

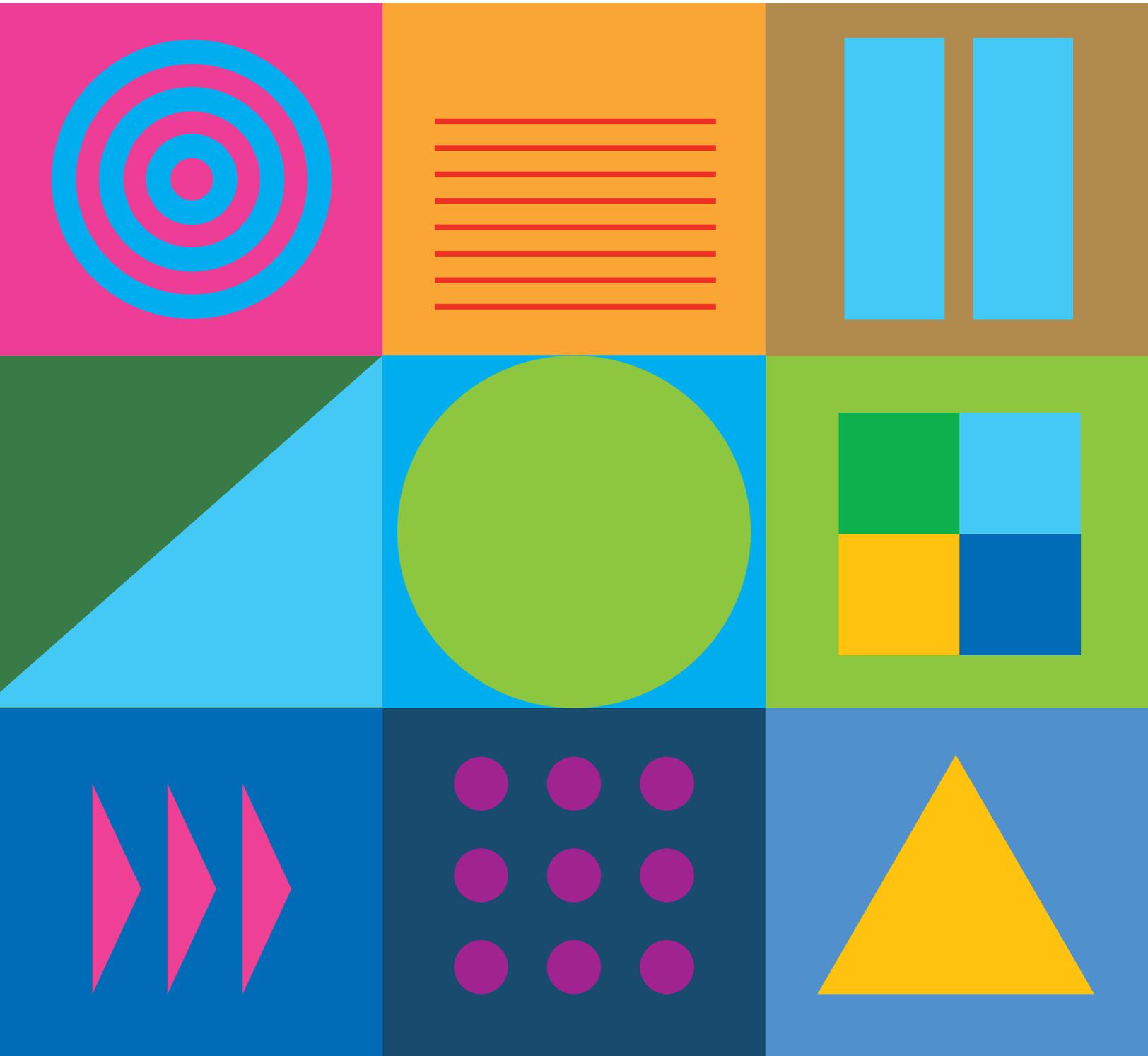


UNITED NATIONS
SERBIA



STRENGTHENING THE MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIMENSION OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND THE SDGs

SERBIA





ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report, “Strengthening the multi-stakeholder dimension of national development planning and the SDGs in Serbia” is supported by UN DESA, Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG) through a grant with the European Commission “SD2015: Delivering on the promise of the SDGs”. It is based on the responses of 33 members from 24 entities that were interviewed or completed a structured questionnaire in October-November 2020.

The United Nations Serbia acknowledges with appreciation the entities that responded to the survey: Advisor of the Prime Minister for Agenda 2030 implementation, Ministry of European Integration; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); International Labour Organization (ILO); International Organization for Migrations (IOM); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF); United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS); United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN Women); World Health Organization (WHO); Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia (EU Delegation); Council of Europe (CoE); Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ); Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC); Sweden’s government agency for development cooperation (SIDA); European Investment Bank (EIB); World Bank (WB); Global Compact Serbia; Alta Bank; Divac Foundation; Centar for Advanced Economic Studies (CEVES); Belgrade Open School (BOS).

The report was prepared by the consultant Marija Babovic, Ph.D., with the support and management of the United Nations Resident Coordinator’s Office in Serbia. The text has not been edited to official publication standards and the UN accepts no responsibility for error.

The views expressed in the report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the United Nations or any of its affiliated organizations.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Acronyms	4
1. INTRODUCTION.	5
2. STAKEHOLDERS' UNIVERSE IN THE PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA 2030.	7
2.1 Deeply immersed stakeholders	8
2.2 Committed stakeholders	10
2.3 Associated or occasionally engaged stakeholders.	14
2.4 Engagement as a formality or marginal engagement	17
2.5 Coverage of SDGs by interviewed stakeholders and mapping the gaps	18
2.6 Perceived contribution of stakeholders to Agenda 2030	20
2.7 The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on stakeholders' engagement in SDGs	21
3. STAKEHOLDERS' PARTICIPATION IN VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW (VNR)	23
4. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGENDA 2030	25
4.1 Challenges and Bottlenecks	25
4.2 Factors contributing to the effective implementation of SDG-related interventions	26
5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	31
5.1 Conclusions.	31
5.2 Recommendations.	31
Annex 1: List of reviewed documents.	36
Annex 2: Key projects contributing to the SDGs implemented by UN agencies in Serbia in period 2015-2020	37

LIST OF ACRONYMS



CEVES	Centre for Advanced Economic Studies
CSO	Civil society organization
DCWP	Decent Work Country Programme
DEU	Delegation of European Union
DPF	Development Partnership Framework
EIB	European Investment Bank
EU	European Union
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GoS	Government of Serbia
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HLPF	High Level Political Forum
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MEI	Ministry of European Integration
NAD	National Priorities for International Assistance
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PM	Prime Minister
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
RCO	Resident Coordinator's Office
RIA	Rapid Integrated Assessment
SDCF	Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
SCRM	Serbian Commission for Refugees and Migrants
SCTM	Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEECF	South-East European Cooperation Process
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
UHC	Universal Health Coverage
UASC	Unaccompanied minors
SORS	Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization



1. INTRODUCTION

Background

The formulation of the 2030 Agenda was the result of an inclusive and participatory global process. The Agenda calls for the meaningful and active participation of people and stakeholders at all stages, from SDG integration into national strategies and financing from various sources, to implementation at local level, national monitoring, and review. It highlights the importance of participatory approaches for sustainable development. It also places the most vulnerable and voiceless people as central to the Leave No One Behind principle.

UN Country Teams (UNCTs) have a key role to play in i) supporting Member States to implement Agenda 2030, ii) enabling environments where stakeholders can contribute meaningfully, and iii) ensuring inclusive and informed participation of all. In September 2019, the UN Secretary-General called on all sectors of society to mobilize again for a decade of action on three levels: **global action** to secure greater leadership, more resources and smarter solutions for Sustainable Development Goals; **local action** embedding the needed transitions in the policies, budgets, institutions and regulatory frameworks of governments, cities and local authorities; and **people action**, including youth, civil society, the media, the private sector, unions, academia and other stakeholders to generate an unstoppable movement pushing for the required transformations.¹ The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 further widened inequalities between individuals, communities and nations. This was an abrupt reminder to all of us of the need to accelerate the transformation of societies and economies towards a more sustainable future.

The Secretary General noted that, in moving towards a new generation of UNCTs, it must be ensured that Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs) are empowered at the country level to serve as a one-stop shop for partnerships with external partners. This multi-stakeholder analysis is a part of the strategic ambitions of Serbia UNCT to accelerate the realization of the SDGs in the country and formulate new areas of partnerships and actions.

Multi-stakeholder partnership for the SDGs

'An ongoing collaborative relationship among organizations from different stakeholder types aligning their interests around a common vision, combining their complementary resources and competencies and sharing risk, to maximize value creation towards the Sustainable Development Goals and deliver to each of the partners.'

United Nations, The SDG Partnership Guidebook

Purpose, Objectives and scope

The purpose of this report is to support the RCO and UNCT in their endeavour and obligation to accelerate the realization of the SDGs in Serbia.

