance, would need to make concessions to the other sectors, negotiating trade-offs and starting to integrate the other two dimensions – society and environment – into their economy dimension. On the other hand, Persson (2016) explains that "by the same token, while integration can exploit synergies and optimize trade-offs, the flipside of policy integration is policy dilution."(last sub-heading, third paragraph). Policy dilution, in this context, means that policies are 'watered down' and lose their initial policy aim, running the risk to result in 'paper tigers' and ineffectiveness again (Carbone & Furness, 2016).

Integration of PCSD – a possible move from PCD to PCSD

In comparison to the 2030 Agenda, the EU started to institutionalise the policy framework of PCD first. Political will and commitment was mobilised amongst EU institutions and Member States in the gained momentum of the adoption of the MDGs and in the pursuit to make its internal and external policies more coherent. In acknowledgement of the importance of international development cooperation and its coherence with other policy sectors, the EU was a frontrunner and prime advocator of PCD, taking

development policy into account in non-development policies and across sectors (Carbone & Keijzer, 2016a; European Parliament, 2015b; Keijzer, 2012; Picciotto, 2005; Portela & Raube, 2011; Siitonen, 2016; Stocchetti, 2016). After overcoming legal challenges for PCD's institutionalisation through Treaty revisions, the EU began to successfully mainstream PCD in its policies – at least on paper (Adelle & Jordan, 2014; European Commission, 2015c; European Parliament, 2015a, 2015b). After the adoption of twelve focal policy areas for PCD and PCD Reports, at both on the EU level and the national Member State level, the EU was seemingly doing well to make its internal-external policies coherent and in line with its development cooperation.

In recent years, however, it was pointed out that particularly Member States have paid lip service to the EU concerning PCD's importance and their commitment for implementation (Carbone & Keijzer, 2016a). The EU stepped into the rhetoric-reality gap, where it claims that its intended coordinated policies can have major (positive) impacts on developing countries, although there are no studies on the impacts of non-development policies on developing countries or on EU's development cooperation, nor is there a comprehensible PCD impact assessment in place clarifying what the pursuit of PCD really aims at, besides the abstract concept of policy coherence (ODI *et al.*, 2013). Some scholars find this in agreement and clarify that policy coherence, as an abstract concept, is impossible to measure (from a scientific perspective). They also criticise the overly bureaucratic and technocratic attempts of IAs in the case of PCD (Bodenstein *et al.*, 2016; Carbone & Keijzer, 2016a). The practice of conducting impact assessments, shows the increased bureaucracy and a trend of "mutual accountability", in which donors and recipient countries take responsibility and account of the results in development policy (European Commission, 2011a; Jones, 2017). These *ex ante* impact assessments, whether in development cooperation or in other policy sectors, show the rationale for increasing demands of accountability. The IAs conducted to measure or assess the impact of PCD, however, show that PCD has not produced the coherence it seeks to achieve. Likewise, it does not hold the Member States nor the EU accountable for the failure to deliver results, since no infringement or enforcement measures are in place. These findings show why Member States were able to pay lip service to the EU, asserting their political commitment to the concept in theory, but not in practice.

I suggest three possible paths the EU can take to address this issue. First, it could alter the image of PCD as a purely normative incentive of shared values and rhetorical commitments embodied in the European Consensus on Development; and move towards more "coercive incentive" taking the shape of binding mechanisms and instruments to trigger collective action with force (see Carbone & Furness, 2016; Latek, 2017, p. 6). Second, the EU could commission studies and research on the impact non-development policies have on and in developing countries, as there has not been as lot of efforts to monitor and assess these effects, as a paper commissioned by the Senate of the Dutch Parliament suggests (2013). Thirdly, the last and threefold option, the EU could move from PCD to PCSD in its integration and implementation efforts of the 2030 Agenda and adopt the concept fully. Taking the concept on board would either entail (i) the abandonment of the known PCD policy framework and the introduction of PCSD; building on its previous PCD experience and learning from mistakes. Or (ii) continuing the PCD efforts as an "important contribution to the broader objective of Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD)" (Joint Declaration, 2017c, p. 22). The EU could also (iii) practice PCSD without calling it such, as EU Official 4 pointed out.

