

# FINLAND

Executive Summary of the Government's Report  
on the implementation of the 2030  
Agenda for Sustainable Development

2018

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## THE 2030 AGENDA AND FINLAND

Finland is committed in advancing the 2030 Agenda as a whole by 2030. The Government's existing policy and legislative framework and the implementation of international and national agreements and strategies provide the basis for the national implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The Implementation Plan outlines the Government's focus areas and actions for enhancing economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development in Finland nationally. These focus areas support the simultaneous realisation of multiple goals nationally, and also advance the global realisation of sustainable development. A human rights based approach will be followed in implementation, and special attention will be paid to identifying those people and groups who are at risk of falling behind.

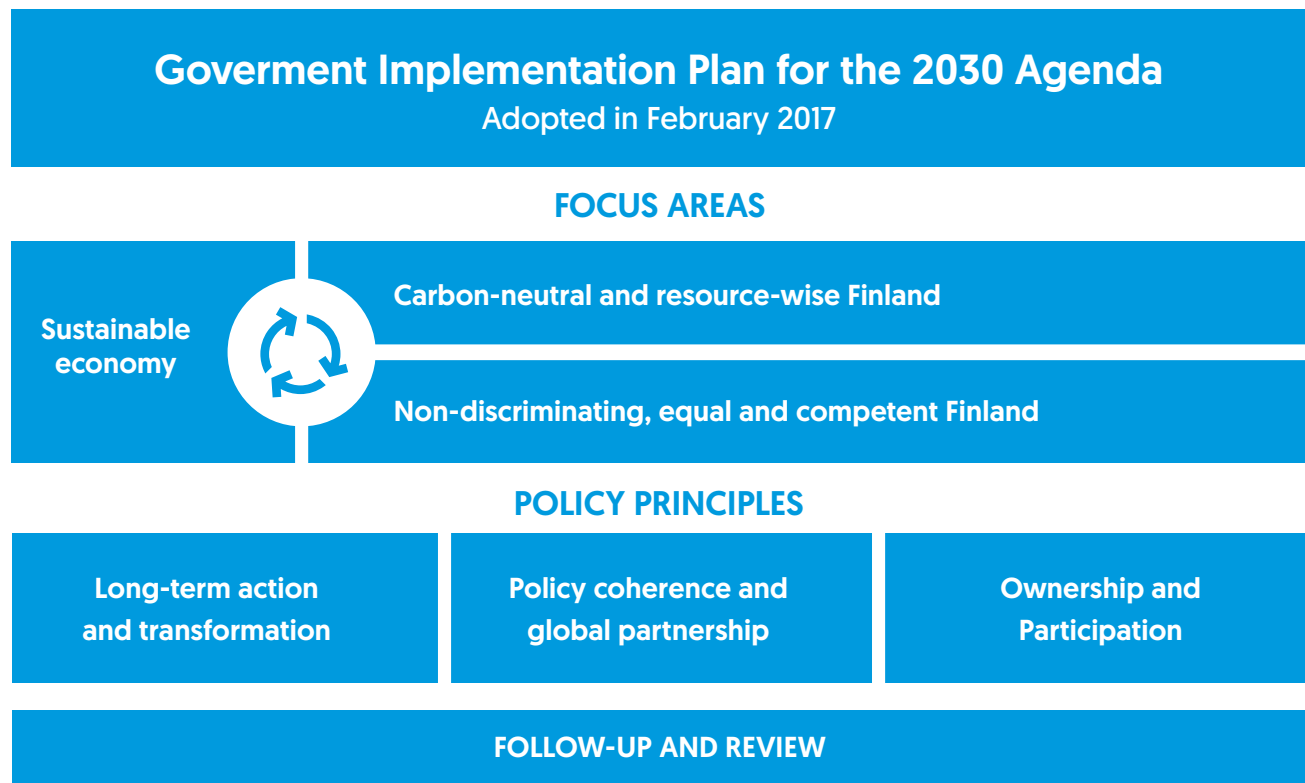


Figure 1: Contents of the Government Report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

Finland performs well in international comparisons on sustainable development and ranks very high in many indices. A specific study on Finland's strengths and weaknesses was conducted in 2016 to identify Finland's baseline and critical areas in implementing the 2030 Agenda. According to the study, quality education and related competencies, as well as the general societal stability, good governance and democratic institutions were found as Finland's particular strengths. Combating climate change and the overuse of natural resources, as well as promoting economic development and employment, were identified as Finland's key challenges. The results of this study were important building blocks also in defining the focus areas and other key elements for Government's Implementation Plan of the 2030 Agenda.