The objective is to:

- Map and analyse the current practice in planning, mainstreaming and implementing the SDGs in Serbia by various stakeholders;
- Propose recommendations and concrete actions for the UNCT to strengthen or streamline multi-stakeholder interventions for the realization of the SDGs — including a revised stakeholder engagement strategy.

The scope of work:

- A national stakeholder mapping exercise for engagement and participation on the 2030 Agenda implementation in the Republic of Serbia, including identification of challenges and opportunities to strengthen stakeholder engagement through existing platforms;
- An analysis of stakeholder engagement in the preparation of the VNR that was presented at the HLPF in 2019, including the engagement of youth, CSOs, academia, parliament and the private sector;
- Recommendations for alternative or additional ways of conducting stakeholder engagement in the context of the COVID-19 situation;
- A summary of recommendations to be included in the 2021-2025 CF.

¹ United Nations, The SDG Partnership Guidebook, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26627SDG_Partnership_Guidebook_0.95_web.pdf

The **stakeholders identified** are different actors who are engaged or should be engaged in planning and implementing the 2030 Agenda, either by their mandate (government at national and local levels, intergovernmental organizations, bilateral development agencies, international non-governmental organizations, international financial institutions); by their mission (civil society organizations); by their commitment to contribute to the betterment of society through social corporate responsibility (the private sector); by their expertise (academia and expert community); or by their responsibility for distributing public information on issues of general concern (such as the media).

Methodology

The methodology of the multi-stakeholder mapping and analysis is guided by several key UN documents that define the importance, roles, and principles of a partnership framework and UN engagement in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda: *Common Minimum Standards for Multi-stakeholder Engagement in the UN Development Assistance Framework*, *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework* and *The SDG Partnership Guidebook*. Another important starting base for the mapping and stakeholder analysis was the Final Evaluation of the UN Development Partnership Framework for the Republic of Serbia 2016-2020, as well as its accompanying raw material — interview notes with diverse stakeholders that participated in the evaluation, conducted in autumn 2019.

The analysis of multi-stakeholder engagement in planning and implementing the achievement of the SDGs included several components:

- Review of relevant documents (list provided in Annex 1);
- Mapping stakeholders and the stakeholder analysis through desk review;
- Selection of key stakeholders and data collection through:
 - interviews,
 - questionnaires.
- The analysis and preparation of this report with recommendations for future partnerships and engagement of the UNCT in multi-stakeholder initiatives.

In order to understand the complex picture of multi-stakeholder engagement, the mapping of stakeholders started with desk research that aimed to identify key stakeholders from the government, the international development community, and non-governmental actors, including civil society and the private sector. This resulted in a broader set of key stakeholders that were only overviewed based on publicly

available data. Within this, a narrower set of key stakeholders was selected for more in-depth data collection through interviews. Although there was more substantive and detailed information available for some stakeholders and only basic information available for others, it is still important to place the stakeholders with superficial insights in the broader landscape of key stakeholders.

The criteria for identifying the initial set of stakeholders to interview were their authority in the planning and implementation of the 2030 Agenda, their 'centrality' vis-à-vis other stakeholders involved, and their availability during the relatively short period of data collection. The first round of interviewed stakeholders included representatives of the government (the Inter-Ministerial Working Group for the implementation of Agenda 2030 and the Ministry of European Integration), the Delegation of the European Union, and the UNCT Serbia. These stakeholders identified others with whom they partnered for various initiatives and processes related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, with the next set of informants selected through snowballing.

In total, 33 respondents from 24 institutions/organizations were either interviewed or completed a structured questionnaire. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews were conducted online, via Zoom or Microsoft Teams platforms, except in one case where the interview was organized face-to-face upon the request of the respondent.

FIGURE 1 | Institutions and organizations that participated in the mapping exercise



* 10 resident UN agencies, members of Serbia UNCT, that significantly contribute to the 2030 Agenda implementation and UNDAF 2016-2020, participated in the survey. Non-resident UN agencies didn't respond to the request for information/interview.



2. STAKEHOLDERS' UNIVERSE IN THE PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA 2030

Stakeholder engagement is assessed on the following criteria:

1. **The 'centrality' of Agenda 2030 in the stakeholder's strategic approach.** What is the strategic relation towards Agenda 2030 in Serbia and its role in implementing, supporting or pushing key policy and institutional processes that lead to the implementation or acceleration of Agenda 2030? Is the 2030 Agenda the key framework that shapes the actions of the stakeholder? Or is the 2030 Agenda an important — but more complementary — framework to the stakeholder's main agenda, through being a framework that guides objectives and actions of the stakeholder that would be pursued anyways, though maybe in a somewhat different way? Or does the stakeholder's action reveal that the 2030 Agenda has a marginal position in its strategic approach, or is the approach to Agenda 2030 predominantly a formality?
2. **Dynamics of engagement.** Is engagement continuous and systematic, inconsistent (with fluctuating periods of engagement and inactivity), or occasional (where engagement is only around certain events or initiatives)?
3. **Partnering and mobilization of other stakeholders.** Are stakeholders recognized as leaders that mobilize other stakeholders, support them, and create diversified partnerships on a relatively continuous basis? What is the quality of partnerships in terms of setting targets, providing synergy, taking into account diverse interests, stability and the longevity of partnerships through networks and alliances?

Based on these criteria, mapped stakeholders were classified into four categories:

1. **Deeply immersed stakeholders.** They are promoters of the 2030 Agenda. They take Agenda 2030 as their key overarching policy framework and they initiate and facilitate key policy processes, support institutions responsible for the implementation of Agenda 2030, mobilize diverse stakeholders on a continuous basis and generate new partnerships around the SDGs.

2. **Committed stakeholders.** They are significant contributors to the 2030 Agenda. Some of them are also among the leading stakeholders that pursue the 2030 Agenda in areas under specific SDGs, but they lack an overarching approach. This is either due to their narrower mandates or due to the 2030 Agenda not being a central focus in their own strategic approach. Regardless, the actions of these stakeholders are guided by the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of specific SDGs. Their engagement is continuous, and they generate or facilitate valuable partnerships, though these partnerships as well as their engagement are often not around core policy processes. Their contribution is more 'operational' to the achievement of the SDGs rather than focused on key policy processes and institutional capacities to implement or accelerate the 2030 Agenda in Serbia.
3. **Associated or occasionally engaged stakeholders.** These stakeholders are, to an extent, aware of the importance of Agenda 2030, but their engagement is not consistent. They either participate as partners of other stakeholders who are more systematically engaged in the 2030 Agenda and who initiate processes or events, or they only occasionally participate in events and only contribute to single initiatives. They often indirectly contribute through financing, and they occasionally may participate in events or policy processes or implement projects focused on specific SDGs.
4. **Stakeholders with engagement as a formality.** These are stakeholders who predominantly follow the 2030 Agenda as a formality. This is either as a 'ticking the box' exercise to claim that some of their interventions contribute to certain SDGs, or they are duty bearers who claim that Agenda 2030 is of great importance but in fact implement very little action related to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

Typology limitations. This classification should be taken with caution. For some of the stakeholders, available insights were limited as they were not interviewed and were overviewed only based on publicly available information. As is true for every classification, this is also an 'ideal type' classification, and some stakeholders could belong to multiple

categories depending on the criteria measured. Therefore, it is better to understand these classification groups as key pillars along the spectrum of engagement, which starts from no engagement or only engagement as a formality (as mapping did not include stakeholders who are not engaged at all) to engagement as leaders of the process influencing

or implementing key policy processes that lead to the fulfillment of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

Based on the mapping data, the following graph shows where stakeholders fit on the engagement continuum.



2.1 Deeply immersed stakeholders

There are only a few stakeholders that can be placed in the 'deeply immersed' category. Currently, the most coherent engagement is from GIZ. This engagement is also the most visible to many of the other interviewed stakeholders and creates the most intense dynamics around the SDGs in an otherwise quite passive environment. The UNCT has also been deeply immersed in accelerating the achievement of the SDGs, but the expectations for the UNCT to lead these processes are much higher than for other stakeholders (except for the Government). Accordingly, many stakeholders believe that the UNCT has lost its leading role as custodian of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. In addition, due to a lack of coherence, continuity, visibility and systematic overarching engagement, UNCT engagement is underemphasized.

The Evaluation of the UNCT DPF 2016-2020 supports this conclusion, as it reveals strong engagement with the SDGs. The 'UN system was instrumental and very effective in introducing and promoting Agenda 2030 through its advocacy and advisory/technical work in multiple areas of SDG implementation:

- The UN system's engagement **contributed to raising awareness among partners and the population at large.**
- From the onset, the UNCT has been proactive in supporting the establishment and functioning of the **Governmental Inter-Ministerial Working Group on SDGs (IMWG)**, which comprises 27 members from various government institutions and offices and is chaired by the Minister without portfolio in charge of Demography and Population.