The findings of the second empirical chapter on PCD and PCSD showed that the third option of (i) an abandonment of PCSD is unlikely. Although research institutes, think tanks and the OECD see great potential for the concept that the 2030 Agenda introduced and are attempting to spread understanding and clarity on PCSD, the absence of a clear and fully recognised definition make a move away from PCD to PCSD difficult and unlikely. Due to the lack of conceptual clarity and understanding,

political commitment for a move remains low; as implications cannot be predicted in the short- nor the long-run. The findings chapter stated the additional complexity of PCSD consists of the pursuit for policy coherence among all three dimensions of sustainable development – environment, economy and society – and between all levels and layers of actors involve in the policy process. Intra- and inter-institutional agreement on the PCSD concept and its importance contribute to the lack of advantageous institutional settings.

The analysis of the findings through the application of the developed theoretical framework based on insights of EPI theories showed that concept of PCSD is still not tangible and too complex for EU policy makers to understand and apply (first dimension); leading to low interest of the political leaders – therefore to low political willingness to commit to the concept (second dimension). Intra- and inter-institutional disagreement and most importantly the lack of legal footing for PCSD in the EU Treaty (third dimension); linking it to (PCD) reporting mechanisms and impact assessments which have not produced the desired results and progress, making it unlikely to be achievable under the added complexity of the PCSD concept (fourth dimension). The findings, however, are mostly supporting the last possible scenario of the threefold option (iii) in which the EU is gradually moving from PCD to PCSD, without openly communicating to do so, and without making immediate structural adjustments just yet.

The observation by Carbone and Keijzer (2016a, p. 36) provide the last concluding remark: "the EU is good at setting normative frameworks, but its compliance record generally does not match its ambitions." This quote depicts the situation of the EU very accurately and shows that the EU, once more, stepped into the rhetoric-reality gap. To accelerate progress towards attaining the 2030 Agenda and with it strengthening policy coherence for development, the EU has a long road ahead to catch up with its expectations and good intentions.

8|1 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS IN A BROADER PERSPECTIVE

The results of this research can be given more weight if settled in a broader EU context and perspective, beyond the 2030 Agenda and the PCD policy framework. In recent years, the EU faced major challenges, starting with the economic and financial crisis in 2008, to increased turmoil in the EU neighbourhood and the Northern African countries, leading to a migration influx in Europe and the inability to find a EU-wide united to the 'migration crisis'. Although the latter did not spark a deep rift between the EU Member States, it meant a radical change for development cooperation.

Discussions on political conditionality prevented the Member States to find common ground, already long before the 'instrumentalisation' of aid for the purpose of migration management. Such instrumentalisation is contrary to the idea of PCD, as Siitonen (2016) identifies that "development is not the only possible candidate for a general guidance for policy coherence. At least some potentially competing – even if also closely related – issue areas seem to have grown in importance on the 21st century global policy agenda, such as security, migration and environment." (p. 4). This observation shows that these developments could lead to shift the PCD discussion away from PCSD, and in turn giving room and momentum to a redefinition of PCD not based on the three dimensions and expansion of the concept according to PCSD, but based on need to address particularly threatening global issues.

Indications of the importance of these issues is also shown by the State of the Union address of Commission President Juncker:

> From instability in our neighbourhood and terrorist threats to demographic, climate and technological change; from the need for sustainable investment and a more resilient Economic

and Monetary Union to the growing call for more social fairness and democratic accountability" (Juncker, 2017, p. 3)

With regards to development cooperation and policy, the EU has come a long and winding road from contesting sovereignty concerns of Member States (talking about Europeanisation and Communitisation), to successes in form of institutional settings (establishment of the Common Foreign and Security Policy), to cooperation on paper but not in practice (Frisch, 2008). Nevertheless, the EU is still too much concerned with its own (structural) struggles (Brexit, stabilising the economy after the economic and financial crisis in 2008 and now with the international instability (Syria and migration influx, Turkey, Trump, Crimea to name but a few). The EU may therefore be too occupied 'at home' with issues that take priority over sustainable development and the integration of the 2030 Agenda.