## **Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development - a national interpretation of the 2030 Agenda**

This Government Implementation Plan is based on the vision, principles and goals set forth in Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development "The Finland We Want 2050", which provides a long-term framework for Finland's sustainability work. Society's Commitment, adopted by the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development, is Finnish society's vision of sustainable development and interpretation of the challenges that must be overcome to achieve it.

Society's Commitment is also an implementation mechanism that enables citizens, businesses, organisations, municipalities and other stakeholders to participate in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. All levels of society can significantly contribute to the success of sustainable development.

**Objectives of the Society's Commitment:**

**Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda:**



Figure 2: Correlation of the objectives set in the Society's Commitment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda

## **IMPLEMENTATION FOCUS AREAS**

The Government's implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Finland builds on two themes: carbon-neutral and resource-wise Finland, and a non-discriminating, equal and competent Finland. Based on broad consultations, these are the areas most in need of improvement in Finland, but they also provide opportunities for supporting and promoting sustainable development abroad.

The two focus areas are strongly interdependent; one cannot be achieved without the other. To achieve a carbon-neutral and resource-wise Finland, we need to invest in competence development and change management in ways that are fair and sustainable for individuals and society as a whole. The education system and employment policy must be able to adapt to meet the new requirements.

The Government stresses the importance of coherence between national and international policies, as well as global responsibility of our national policies and measures. Further, a strong, sustainable and universally beneficial economy is linked with the achievement of all of the Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Focus area 1 – a carbon-neutral and resource-wise Finland**

Finland is a developed society whose challenge is to generate wellbeing in a way that ensures environmental sustainability and social justice, both nationally and globally. While doing this, Finland should strengthen its economic performance and competitiveness, enhance its citizens' competence, skills and knowledge, and foster industrial renewal in order to create jobs with higher added value and productivity. An abundance of renewable natural resources, a high level of education and technological competence, the ability to capitalise on digital solutions and robotisation, and to identify and solve problems, provide Finland with a firm foundation for building a carbon-neutral and resource-wise society by 2050.

To become carbon-neutral and resource-wise by 2030, Finland must take determined and ambitious actions to increase energy, resource and material efficiency, to sustainably grow the share of renewable energy sources, to produce and export climate-friendly products, services and innovations, and build low-emission sectors and business models. Companies and the innovations they develop will play a crucial role in the achievement of these goals. New business and exports must be sustainable and based on the principles of corporate social responsibility.

The Government has committed itself to numerous actions during the current electoral term, such as:

- Launch the implementation of the energy and climate strategy
- Create sustainable bioeconomy and cleantech solutions
- Implement the roadmap to the circular economy through broad-based cooperation
- Accelerate public procurement in central and local government
- Prepare and implement a national programme for sustainable urban development
- Promote carbon-neutrality and wise use of resources globally

### **Focus area 2 – a non-discriminating, equal and competent Finland**

According to the values espoused by Finnish society, everyone is a valuable and an equal member of the society, and everyone has equal opportunities for wellbeing and good life, health, working and functional capacity, education and employment. Everyone is entitled to participate in the society in a meaningful way. Ensuring the wellbeing of children and young people, and supporting civil engagement are of particular importance. Promoting gender equality is an integral part of the implementation of all the goals of the 2030 Agenda.

Inequality has increased in Finland. To reduce inequality and poverty, attention should be paid to safeguarding a sufficient income and equal wellbeing and employment services for everyone.

The achievement of this goal – a non-discriminating, equal and competent Finland – by 2030 will require determined steps to prevent youth and long-term unemployment, the social exclusion of certain population segments, the polarisation of labour markets, and the segregation of living and residential areas. Action is also needed to reduce health inequality, promote gender equality, support lifelong learning and equality of education, and to raise the population's educational and skill levels. Equal access to services for the ageing population will support non-discrimination and helps to ensure dignity in old age.