- The UN agencies developed direct partnerships with **line ministries** in focused efforts to advance progress in certain SDG areas.
- The partnership and dialogue with the Delegation of the European Union (DEU) was directed towards **identifying linkages between EU accession and the 2030 Agenda** from the beginning. The UN and the DEU organized several programme-related and thematic events, including a dedicated policy-oriented discussion between the UNCT and all DEU portfolio managers.
- The Resident Coordinator fostered **regular discussions with international development partners**, as well as regional partners, on the SDGs in order to ensure coherent messaging to the Government of Serbia. SIDA, SDC, Norway, EU, GIZ, US and several IFIs were especially active in this group.
- UN agencies have also worked closely with **CSOs in ensuring their participation in SDG-related dialogue**.
- The UN started to work closely with the **Parliament** on SDG-related issues with significant progress made so far (for more information, see the chapter on partners' views).
- The UN, **through the Global Compact, was active in supporting private sector participation** in SDG dialogue.
- The UNCT supported the **Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA)**², which conducted a more detailed assessment of the national policy framework against the Agenda 2030 requirements.
- The report was presented to the IMWG and international development partners, but the Government has never officially endorsed it.
- The UNCT supported the **Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) Mission** whose report was made available to the IMWG in 2018.
- UN Agencies, and particularly UNICEF who prepared part of the report, contributed to the **first VNR**, presented to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2019.
- The Government of Serbia was also supported by the UN in **regional activities on the 2030 Agenda**: first, the Regional Parliamentary Seminar on SDGs, in Belgrade in May 2018, with the support of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU); second, ambitious Sub-Regional Conference promoting the implementation of Agenda 2030 in the Western Balkans, hosted by the GoS with the support of the UNCT, UNECE, the UNDP and GIZ, in Belgrade in September 2018.
- The UNCT has supported the mapping and translation of **SDG indicators** in cooperation with the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia.

The DPF evaluation was however mainly centered around UNCT performance. From the perspective of the broader landscape of stakeholders engaged in the 2030 Agenda, UNCT engagement leaves the impression of being 'scattered'. It is a collection of various initiatives or strategic interventions of various agencies rather than a coherent, concerted action coordinated more firmly by the UN RCO. This more coherent and coordinated approach of stronger engagement from the UNCT as a whole would be in line with the 'Delivery as One' principle. It would also give other stakeholders an impression of stronger leadership and authority in setting the 2030 Agenda as a driving framework for development policies in complementarity with the EU accession Agenda (discussed further in later chapters).

GIZ emerged as one of the leading stakeholders engaged in the 2030 Agenda, which in some ways filled the gap after the withdrawal of the UNCT from its initial leadership role in promoting the 2030 Agenda. GIZ is one of the development partners that is most profoundly engaged in the implementation of Agenda 2030, under Germany's special support program to the coordination of SDG implementation around the world, *The Agenda 2030 Initiative*. The project is focused on the reform of public finance and is centred around linkages between public finance and the SDGs. It is supported by SDC. It reflects the comparative advantage of GIZ, which is described as strongly focused on the development of capacities of national stakeholders based on their needs and adjusted to the national context.

'We attempt to integrate their (national partners') objectives, to support their capacities to achieve their own priorities. Not some project units, but structural support to the partner to achieve its own objectives. In addition to this, in partnership with SDC we are in the position to streamline activities of two donors in Serbia in SDG achievements.'

GIZ representative

GIZ provided support to the Ministry without portfolio and IMWG in preparation of the VNR. Previously they supported the Republic Secretariat for Public Policies in preparing *Agenda 2030 in Serbia*, which presented the overview of national policies and their linkages with the SDGs. Within the project *The Reform of Public Financing of Agenda 2030*, the platform of non-governmental stakeholders for the implementation of the SDGs was established under the name **SDGs for All**.

³ A part of the project is focused on providing support to the Statistical Office of Serbia and on monitoring the SDGs. In this area, GIZ supports the expansion of the coverage of SDG indicators, increased disaggregation of data, improved

² UN System in Serbia (2018). Serbia and Agenda 2030: Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA)

³ <https://sdgs4all.rs/>

user experience of the SDG monitoring platform, and dissemination of information on the availability of data. This work led to an increase in the number of indicators that can be monitored from 43 to 83. Recently, the first monitoring report on the achievement of the SDGs was prepared.⁴ The project has a strong focus on the localization of SDGs, through mobilizing diverse local stakeholders in the discussion on local SDG priorities, raising awareness of local communities on Agenda 2030, and translating the global sustainable goals into their local settings. Through initiatives implemented by the SDG platform, citizens in selected local communities engage in dialogue with self-governments on priorities in local sustainable development.

The third stakeholder that could be placed within this category is the newly established civil society platform 'SDGs for All', which is the only civil society platform directly focused on the SDGs. It was established by six civil society organizations with the support of GIZ and SDC. Three civil society organizations were interviewed during the mapping: Divac Foundation, CEVES and Belgrade Open School. Each organization coordinates one pillar with another partner organization: Divac Foundation and Foundation Center for Democracy coordinate the social pillar, CEVES and Timok Youth Center coordinate the economic pillar, while Belgrade Open School and Center for Political Excellence coordinate the environmental pillar. The aim is to create networks of diverse stakeholders (CSOs, businesses, universities, institutes, research centers, media, citizens) in different regions of Serbia and mobilize them to define national/local priorities and to foster the implementation of Agenda 2030. The idea is to develop a participatory process around the implementation of Agenda 2030 and to open discussions and negotiations on priorities between non-state actors and state actors.

A web platform, which will be used as a space for raising awareness and fostering discussions, was recently launched. This is the only SDG-specific platform in Serbia that consists of non-governmental stakeholders. The platform works with local communities to mobilize diverse local actors in the debate on the SDGs and to engage them in local prioritization and advocacy to incorporate these priorities in local development plans. The organizations gathered around this platform have prepared the monitoring report on SDG achievement seen from the perspective of civil society. However, the platform was project financed and it remains to be seen if it will sustain after the project period and if it will be engaged with as comprehensively and as dynamically as it is now.

2.2 Committed stakeholders

This category includes a significant portion of the stakeholders interviewed during the mapping exercise. While the UNCT was positioned in the first category, individual UN agencies are placed here as they demonstrated high level of commitment to the SDGs in line with their mandates, international partners, international and bilateral organizations such as the EU Delegation, Council of Europe, SIDA, SDC, World Bank and to a certain extent, the Global Compact, whose engagement is somewhere between this and the next category.

UN family

In order to map the specific engagement of UN agencies regarding the 17 SDGs, UN agencies were asked to list five key projects that were implemented, or are still being implemented, and which contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. Ten UN agencies with significant portfolios in advancing the SDGs in the country participated in the survey. The information received confirms the picture of all-encompassing engagement of UN agencies, covering all SDGs, and significant contribution to the implementation of Agenda 2030 (table 1). The summary of the key projects of each agency is presented in Annex 2.

⁴ http://sdg.indikator.rs/media/1546/progress-report-on-the-implementation-of-sustainable-development-goals-by-2030-in-the-republic-of-serbia_web.pdf

TABLE 1 | Contribution of UN agencies to the SDGs

	FAO	ILO	IOM	UNDP	UNFPA	UNHCR	UNICEF	UNOPS	UN Women	WHO
SDG 1										
SDG 2										
SDG 3										
SDG 4										
SDG 5										
SDG 6										
SDG 7										
SDG 8										
SDG 9										
SDG 10										
SDG 11										
SDG 12										
SDG 13										
SDG 14										
SDG 15										
SDG 16										
SDG 17										

Source: Multi-stakeholder mapping

Funding sources used for the implementation of actions focused on the SDGs include significant core funding, as well as external funding from the EU, GEF, United States, Swiss Development Cooperation, United Kingdom, Norway, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, World Bank, and Austrian Development Agency. Some agencies, like UNICEF, also rely on a large number

of private sector and individual donors, such as the LEGO Foundation, GlaxoSmithKline-GSK, VODA-VODA, and NOR-DEUS. Only a few projects are financed by the Government of Serbia.

In implementing projects contributing to the SDGs, UN agencies have developed diverse partnerships (table 2).

TABLE 2 | Map of partnerships and cooperation between UN agencies and other stakeholders in projects contributing to SDGs

	FAO	ILO	IOM	UNDP	UNFPA	UNHCR	UNICEF	UNOPS	UN Women	WHO
National government (ministries, bodies)										
National Assembly										
Local self-governments										
CSOs										
Academia and experts										
Development partners										
International financial institutions										
Business sector										
Media										

Source: Multi-stakeholder mapping

Governmental stakeholders

While most governmental stakeholders were found to either engage with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs only as a formality or only marginally, there are some governmental institutions that are strongly committed to the 2030 Agenda. These institutions provide a basis for important processes such as monitoring and informing policies.