Extending the findings even further shows that the EU and its Member States struggle with the integration and implementation of the 2030 Agenda, because its very own nature is all encompassing, seeking synergies, interconnectivity and indivisibility (UN-GA, 2015b). The 2030 Agenda ultimately demands that traditional policy sectors become more flexible, collaborate and coordinate more amongst each other, and therefore engaged in trade-offs and compromises. It also calls for the investigation of the traditional role of developed and developing countries, donors and recipients. In connection to the PCD policy framework, but also in the broader picture of the policy integration efforts for the 2030 Agenda, Siitonen (2016) outlines a possible critical approach to the events, which "reveals the hegemonic interests behind the developmental language of PCD, but easily leads to a rather simple, dichotomous idea of the world consisting of the 'West' and the 'Rest'." (p. 5).

Reflection on the Suitability of the Theory

The case study of the EU as a policy actor engaging in the integration of an overarching international policy framework as the 2030 Agenda and the possible expansion of the policy framework PCD to a wider PCSD one, can give some insights for theories on EPI. The operationalisation of EPI offered a lens to investigate, analyse and understand the process of policy integration, although EPI theory literature primarily focuses on environmental aspects and objectives. Due to the adaptation of the theoretical framework and the complementation of the insights of EPI theory by concepts of PCD, this thesis added to the body of existing literature.

What insights can the EU experience with the policy integration of the SDGs give for theories on EP?

Insights on EPI theories and the EPI body of literature offered the necessary academic tools and instruments to establish four dimensions in policy integration; therefore, constituting a theoretical framework foundation suited for the application on the unit of analysis, the EU, and the two policy frameworks, PCD and the 2030 Agenda.

The EU experience and its policy integration efforts show that theories on EPI help to understand and analyse the challenge of policy integration of such complex policy frameworks as PCD and the 2030 Agenda. The EPI theory provided the 'theoretical conditions' to analyse the current EU affairs and to inquire in these 'practical conditions' can be found in the unit of analysis. The EU experience shows that EPI theory can expand beyond its environmental domain of investigation, but has the provisions to address more complex integration challenges transcending its traditional environmental focus.

This thesis addressed the *Mission Impossible 2.0* of policy integration in the case study of two policy frameworks (i) the 2030 Agenda and (ii) the policy framework of policy coherence for (sustainable) development in the European Union. The focus has been placed on the policy integration in EU external and internal development policy, with a particular interest in the role of the three most important EU institutions – the European Commission, the Council, and the European Parliament.

For the purpose of answering the research question of how the EU is seeking to integrate the 2030 Agenda and a possible move from PCD to PCSD, the thesis developed a theoretical framework based on the insights of EPI theories and established four dimensions: (i) normative framework, (ii) political will, (iii) institutional setting, and (iv) resources, capacities and procedures. By applying the lens of the established theoretical framework, it analyses the EU's 'mission impossible' to integrate the two complex policy frameworks. This thesis argued that the European Union started off from the promising position of being a leading negotiator of the 2030 Agenda, yet has not followed suit with implementation 'at home'. In the application of the lens of the theoretical framework developed, the analysis of the findings show that the EU is running at risk to step into the rhetoric-reality gap. The following results confirm this claim.

On the general integration efforts of the SGDs, the thesis demonstrated that the EU (i) is struggling to mobilise a common sense of responsibility and dedication to the 2030 Agenda across sectors. This is partially due to the absence of awareness and the 2030 Agenda's labelling of being a mere developmental and environmental programme.