Finland promotes global stability and security. In keeping with the key objectives of its development policy, Finland aims to reduce global inequality and help the poorest countries with capacity-building. We seek to bring stability to crisis areas through comprehensive crisis management. Stability-promoting actions with which Finland contributes to the achievement of sustainable development – in crisis areas and globally – include civilian and military crisis management, peace mediation and peacekeeping, and the security sector reform.

The Government has committed itself to numerous actions during the current electoral term, such as:

- Improve health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities
- Secure access to skilled labour force in changing labour markets and prevent social exclusion
- Significantly increase the chances of persons with partial work ability to find employment and remain at work
- Promote integration of immigrants
- Implement an action plan to prevent hate speech and racism and to promote social inclusion
- Implement vocational education reform
- Further develop the youth guarantee system, secure a study place, and strengthen social welfare and health care services for young people
- Actively promote gender equality
- Promote equality and non-discrimination globally

## **KEY POLICY PRINCIPLES OF IMPLEMENTATION**

The successful promotion of sustainable development will place major demands on political decision-making and administration. Decision-making and administrative action need to be long-term and transformative, increase policy coherence and aim at strengthening global partnerships, and underline ownership and inclusion.

### **A – Long-term action and transformation**

The 2030 Agenda is an inter-generationally significant political programme: actions taken by current generations must safeguard the basis of a good life for future generations. Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development serves as the long term target framework and tool for policy coherence within the strategic and programme work on sustainable development undertaken by various administrative sectors and societal actors. A long-term approach should also be adopted in resourcing. The aim is to include the principles and objectives of sustainable development in future Government Programmes, the Government's foresight activities and budget preparation.



To implement this principle, the Government has engaged to several concrete measures, such as:

- Link the Government's foresight activities more closely with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda
- Allocate administrative resources in a flexible way and develop competence
- Secure conditions for long-term work promoting sustainable development through interaction and cooperation
- Assess applicability of phenomenon based budgeting
- Strengthen the role of research and foresight in sustainable development policy and decision-making

## **B - Policy coherence and global partnership**

As a global partner, Finland applies foreign and security policy measures such as trade and development policies to support sustainable development in developing countries. The goal of the Government's development policy is to reduce extreme poverty. This will require sustainable economic growth, entrepreneurship and job creation in the target countries. Consequently, the effectiveness of development policy can be significantly enhanced by private sector involvement, since jobs in developing countries tend to be created in the private companies.

Since the effects of Finland's actions extend beyond its national borders, global responsibility and policy coherence are key principles. Decisions made in different policy sectors (including taxation, finance, trade, migration, agriculture) have a major impact on the realisation of sustainable development goals in Finland and globally.

In February 2016, the Government approved a Report on Finnish Development Policy which is largely founded on the 2030 Agenda. Key focus areas of the development policy include strengthening the rights and position of girls and women, building the economies of developing countries, driving democracy and functional capacity forward through measures such as more efficient taxation, and improving food security, water and energy supply, and sustainable natural resource policy. In particular, development funds are being provided for the least developed countries, fragile countries, and countries in conflict. In addition to development policy, foreign and security policy in general and, e.g. trade policy, have a significant role in the global implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The 2030 Agenda, Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development and the priority areas of the Government's foreign and development policy form a consistent vision and objective framework for the national implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

To implement this principle, the Government has engaged to several concrete measures, such as:

- » Enhance policy coherence to support sustainable development
  - In implementation and reporting attention will be paid to identifying and accounting for groups, including those outside Finland's borders, which are at risk of falling behind of development.
  - The implementation of the 2030 Agenda will be reported annually to the Parliament, as part of the Government's annual report
  - The implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda will be regularly discussed at the Meeting of Permanent Secretaries of Ministries.
- 
- » Build stronger global partnership
  - The report on Development Policy will be implemented and a commitment will be made to uphold Finland's development cooperation values and principles in the long term.
  - Better conditions will be created for developing countries to participate and benefit from international trade.
  - Allocation of other resources to sustainable development will be sought with help of private investments, broad-based partnerships, technology and innovation.
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- » Explore the use of a sustainable development impact assessment tool in the drafting of bills

## **C – Ownership and participation**

A human rights based approach and broad-based participation deemed important to Finland throughout the negotiation process of the 2030 Agenda. Although the Government bears most responsibility for implementation, sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda affect everyone.