One of these institutions is the **Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia** (SORS). The SORS has established a web-based platform for monitoring the implementation of the SDGs that tracks 83 out of the 244 indicators. In cooperation with GIZ, the SORS has prepared the first report on monitoring progress in the achievement of the SDGs. The SORS also contributed to the first VNR with a statistical annex showing progress according to the indicators for which data were available. SORS also participates in international processes that aim to improve the use of statistics for monitoring the SDGs.

The **Institute for Standardization of Serbia** (ISS) is instrumental to operationalizing the SDGs for local and national administrations, the business community, as well as for CSOs and organizations of all kinds. The standards published by ISS support the three pillars of sustainable development. For example, they promote economic sustainability by facilitating international trade, social sustainability by supporting sustainable business practices and gender responsive standards, and environmental sustainability by providing tools to measure and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption. With the support of UNECE and ISO, the ISS is further developing its engagement on sustainable development and has published a report in Serbian on the contribution of standards to sustainable development. In this report, ISO standards are classified by the SDGs, which provides ground to track the contribution to the achievement of each SDG.⁵

Development partners

The European Union is a key development partner, with the EU Accession being a top priority — and the de-facto development agenda — of the Republic of Serbia. The EU Delegation in Serbia implements the SDG contribution tracing system, which requires all interventions, contracts, and grants to be linked with respective SDGs, indicating how particular interventions contribute to the 2030 Agenda. The main counterpart of the EU Delegation is the Government of Serbia, and key coordination is organized through the Ministry of European Integration. Although the representatives of the EU Delegation interviewed for the purpose of this multi-stakeholder mapping indicated that the 2030

Agenda is broader than EU accession negotiation chapters, they emphasized that the two agendas overlap significantly, are compatible and that the engagement of the EU Delegation can be traced to all 17 SDGs. As will be elaborated on later, the 2030 Agenda is highly appreciated by EU Delegation representatives as a development framework, as is cooperation with the UN. Examples of good cooperation in certain areas were presented, including in the case of child protection and development, local development, and gender equality and empowerment of women, around which cooperation between the EU Delegation and UN agencies (such as UNOPS, UNICEF and UN Women) has significantly evolved during the last 4-5 years.

The Council of Europe Field Office's main aim is to facilitate, maintain and strengthen working relations between the Council of Europe and the national authorities, but also with local authorities, representatives of civil society and other stakeholders. They are a strategic partner to the EU and support the country to implement the necessary reforms for EU accession. A particular focus is placed on SDG 16 — rule of law and good governance. The support is implemented through thematic facility programmes. The horizontal facility includes three components: implementation of conventions (over 200), monitoring and identification of problems in specific areas, and identifying areas as particularly challenging. These areas are identified in partnership with the national authorities. Currently, different projects are implemented through the horizontal facility, focused on promoting independence and accountability of the judiciary (support to the high council of prosecutors, to constitutional and post-constitutional reforms), support to the media, combating human trafficking, education, etc. The horizontal facility is adjusted to the action plans for chapters 23 and 24 of the EU negotiation process. Project cycles last 3 years and this cycle will finish in 2022.

In addition, specific projects have been implemented in areas such as support to local self-governments for modernization of public administration and improved human resource management. Examples include the areas of prevention of money laundering and risk assessment of NGOs.

Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) is one of the most important bilateral donors in Serbia. The 2030 Agenda is mainstreamed in the Cooperation Strategy for Serbia, and important elements are multi-stakeholder dialogue and localization of the SDGs. One of the most significant SDG projects is implemented with GIZ — **SDGs for All**. It is part of a broader initiative: **Public finance reform Agenda 2030**. In addition to the platform of non-state actors mobilized in the increasing awareness and implementation of Agenda 2030, through partnership with the SMART collective, horizontal coordination with the business sector was initiated. At the same time, SDC provides support to the government in implementing the 2030 Agenda and in improving data

⁵ https://iss.rs/en/the-contribution-of-standards-to-the-un-sustainable-development-goals-sdgs_p947.html

for monitoring the SDGs. Their portfolio covers the majority of the SDGs (see table 3), with a strong focus on social inclusion, rule of law, decentralization, decent employment, energy efficiency, resilient cities, disaster risk reduction and migration.

The Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) is the third bilateral donor by size, when counting only development cooperation without loans and guarantees. Bilateral cooperation with Serbia is defined by the Strategy endorsed by the Government of Sweden. Since the strategy was endorsed prior to the adoption of Agenda 2030, there are no explicit objectives and indicators set regarding the SDGs. However, the SDGs were later integrated into operational plans, and SIDA has introduced a comprehensive system for tracing the contribution of their cooperation to the SDGs. A new strategy to be adopted next year will explicitly support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the SDGs.

World Bank (WB Group — IBRD, IFC) engagement in Serbia is guided by the 2019 Performance and Learning Review that reaffirmed the overarching goal of the Country Partnership Framework 2016-20 to support Serbia in creating a competitive and inclusive economy and, through this, to **promote integration into the European Union**⁶. Setting the EU integration agenda high in its strategic orientation for Serbia does not dismiss the importance of sustainable development and SDGs, as well as the World Bank Group's own twin goals to end poverty and build shared prosperity in a sustainable manner. It has been noted by interviewed WB representatives that each of the current WB Group's projects firmly contributes to achieving sustainable development targets. However, direct commitments related to the 2030 Agenda are nonexistent, as are systematic efforts of the WB Group in Serbia to track the contributions and report on the 2030 Agenda. The WB Group's broad portfolio covers almost all SDGs. Initiatives include providing support to the government in improving social protection systems (with recently developed social mapping supported by the WB), better targeting, and developing information systems in social protection. They supported the analyses of public spending in the areas of education, social protection, and health care. Some initiatives are specifically related to gender equality, in addition to mainstreaming gender into all actions, which is an obligatory requirement within the WB system. The bank supported the country's economic memorandum and initiatives directed towards improving employment and competitiveness and increasing the efficiency of the National Employment Service. An important part of the portfolio is in the area of climate change, natural resources and the economy. The WB is very active in partnering with

other stakeholders, including both governmental and development partners. In the area of environment, natural resources and the economy, cooperation with other development partners is well established. They organized an informal coordination group to exchange information on initiatives and prevent overlap of their engagements. Through this cooperation mechanism they closely cooperate with UNDP's climate change team and evaluate the contributions of UNDP in this area as particularly valuable.

In addition to the above development partners that were interviewed for the purpose of this mapping, other bilateral donors also provide significant support across different developmental areas, which contributes to the SDGs. **USAID's** support is focused on the rule of law (particularly by improving the independence, efficiency and professionalism of the Serbian judiciary), anti-corruption, and increased transparency of local self-governments. The support is also directed towards civil society, in order to contribute to the sustainability of CSOs, as well as to fostering a more enabling business environment.⁷ **Norwegian aid** supports Euro-Atlantic integration, as a key to democracy based on the rule of law and stability. The strategic focus is on closer regional cooperation, implementation of transitional justice and reconciliation, socio-economic development, including increased economic growth, competitiveness, capacities in the field of environment, climate change and energy, as well as increased social and economic inclusion of marginalized groups. One of the priorities is good governance — the rule of law strengthened through capacity-building of courts, a more democratic defence sector, and a strong and vibrant civil society.⁸ The **OSCE Mission to Serbia**⁹ has a broad portfolio that contributes to achievements in the areas of safety (arms control, border management, conflict prevention and resolution, cyber security), democratization, economic development, environmental protection, gender equality, good governance, migration, tolerance and non-discrimination and others. Significant contributions also come from **Japan's official Development Assistance, French Bilateral Assistance, Netherlands Development Cooperation, and Austrian Development Agency.**

⁶ The WB Group currently implements 14 projects in Serbia, with a value of US\$ 934 million (IBRD) and EUR 7,9 million (EU Trust Funds). More at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/serbia/overview#2>

⁷ USAID, <https://www.usaid.gov/serbia/our-work>

⁸ Royal Norwegian Embassy in Belgrade, <https://www.norway.no/en/serbia/norway-serbia/project-cooperation/priorities-and-channels-of-support/>

⁹ OSCE Mission to Serbia, <https://www.osce.org/mission-to-serbia>

Private sector

The engagement of the private sector in Agenda 2030 and their involvement in strategic partnerships with other stakeholders implementing initiatives towards SDG achievements was challenging to map. The involvement of the private sector in the SDGs is often part of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), which is still a relatively new component to businesses in Serbia (developed during the last decade) and was stimulated by the good examples of foreign companies which have well-developed CSR frameworks. International partners as well as a few national foundations and civil society networks (such as Trag, Divac foundation, SMART, etc.) have also contributed to the increased adoption of CSR in Serbia. The most systematic approach to the engagement of the business sector in the SDGs is found in the Global Compact. One of the relatively more committed stakeholders is the Chamber of Commerce of the Republic of Serbia. However, their level of engagement places them somewhere between being a committed stakeholder and an associated stakeholder.