Regarding the investigation of the political will and ownership (ii), the research found that, although there is a leading political key figure like First Vice President of the Commission Timmermans owning a sustainable development mandate, there is not enough assertiveness and diligence at this moment to get everybody engaged. Consequently, a clear universal commitment exercised in a cross-cutting manner and transcending traditional policy sectors is currently still missing. In an attempt to channel commitment and communication, the EU introduced various institutional settings (iii) – amongst them the high-ranking Commission SDG group – to increase cross-cutting collaboration to overcome system-thinking. On the other hand, it was shown that overcoming policy silos can lead to policy dilution presenting lowest-common denominator outcomes, instead of bold endeavours needed for the integration of the 2030 Agenda. Lastly, the fourth dimension identified that (iv) revision/review of EU policy instruments are planned to increase capacity-building and provide procedural mechanisms, ensuring reporting on and monitoring of the SDG implementation process. Yet, there is no allocation of EU budget for the SDG implementation and the revision/review exercises are time-consuming and inflexible in their response to the 2030 Agenda.

A more focused approach to the EU implementation efforts, the examination of the integration of the concept PCSD and a possible move from PCD to PCSD, identified several findings. The thesis stated that (i) the absence of a PCSD definition, the missing conceptual clarity and the possible implications a move from PCD to PCSD could entail, show that EU officials are cautious and sceptical to endorse it fully. This is reflected in (ii) the (political) unwillingness to further engage with the concept itself, which implies an addition of a significant amount of complexity and the fact that both, Member States and the EU institutions are more likely to stay dedicated to the known policy framework PCD. Most of the EU officials (iii) justify this dedication with the legal treaty obligations of PCD (Article 208 TFEU) that are

to be fulfilled, and in turn remind that no such direct legal basis exists for PCSD yet. However, this thesis identifies possible approaches to create a PCSD legal footing; namely through the combination of legal obligations of sustainable development (Article 3(3) TFEU) with the legal basis for PCD (Article 208 TFEU). Lastly, (iv) the findings stated that PCD reporting mechanisms are in place, although they were found to produce limited results, particularly in terms of accountability, due to a lack of legally binding enforcement mechanisms in place.

The thesis therefore indicated that the introduction of more coercive incentives concerning PCD are more likely to be introduced than reporting mechanisms on PCSD. The thesis discussed the established findings in light of the theoretical framework and in a broader context. It argued that the EU was not able to live up to its (self-imposed) expectations to establish a frontrunner role in the implementation process of the 2030 Agenda, and showed that it did not maintain the leading role it had established during the negotiations of the SDGs.

In support of the claim, the analysis and discussion demonstrated that the EU stepped into the rhetoric-reality gap due to its *sui generis* character and structural complexity, and the challenges it is facing 'at home', in its wider neighbourhood, and internationally. The EU has a long and winding road ahead concerning the implementation of the overarching policy framework of the 2030 Agenda to live up to its intentions and expectations.

In clarifying the limitations of the research, this thesis acknowledges that the EU officials and other experts approached for interviews were embracing and supporting the values expressed by the 2030 Agenda and PC(S)D. The suggestion for further research, therefore, is to collect empirical data from those that have a critical stand towards the two policy frameworks and, arguably, different observations and opinions to share. It would be interesting to triangulate the data collected from interviews with EU officials and the consultation of EU policy documents, with data from other stakeholders involved in the integration efforts on the 2030 Agenda; such as NGOs, the private sector, scientists and researchers, and civil society itself.

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TABLE 4 LIST OF CODES EMPLOYED

Code Type	Code
International organisations/actors	European Union (EU)
	United Nations (UN)
Policy frameworks	2030 Agenda
	Policy coherence for development (PCD
Concepts	Sustainable development
	Policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD)
	Policy integration
	Environmental policy integration (EPI)
	Development cooperation
	Capability vs. expectations
	Rhetoric vs. reality
	Sui generis
	EU competences
Institutional Structure	European Commission
	Council
	European Parliament
	Other EU institutions
Theoretical Framework	
1st Dimension	Normative complexity
	Norms and values
	2030 Agenda values (interconnectedness, indivisibility, universality, leaving no one behind)
	Subsidiarity and proportionality
2nd Dimension	Political will
	Political ownership
	Leadership
	Responsibility
3rd Dimension	New institutional structures
	Cross-sector/cross-institutional collaboration
	Channelling of action
4th Dimension	Reporting and monitoring
	Measuring impact
	Allocation of (financial) resources