Finnish society has an exceptionally strong tradition of a wide ownership for sustainable development; civil society, business life, trade unions, the church and other actors have been

participating in the formulation of strategies, programmes and policies for over 20 years. In Finland, we realised at an early stage that sustainable development is a social learning process that requires everyone's participation. Actual sustainable development work has been carried out in cities and local communities, companies, organisations, educational institutes, workplaces and homes. Many cities have their own sustainable development strategies.

In Finland, participation in sustainable development policies has traditionally been organised through representative Committees. For the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, it is important to extend participation to stakeholders outside such Committees, and to citizens.

The tool for operational commitments, linked to Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development, provides organisations and active citizens with the opportunity to pursue Sustainable Development Goals in their own operations and lives.

To implement this principle, the Government has engaged to several concrete measures, such as:

- Expand the use of the Society's Commitment for Sustainable Development tool
- Launch experiments to test sustainable development solutions
- Encourage discussion of the current national status of sustainable development and the related actions, and communicate in a strategic way
- Encourage cities and communities to set ambitious sustainable development goals
- Give young people a voice in sustainable development issues

## **FOLLOW-UP AND REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION**

Promoting sustainable development and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda are long-term processes that require systematic follow-up, review and development. Up to date information is needed for follow-up purposes, together with the expert and multi-voiced interpretation of such information and open dialogue between all stakeholders. A regular and independent impact assessment is required in addition to follow-up activities.

Progress made with the objectives and implementation of Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development, "Finland We Want by 2050", has been monitored using the national indicators for

sustainable development. Finland is also required to monitor its progress with respect to the 17 goals and 169 targets of the 2030 Agenda. This will be done using a global indicator framework developed by the UN.

The Government is responsible to its citizens for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Finland. Parliament supervises and reviews the activities of the Government and the administration, thereby ensuring full accountability. In addition, the participation of Parliament in the discussion of sustainable development issues and in the follow-up of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is important to ensuring policy coherence