The Global Compact local network in Serbia was established in 2007 and currently has 44 members — companies, civil society organizations, trade unions, and university institutions — that are committed to the implementation of ten universal principles in the areas of human rights, labour rights, environmental protection and anti-corruption action. When Agenda 2030 was endorsed, the Global Compact in Serbia was very active and enjoyed a strong partnership with the UNCT. This cooperation reduced in later years, but the intention is to strengthen it again. Cooperation with the Ministry without portfolio and IMWG was occasional, informal and not very substantial (mainly through participation in conferences). The efforts of the local network are strongly focused on promoting the work of their members in the areas of the SDGs. The SDG working group meets monthly and exchanges good practices regarding the contribution to specific SDGs. This year, the focus was on the COVID-19 pandemic, the health care system and support to the vulnerable. The local network participates in the global program 'SDG Ambition', designed exclusively for the business sector, and invests efforts to globally present good practices and achievements in Serbia.

The Chamber of Commerce of Serbia shows significant commitment to the 2030 Agenda, not only through participation in the Global Compact but also through individual initiatives that are clearly designed to provide strategic contribution to certain SDG areas. In December 2020, the Chamber of Commerce signed the Memorandum of Cooperation with UNDP on joint participation in a project focused on environmental protection, innovation, support to companies to transform their businesses from linear to

circular and low carbon business models.¹⁰ The Chamber of Commerce also hosts the Centre for the Circular Economy, and further engagement between the Centre and the UNCT will be important to promoting the achievement of the SDGs, by minimizing waste generation, maintaining the value of products and resources for as long as possible, and closing technical and biological loops.

The final evaluation of the UN DPF 2016-2020 emphasized that UN partnerships with the private sector should be significantly improved. The evaluation found that there is currently no strategic approach or systematic cooperation with the private sector. Evidence indicates declining engagement with the corporate sector on sustainable development issues. Individual initiatives, on the other hand, show the large potential of this cooperation when it is properly developed, especially around innovative initiatives.

2.3 Associated or occasionally engaged stakeholders

Civil Society Organizations

There are many important CSOs that, through individual work or through CSO networks or platforms, contribute in some way to the 2030 Agenda. However, the mapping exercise could not extensively interview CSOs due to the complex landscape, which includes almost a thousand registered foundations and charities and tens of thousands of associations of citizens (more than 34,000 are registered in the Business Registers Agency).¹¹ These promote human rights and minority rights, democratic values, European integration, sustainable development, improvement of social and health protection, gender equality, culture and public information, the popularization of science, education, arts and sports, the improvement of the position of persons with disabilities, and environmental protection. They contribute to the improvement of the position of various social groups, such as children, youth, women, the older population, people under risk of poverty and exclusion, national minorities, persons with disabilities, migrants, LGBTI and other groups at risk of being excluded from developmental processes or from the benefits resulting from development.

However, there are no systematic insights into the contribution of CSOs to the 2030 Agenda. In the majority of cases, organizations do not trace their contributions to the 2030 Agenda, nor to the EU accession agenda. Keeping in mind

¹⁰ Chamber of Commerce of Serbia, <https://pks.rs/vesti/saradnja-pks-i-undp-u-oblasti-cirkularne-ekonomije-3574>

¹¹ In December 2020, there were over 34000 registered civil society organizations of different kinds in Serbia — agency for Business Records, <https://www.apr.gov.rs/registers.1608.html>

that they are supported mainly by international organizations and bilateral donors (such as those presented above), it can be assumed that their contribution is significant. The lack of a systematic SDG tracking system for CSOs, however, is partly responsible for the somewhat inconsistent findings on the role of CSOs. While their presence in key national processes was not identified, many stakeholders still have a perception of CSOs contributing highly to the 2030 Agenda.

Since it was not possible to offer systematic mapping of all these organizations, the mapping exercise focused on key platforms and CSO networks that are clustered around some of the key sustainable development aspects/issues.

The National Covenant for EU is a civil society platform that gathers around 750 member organizations and represents the interests of citizens of Serbia in all stages of EU accession. This is a Federation of associations of citizens and was established with the aim to promote dialogue on EU accession between representatives of public administration, political parties, NGOs, experts, the private sector, trade unions and professional associations. The Covenant monitors, analyses, and evaluates progress in EU accession and advocates for improvements. It demonstrates to citizens the benefits and costs of EU membership. The National Covenant is not strategically committed to Agenda 2030, as its strategic approach is fully centred on the EU accession process.¹² However, some of the members of the National Covenant are also the organizations leading the CSOs' platform for Agenda 2030 ('SDGs for All'), and the Covenant is indirectly involved in the activities focused on the Agenda and occasionally participates in Agenda 2030 events.¹³ The potential of the Covenant to contribute to stronger links between Agenda 2030 and the EU accession Agenda are underused and should be considered as having great potential in the processes of achieving better complementarity and synergy between the two policy reform frameworks.

The Women's Platform for Development of Serbia is the broadest feminist and women's platform, gathering many women's and feminist organizations as well as individual experts around strategic issues of gender equitable sustainable development. In November 2020, with the support of UN Women, the EU Delegation, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Norway and the UK, the Platform held a conference on the 20th anniversary that defined new development priorities for Serbia. Under the title 'Feminism. Rebellion. Change', the Conference provided conclusions and recommendations for development actions in the area of legal foundations for gender equality, green economy and responsible development, social welfare and security and creativity.¹⁴ This is

one of the most comprehensive civil society contributions to sustainable development, but the continuity of activity is weak and strongly depends on the support of international partners.

Business sector

The Serbian Association of Employers has implemented numerous initiatives that contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. Many efforts are directed towards the decent employment agenda and the protection of labour rights of employees. The Association provides support to employers in understanding labour regulations in order to provide high protection of labour rights. It implements a project on promoting participation of employees in company management, which aims to promote decent employment of young people (supported by the Kingdom of Denmark), provides support to employers in employment of persons with disabilities (with support from the ILO), and it promotes work-life balance and elimination of gender stereotypes.¹⁵ However, their contribution is indirect and relates to individual initiatives, so they classify as an associated stakeholder in the 2030 Agenda stakeholders' landscape.

The Association of Business Women in Serbia is similar to the previous association in that it is one of the key stakeholders that fosters business engagement in the social agenda and contributes to women's economic empowerment, through diverse initiatives. Two initiatives include providing support to vulnerable groups of women to reintegrate into the labour market in the context of COVID-19's adverse impacts and strengthening the capacities of women entrepreneurs in digitalizing their businesses. The Association is particularly important in supporting women's economic empowerment in local communities and regions that face developmental challenges, but also bearing potential for locally specific businesses. Although their contributions are significant, their engagement is often indirect and infrequent.¹⁶

Academia and expert community

The mapping exercise did not reveal any systematic engagement from the university and academic community to the SDGs. However, contributions of individual experts, many coming from academia, are significant as indicated by desk review and interviews with key stakeholders. However, they are usually associated partners to initiatives undertaken by other stakeholders, including government, international partners or CSOs.

¹² National Covenant for EU, <https://www.eukonvent.org/o-nama>

¹³ <https://twitter.com/nkeusrbija/status/1235252060129562624>

¹⁴ [https://www.koalicija27.org/en/about-coalition-27/New Economy](https://www.koalicija27.org/en/about-coalition-27/New%20Economy), <https://novaekonomija.rs/vesti-iz-zemlje/%C5%BEenska-platforma-za-razvoj-srbije-obele%C5%BEava-20-godina-rada>

¹⁵ <https://www.poslodavci.rs/category/projekti/>

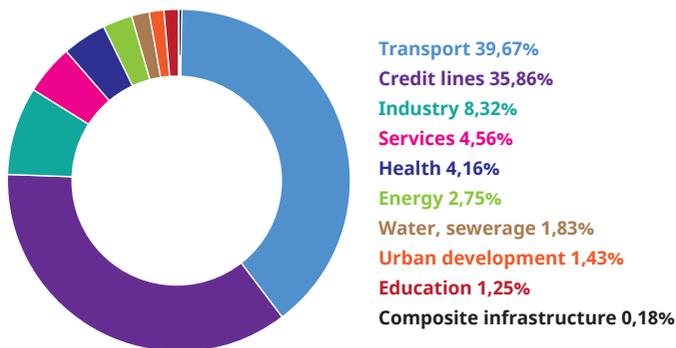
¹⁶ <http://poslovnenezene.org.rs/category/aktuelni-projekti>

There is no systematic engagement of universities in the 2030 Agenda 2030, according to mapping evidence, so this stakeholder is positioned somewhere between this and the next category.

International financial institutions

European Investment Bank (EIB) is the long-term lending institution of the European Union, owned by its Member States, and aims to support the Candidate and Potential Candidate Countries of the Western Balkan region in their journey towards *European Union membership*. In Serbia, within their regular mandate, EIB traces the contribution of its investments to specific SDGs (SDGs tracker). In late 2020, EIB started developing a new mapping methodology for measuring and reporting on its SDG contributions. This should enable EIB to provide a comprehensive account of its contribution to each of the SDGs, both in financial terms and in terms of physical project outputs and outcomes, and should also enable them to take into account a range of interactions and interlinkages amongst the SDGs. EIB has a diverse investment portfolio in Serbia, with major investments in transport, credit lines, and industry, and on a smaller scale in service, health, energy, water, sewerage, urban development and education.

FIGURE 2 | Total EIB financing in Serbia by sector



Source: EIB¹⁷

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) has three priorities in Serbia defined in the Strategy for the period 2018-2023: (i) to foster competitiveness and governance by enhancing private companies' capacity and reforming selected SOEs and public utilities; (ii) to enhance integration by improving the transport network, supporting regional economic connectivity reform, and advancing energy interconnectivity; (iii) to support the green economy by fostering energy efficiency, enhancing renewable energy

and promoting sustainable practices.¹⁸ The current EBRD strategy for Serbia does not include the SDGs, nor are the interventions tracked/reported under the specific goals of the 2030 Agenda. Instead, the EBRD approach to sustainability includes several principles while implementing the priorities of strategic orientation. These are: (i) incorporating environmental and social requirements into the appraisal and implementation of all Bank-funded projects based on EU standards; (ii) providing finance and technical assistance specifically aimed at promoting environmental and social benefits; (iii) promoting social inclusion and access to municipal services such as water and public transport.

KfW Development Bank supports Serbia in achieving the goals agreed with the EU in the energy, water supply and sanitation, waste and environmental sectors. KfW also promotes sustainable economic development by providing credit lines for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and municipalities.¹⁹ In 2019, the KfW introduced the Sustainability mission statement followed by the standardized mapping method for the 2030 Agenda. This made KfW a pioneer among the development banks in terms of tracing their contribution to sustainable development and enabled transparency on sustainable financing. The system includes 1,500 indicators for assigning KfW investments to SDGs on an annual basis. The KfW largely updates its annual SDG mapping automatically on the basis of the new commitments made the previous financial year. The assignment of the individual commitments in 2019 to the SDGs shows the following priority areas of financing globally: SDG 11 — Sustainable Cities and Communities, SDG 13 — Climate Action, SDG 8 — Decent Work and Economic Growth, and SDG 7 — Affordable and Clean Energy.²⁰ The shortcoming of the KfW mapping method for Agenda 2030 is that country disaggregation of investments is not available, which would improve country-specific data and influence development policies.

Regional stakeholders and initiatives

The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) is an important framework for regional cooperation in South East Europe. Within the framework of the general political guidelines set by the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP), the RCC works to develop and maintain a political climate of dialogue, reconciliation, tolerance and openness towards cooperation. The RCC's work is mainly focused on regional mobility, connectivity through the Digital Integration Agenda, the environment and sustainable development, competitiveness and governance, rule of law and

¹⁷ EIB, <https://www.eib.org/en/projects/regions/enlargement/the-western-balkans/serbia/index.htm>

¹⁸ EBRD, <https://www.ebrd.com/serbia.html>

¹⁹ KfW Development Bank, <https://www.kfw-entwicklungsbank.de/International-financing/KfW-Development-Bank/Local-presence/Europe/Serbia/>

²⁰ <https://www.kfw.de/nachhaltigkeit/KfW-Group/Sustainability/Strategie-Management/KfW-und-SDG/>

security cooperation.²¹ The RCC Strategy and Work Programme for the period 2020-2022 stems from the SEE 2020 Strategy, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG) and the European Union strategic goals “Towards a sustainable Union by 2030”. While all strategic areas of RCC interventions contribute to certain SDGs, the most coherence is seen under environmental protection, which resulted in the development of the Green Agenda for Western Balkans. This endeavours to incorporate the SDGs into WB policies together with the 2030 energy and climate policy targets.

Fostering the transition to modern energy markets, clean energy and energy efficiency — the key tenets of SDG 7 — are the main objectives of the Energy Community, which is an international organization that brings together the European Union and its neighbours to create an integrated pan-European energy market. The organization was founded by the Treaty establishing the Energy Community signed in October 2005. The key objective of the Energy Community is to extend the EU internal energy market rules and principles to countries in South East Europe. The governments of the Parties are represented in the Energy Community Treaty through the Ministerial Council. The Mission of the Energy Community Treaty is to establish a stable regulatory and market framework capable of attracting investment in power generation and networks, to create an integrated energy market, enhance security of supply, improve the environmental situation and develop competition at the regional level.²²

2.4 Engagement as a formality or marginal engagement

Government of Serbia

After the endorsement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015, the Republic of Serbia established a key national mechanism for the implementation of the Agenda — the **Inter-Ministerial Working Group for the Implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (IMWG)**. The IMGW was composed of high-ranking representatives of 27 line ministries and other institutions, chaired by the Minister in charge of Demography and Population Policy. The tasks of the Inter-Ministerial Working Group included the coordination of activities of all relevant ministries in connection with the 2030 Agenda; monitoring its implementation; proposing adoption of the National Sustainable Development Strategy with the financial plan to integrate individual strategies and harmonize efforts to achieve the SDGs; proposing statisti-

cal monitoring of goals; proposing interim implementation reports; and continuously informing the UN representative in Serbia and the UN system.

After the elections in June 2020, the former Minister in charge of Demography and Population Policy was appointed as Special Advisor to the Prime Minister on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, while to date of the report finalization, the IMWG has not been re-established.²³ The process of planning future engagement was not defined, but according to the interview with the Prime Minister’s Special Advisor, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the priorities should be carefully reconsidered, placing particular emphasis on the Leave No One Behind principle.

The Ministry of European Integration has an important role as the ministry responsible for planning and coordinating the process of EU integration and international development cooperation. According to the interview with the MEI representative, SDGs are highly prioritized together with the EU accession agenda. During the drafting of the new *National Priorities for International Assistance (NAD)*, each indicator that was defined in NAD had to be linked with a respective SDG. The NAD was developed by taking into account both the EU accession agenda and the UN partnership framework. The MEI will be the data source for some of these indicators, particularly those related to international development assistance. There is a person in the Ministry responsible for coordinating cooperation with the UNCT.

Line ministries contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through legal reforms, policies, programmes and projects specifically focused on certain SDGs, in line with their mandates, but this is mostly implicit, lacking explicit links with the 2030 Agenda. They also contribute through participation in the IMWG on SDGs.

However, several indicators suggest that the government’s engagement with the 2030 Agenda is only a formality. These include low activity of the main mechanism (IMWG); absence of nationalization of the Agenda and of nationally specific targets that would define priorities and build stronger commitment; lack of an overarching national development strategy; occasional initiatives that are more related to official obligations (such as the VNR); lack of continuous participatory processes and sustainable broadly diversified partnerships; and slow ‘reconfiguration’ of national mechanisms and processes after the elections in June 2020 and the establishment of a new government.

²¹ RCC, <https://www.rcc.int/pubs/98/annual-report-of-the-secretary-general-of-the-regional-cooperation-council-2019-2020>
²² <https://www.energy-community.org/aboutus/whoweare.html>

²³ The concrete steps in re-establishing the IMWG have not been undertaken in 2020; future functioning and engagement of this group were not defined at the time of report completion.

National Assembly

The SDG Focus Group of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia is a body within the legislative branch of the government at the national level, established in 2016 with the aim to develop oversight mechanisms for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The members of the Focus Group are two vice presidents of the National Assembly and 13 members from different committees. There are two main lines of action of the Focus Group: raising awareness on SDGs and outreach to local self-governments. One of the ambitions of the Focus Group is to ensure that the Investment plan of the Republic of Serbia until 2025 clearly links investments with respective SDGs, which so far has not been done.

Local self-governments

Local self-governments should play an important role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the association of local self-governments, the **Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM)**, is the main stakeholder that coordinates the 'localization' of the SDGs. The SCTM implements initiatives focused on support to local self-governments to develop new local development plans that will be aligned with the Law on system planning and will include the SDGs. SCTM provided significant contributions to the first VNR, reporting on the achievement of the SDGs from the perspective of local self-governments. Another important stakeholder that is very specific due to its mixed membership — comprised of local self-governments, civil society organizations, the private sector and academia — is the **National Alliance for Local Economic Development (NALED)**. The main focus of NALED engagement is the improvement of the business environment through regulatory reform and, more broadly, economic development.²⁴

However, there are no indications of dynamic processes related to the localization of SDGs. The evidence gathered through mapping indicates that different initiatives exist, coming mainly from international partners through projects focused on local development (with strong contribution from UN agencies), but with no signs of central government supporting systematic localization, as confirmed during the interview with representatives of the governmental mechanisms. The self-governments are only marginally engaged with the 2030 Agenda processes, and local development is in most cases not significantly related to Agenda 2030.