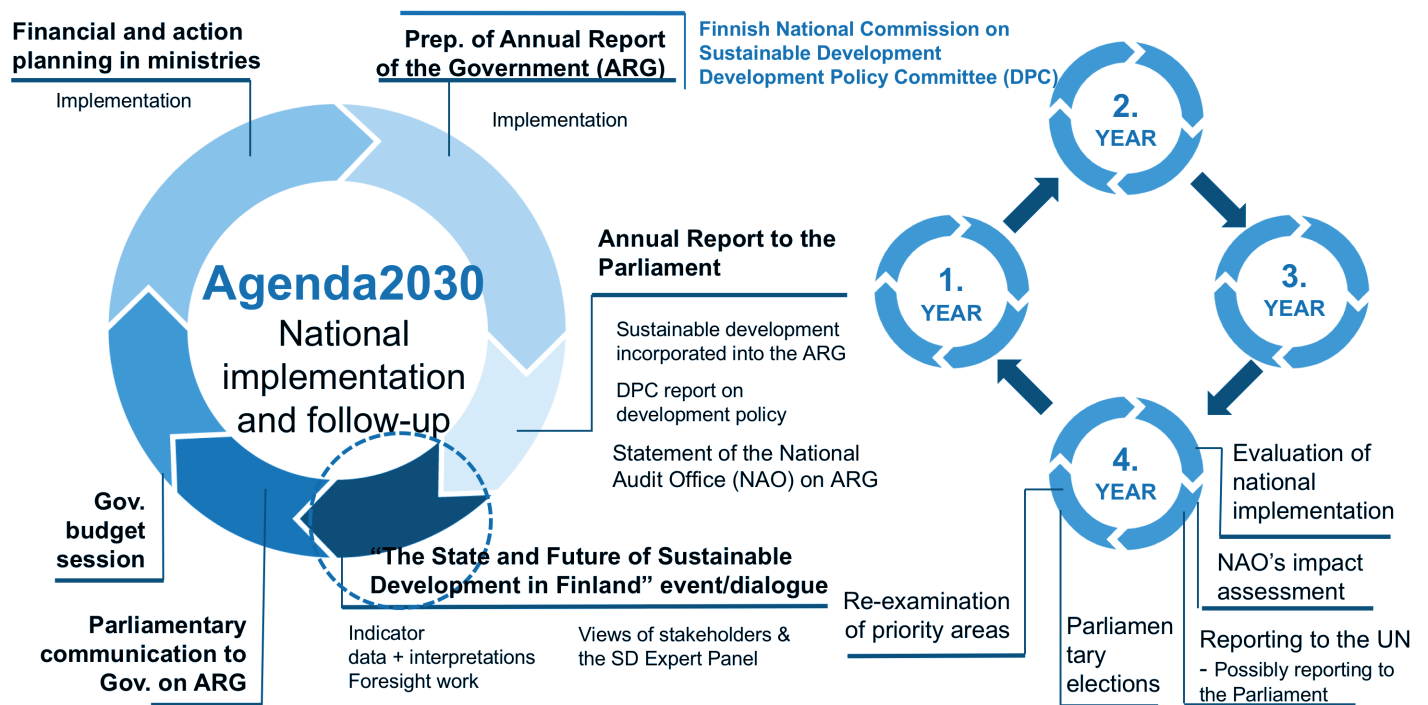


Figure 3: The year clock for the follow-up and review of national implementation, and a description of the four-year cycle of each parliamentary term.

Figure 3 illustrates the annual cycle of follow-up and review during the period up to 2030 and the four-year cycle, whose purpose is to ensure the fulfilment of the Government's commitments in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, to provide Parliament with a stronger role in the follow-up of national implementation, and to raise the visibility of sustainable development issues in national discussions. An annual event addressing the current status and future of sustainable development in Finland is the yearly culmination point and main forum for this discussion.

The discussion of sustainable development in the Government's annual report is an essential part of the annual cycle. This serves as a self-assessment mechanism for the Government and strengthens accountability to Parliament and citizens with respect to sustainable development issues. The National Audit Office VTV provides a statement on the Government's annual report and regularly expresses its opinion of the effectiveness of administrative actions in achieving the 2030 Agenda goals.

In the fourth year of the cycle (parliamentary election year), an external evaluation will be conducted of progress made in national implementation and the effectiveness of actions taken, and a report on the state of sustainable development in Finland will be prepared. The evaluation and quadrennial report will provide input for sustainable development target-setting over the next electoral term.

Key actions are:

- Report progress made in sustainable development in the Government's annual report
- Update sustainable development follow-up indicators and enable multi-voiced interpretation of data in the follow-up mechanism
- Organise an annual discussion on the state and future of sustainable development in Finland
- Prepare a report on sustainable development in Finland every four years
- Evaluate national implementation in 2019 and report to the HLPF every four years, next in 2020
- Harmonise sustainable development assessment practices between administrative branches

## **THE COORDINATION MECHANISM OF THE 2030 AGENDA IN FINLAND**

This Implementation Plan will steer the Government in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and guide the work done in various administrative branches to promote sustainable development.

Responsibility for the planning, preparation, coordination and national implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and for providing support for the national sustainable development policy, rests within a Coordination Secretariat situated in the Prime Minister's Office.

Consisting of representatives of all ministries, the sustainable development Coordination Network supports and guides work done within the Coordination Secretariat. It prepares, develops and coordinates sustainable development efforts in Finland.

The sustainable development Follow-up Network is tasked with updating, supporting and further developing the national sustainable development follow-up mechanism, including the national sustainable development indicators.

The main forum for multi-stakeholder dialogue and participation for sustainable development in Finland is the National Commission on Sustainable Development, led by the Prime Minister. Its key task is to link the implementation of the 2030 Agenda to other national sustainable development efforts, as well as following up and reviewing implementation activities. The interdisciplinary Expert Panel comprising of eight professors and senior academics, challenges and advances the work of the Commission.