Media

In November 2020 there were over 2,500 registered media in the Agency for Business Records. Daily, weekly or periodical newspapers account for 37.4% of the total media, followed by internet portals (33.3%), radio stations (13.3%), and TV outlets (9.7%).²⁵ Media are also diverse in terms of their editorial policies and the general impression of all interviewed stakeholders is that awareness on SDGs among journalists and editors — and the importance given to the SDGs in media — is very low. This statement is supported by the fact that the frequency of terms *sustainable development/SDGs/Agenda 2030* in all online and printed media in the country is only mentioned up to 100 times per month on average, compared to EU accession/EU integration which is mentioned on average 400 times per month, including up to 80 articles per month entirely dedicated to the EU accession agenda. However, there are some initiatives that significantly contribute to the achievement of particular SDGs. One example is the network of journalists '*Journalists against violence*', who promote ethical reporting on violence against women and therefore contribute to SDG 5. With support of the UNCT, UNICEF, UN Women, UNFPA and UNDP, they produced *Guidelines for media reporting on violence against women*, with the aim to improve reporting on VAW and gender equality in media.²⁶

2.5 Coverage of SDGs by interviewed stakeholders and mapping the gaps

As presented in the methodology section, a total of 33 key stakeholders were interviewed for the purpose of mapping. Table 3 represents the coverage of the SDGs by the interviewed stakeholders and confirms their comprehensive engagement. Mapping included key stakeholders engaged in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Some stakeholders — such as the Government of Serbia, the EU Delegation, and the UNCT — by their mandates and roles are engaged in actions that contribute to all SDGs. This was also the case among civil society organizations gathered around the platform *SDGs for All*. GIZ, SDC, SIDA, and the World Bank have very diversified portfolios contributing to the majority of the SDGs, while the EIB has a slightly less diversified portfolio, and the Council of Europe is clearly focused on certain key areas, mainly education, gender equality, environment and the rule of law.

²⁵ Agency for Business Records, <https://www.apr.gov.rs/home.1435.html>

²⁶ <https://www.rs.undp.org/content/serbia/en/home/library/smernice-za-medijsko-izvetavanje-o-nasilju-prema-enama.html>

²⁴ <https://naled.rs/misija-i-ciljevi>

TABLE 3 | SDG portfolio of key stakeholders

	GoS	EU Delegation	UNCT	Council of Europe	Global Compact	SDC	GIZ	SIDA	World Bank	EIB	CSO platform
SDG 1											
SDG 2											
SDG 3											
SDG 4											
SDG 5											
SDG 6											
SDG 7											
SDG 8											
SDG 9											
SDG 10											
SDG 11											
SDG 12											
SDG 13											
SDG 14											
SDG 15											
SDG 16											
SDG 17											

Source: Multi-stakeholder mapping

There are stakeholders that undoubtedly contribute to the 2030 Agenda but are not necessarily aware of their contribution or do not use the 2030 Agenda to design or frame their actions and achievements. This is a large group and it includes a big part of civil society and numerous private companies with corporate social responsibility. Bringing these stakeholders into policy processes, increasing their awareness on the 2030 Agenda, and encouraging them to use it to frame their actions could significantly accelerate the achievement of the SDGs.

Desk review for the purpose of mapping found many active umbrella organizations and networks that have significantly contributed to specific SDGs, but without any strategic or even ad hoc framing of their work in line with the 2030 Agenda. Below are some examples, but this is not an exhaustive list.

OPENS is the Federation of youth associations established in 2016 around concrete initiatives to support the candidacy of the city of Novi Sad for Youth Capital 2018. Since then, they have extended their mission to support active participation of young people through various mechanisms, programmes, advocacy, and creative workshops.²⁷ Another umbrella youth organization is the **National Youth Council of Serbia (KOMs)**, which is a federation of 109 associations of young people in Serbia. This is mainly an advocacy platform for the improvement of the position of young people. It acts as a bridging organization between youth associations and decision makers.

NOOIS is an umbrella organization of persons with disabilities established in 2007. The organization represents around 870,000 persons with disabilities in Serbia and is clustered around different types of disabilities. It also gathers cross-disability organizations, such as legal counselling organizations, or interest organizations with persons with different types of disability. Its mission is the full inclusion of persons with disabilities into society, respect of human rights of persons with disabilities and non-discrimination based on disability, partnership with the state in developing a legal framework and implementation of laws that enable the exercise of human rights and social inclusion of persons with disabilities.²⁸ The NOOIS is a member of the European Disability Forum and Disability People International.

Coalition 27 was established by environmental civil society organizations in 2014 with the aim of monitoring and contributing to the process of harmonization and implementation of the policies and regulations of the Republic of Serbia with the EU acquis in the field of environment and climate change (chapter 27 in the EU accession negotiations). Coalition 27 advocates for public participation in EU negotiations and proposes solutions that will contribute to the protection and improvement of the environment and the quality of life of citizens. Coalition 27 publishes an annual shadow report with an overview of the achievements of Serbia in the areas covered by chapter 27.²⁹

These organizations and networks, as well as many others, should be brought into the scene of stakeholders implementing Agenda 2030, but for this to be achieved, more effective coordination of stakeholders at the national level is required.

2.6 Perceived contribution of stakeholders to Agenda 2030

Stakeholders' self-assessment and assessment of the engagement of other stakeholders

During the mapping exercise, interviewed stakeholders were asked to evaluate the contribution of other stakeholders to the implementation of Agenda 2030.³⁰ According to the mean values of marks presented in the following figure, civil society actors were evaluated as contributing the most to Agenda 2030 implementation. They were followed by development partners, and then academia and the expert community. The National government was evaluated higher than the business sector, local self-governments and the National Assembly, while media had the lowest average mark.

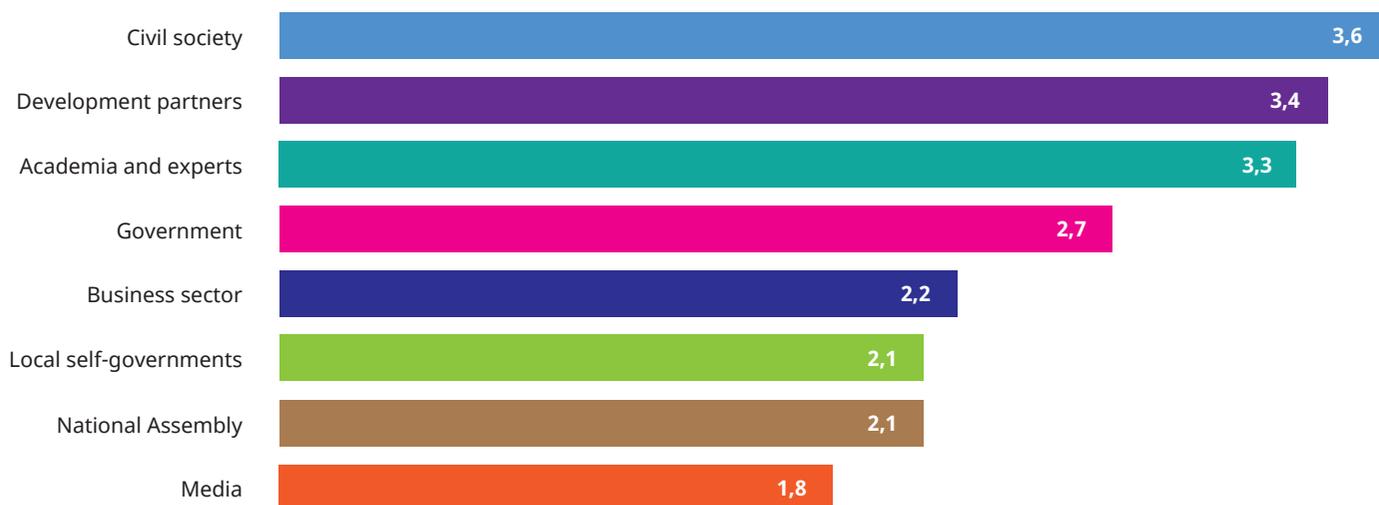
²⁹ Coalition 27, <https://www.koalicija27.org/en/home/>

³⁰ This was done using method of evaluating reputational indicators. The respondents were asked to assess on the scale 0-5 how much specific stakeholder or group of stakeholders contributes to the implementation of Agenda 2030 and achievement of SDGs. The evaluation was subjective and based on the perspective of stakeholder who did the evaluation, and therefore, partly biased as stakeholders had limited information on performance of other stakeholders. But bias depended also on the visibility of the work of each evaluated stakeholder, so less visibility and not necessarily lower commitment and work was also linked to the lower marks. The interviewed stakeholders had the opportunity to evaluate also their own work, which enabled them to place themselves in the broader landscape of stakeholders and assess their own commitment.