The Development Policy Committee monitors and assesses the implementation of Finland's development policy guidelines and international commitments, particularly the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Finland with regard to development policy.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGENDA 2030 IN FINLAND -KEY BODIES AND MECHANISMS

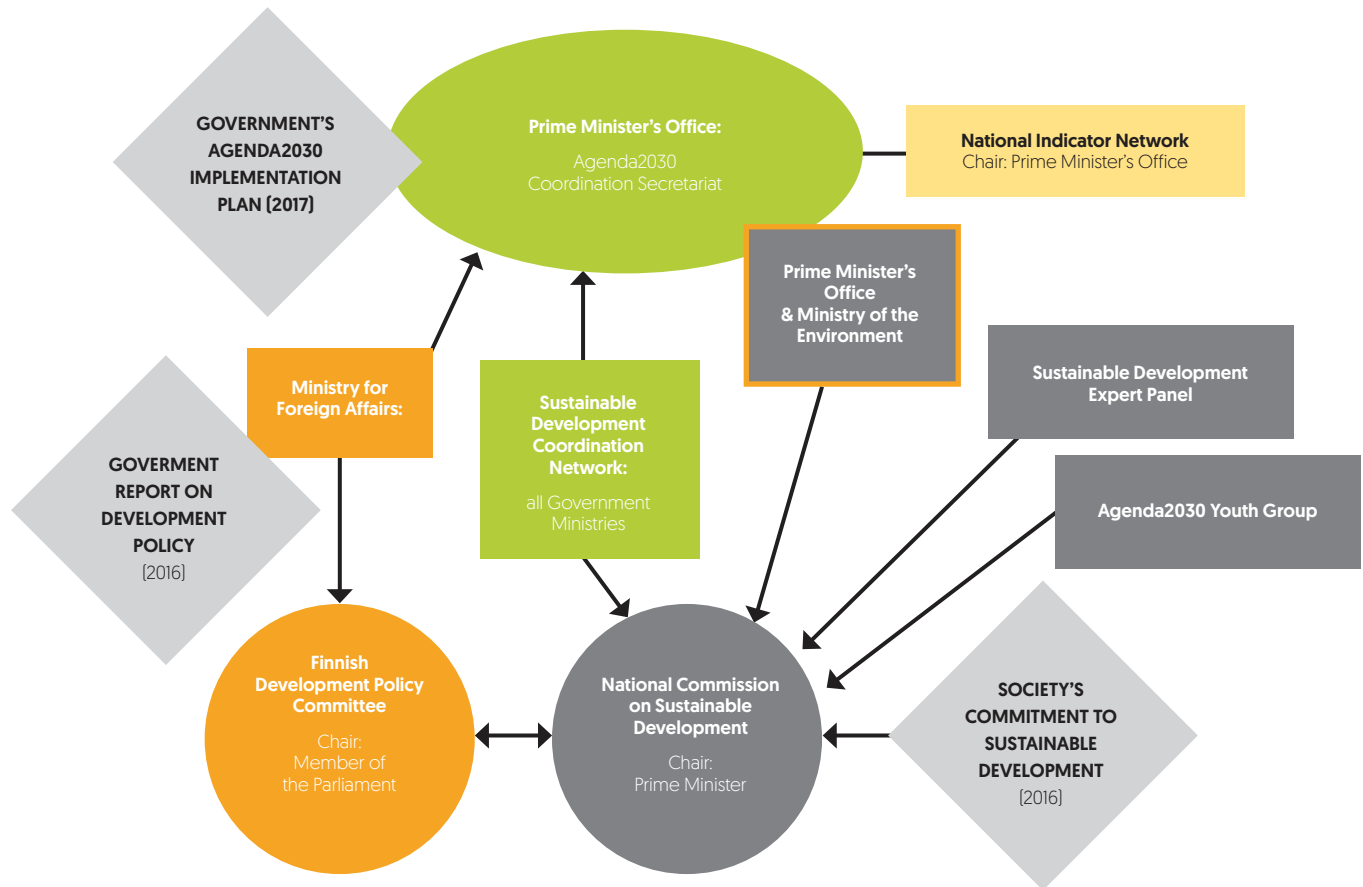


Figure 4. Key bodies, mechanisms and programmes for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Finland



## THE FINNISH AGENDA 2030 YOUTH GROUP

The Agenda 2030 Youth Group was set up in spring 2017, under the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development led by the Prime Minister. The Commission saw the need to increase youth participation in the national planning and implementation of the Agenda 2030, which gave the idea of providing a platform for young people interested in sustainable development. The Agenda Youth Group has two aims: to serve as an advocate for the goals and participate in the national planning and implementation of the SDGs. The Finnish Agenda 2030 Youth Group is composed of 20 people aged 15 to 28 years from all around Finland and with a variety of backgrounds. The Finnish Youth Cooperation Allianssi assisted in finding the group members by an open application process.

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