²⁷ OPENS, <https://opens2019.rs/>

²⁸ NOOIS, <https://www.noois.rs/nacionalna-organizacija-osoba-sa-invaliditetom-srbije>

FIGURE 3 | Evaluation of stakeholder’s contribution to Agenda 2030 implementation, mean values (1-only formal contribution, 5-substantive contribution)



Source: Multi-stakeholder mapping

The expectation from all stakeholders was that the Government should take a much more decisive role in the implementation of Agenda 2030, but these expectations were not met for most interviewed stakeholders. The work of the National Assembly regarding the SDGs is almost invisible to all stakeholders. Only a few that cooperated with the Focus Group on SDGs were aware of any activity of the National Assembly in this area. Local self-governments are not recognized as a contributing stakeholder and all interviewees agree that they should have a much more proactive role in planning and implementing sustainable development policies in line with the 2030 Agenda.

The commitment of civil society and development partners is on average positively evaluated. Interviewees noted that there are big differences within CSOs, and it is therefore challenging to evaluate them as one group. While commenting on the evaluation of academia and the expert community, interviewees noted the differences between these two groups. While the expert community may also include academia, it is more oriented towards policy work and their contribution is evaluated as significant. At the same time, academia as an institution is perceived as a stakeholder that is not very open for partnership and often remains closed in their own circles, where links with Agenda 2030 are not so prominent or explicit.

Regarding the business sector, interestingly, higher marks are assigned by those who cooperate more with these companies. The relatively low average mark could suggest that the work of the business sector dedicated to achieving the SDGs is not very visible to other stakeholders. All stakehold-

ers agreed that increasing the involvement of the business sector is an area of opportunity.

Finally, media were evaluated the lowest by all stakeholders, with remarks that there are exceptional initiatives or examples, but the overall media sector is not at all adequately involved in the reporting or promotion of Agenda 2030.

2.7 The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on stakeholders’ engagement in SDGs

Generally, the pandemic is expected to have reduced the efforts invested by diverse stakeholders to the achievement of the SDGs. This is due to the adverse consequences for the economy and consequently the socio-economic well-being of diverse social groups, particularly those that are marginalized. COVID-19 had a significant impact on stakeholders’ engagement in the SDGs, but not all impact was negative. In some cases, it instigated stronger prioritization and focus on immediate assistance to the COVID-19 response and recovery. Some of the informants said they shifted their focus of intervention towards more priority issues due to the pandemic. For example, WHO activities were completely repurposed to support Serbia to adequately respond to the pandemic, and this focus is only on the health emergency with reduced capacity when it comes to other health issues. ILO has shifted its focus onto job retention and employment issues, while capacities for training and validation workshops related to attainment of international labour standards

were hindered. Resources, human and financial, were re-distributed to respond to the pandemic. To ensure that no one is left behind and to secure inclusion of gender equality and human rights principles in the response, some agencies, such as UN Women, have shifted part of their project towards humanitarian aid. COVID-19 brought more attention to mental health, health in general, older persons, and mobility. As UNFPA works in the area of health and social protection (and is focused on women, youth, older people, persons with disabilities, vulnerable groups, etc.), COVID-19 forced UNFPA to intensify their efforts and to re-programme resources to mitigate the huge negative effect that the pandemic has had on people, availability of services, mental health, gender aspects, and on SDGs more generally.

The COVID-19 pandemic slowed down the activities of most of the stakeholders that contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. Some activities were postponed, some transferred to remote forms using digital technologies and some funds were redirected towards humanitarian aid to populations under higher health risks or risks of poverty. The pandemic caused mobility restrictions and significantly impacted international migration, contributing to heightened vulnerabilities of migrants and called for innovative and digital tools and approaches. The pandemic revealed gaps in outreach to vulnerable populations (for example, Roma and persons with mental disabilities), who were excluded from the different forms of support provided to address the consequences of COVID-19. These and other consequences of the pandemic posed new challenges in the achievement of the SDGs and in some cases instigated pushback to the already achieved results, as reported by stakeholders.

Serbia UNCT produced a comprehensive COVID-19 Socio-Economic Impact Assessment,³¹ and Response Plan³². These documents informed future interventions addressing the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, provide guidance for recovery, and contribute to developmental processes in the post-COVID period. The pandemic opened an opportunity to initiate national prioritization of the SDGs, which is currently lacking.

In some cases, the pandemic enhanced partnerships between UN agencies and the Government of Serbia. As reported by several resident UN agencies, since the COVID-19 crisis, they have experienced an increase of requests from the Government for support and overall engagement. However, these partnerships have shifted largely towards crises adaptive solutions, which does not always contribute to the achievement of the SDGs, as it is a more emergency reaction of the humanitarian kind. Yet, as reported by some agencies, this enabled innovative solutions in response to the crisis.

³¹ https://serbia.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/seia_report%20%281%29.pdf

³² https://www.rs.undp.org/content/serbia/en/home/library/crisis_prevention_and_recovery/covid-19-socio-economic-response-plan.html

3. STAKEHOLDERS' PARTICIPATION IN VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW (VNR)

Preparation of the first **Voluntary National Review**³³ on the achievement of the SDGs (presented to the High Political Forum in 2019) was an opportunity to generate broad discussion on SDG priorities and achievements among various stakeholders and to review the existing coordination mechanisms and improve them for future implementation processes. Therefore, the mapping explored the engagement of key stakeholders in the VNR process, their positive experiences, perception of shortfalls, as well as their willingness to participate in future VNR processes and the resources they are able to contribute to this process.

The preparation of the VNR was coordinated by the Ministry without portfolio team, conducted by a consulting agency, led by the advisor of the Minister of European Integration, and supported by GIZ and SDC. This mapping of the stakeholders that participated in the VNR relied on information presented in the methodological chapter of the VNR and on information obtained from the stakeholders participating in the mapping exercise.³⁴

In addition to the governmental bodies, the report notes the contribution of independent oversight bodies (Ombudsman and the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality), National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia and the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (through organized public hearing), the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (who reported on the local level situation in regard to SDGs), and UNICEF (contribution based on consultations with young people).

The participation of civil society organizations is not clearly outlined in the VNR. It is only mentioned that 'a public call for the contribution of civil society was limited only to a number of organizations, associations and networks of CSOs' but it is not possible to understand the scale of participation of civil society, nor is it possible to know which concrete organizations had the opportunity to provide inputs.

Business sector organizations were invited to complete the questionnaire in the form of a self-assessment and it is reported that only the Serbian Chamber of Commerce, the Serbian Development Agency and 'certain members' of the UN Global Compact in Serbia responded to the survey.³⁵ As confirmed by the Global Compact during the mapping, they participated and made a lot of effort to collect data from their members as they appreciated the importance of the first VNR. However, they were not satisfied with the process as is noted under the section on the shortfalls of the VNR process.

The participation of the UNCT was also noted in the report. As reported by UN agencies during interviews, UNICEF provided contributions on youth; UNFPA provided data from facilitated consultations with beneficiary groups, took part in the editing of the final document and supported the travel of the Government to the HLPF in New York; UNDP provided capacity support to the IMWG for coordinating government departments and provided a large number of inputs to the consultants preparing the VNR; WHO provided technical and expert support through the Ministry of Health to SDG 3; UNHCR contributed jointly with the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration by ensuring that asylum-seekers, refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and stateless persons feature as a cross-cutting issue throughout the VNR; and FAO participated through consultative meetings.

Other stakeholders included in the mapping were not invited to participate in the process.

Stakeholders (mainly UN agencies and Global Compact) indicated some positive experiences from the VNR drafting process, such as the opportunity to discuss with national partners topics that are important for achieving the SDGs and to discuss the potential support they need in implementing activities that lead to achieving these goals. The combination of data sources used for monitoring progress, for example national statistics, UNICEF's U-Reports with youth and direct consultations with target groups (children and youth), were positively valued as they provided a very clear and precise picture on sustainable development. Global Compact indi-

³³ <https://serbia.un.org/en/13991-voluntary-national-review-republic-serbia-implementation-2030-agenda-sustainable-development>

³⁴ It appeared that only the consulting agency who produced the report has the full picture, but they were not available for the mapping process.

³⁵ Government of Serbia, VNR, pp. 15-17.

cated that through the VNR process they identified vast resources of the member companies in terms of diverse data on the contribution of the private sector to the SDGs.

However, stakeholders indicated several shortfalls of the VNR process:

- **Lack of genuine interest from the government.** The process was more formal and used mainly to show that Serbia fulfilled an obligation without substantial interest in the process.
- **Lack of participation.** The report was firstly drafted by a consultancy firm and inputs from participatory processes were only later incorporated into the report.
- **Lack of systematic, coordinated and timely approach.** Some stakeholders had high expectations of the VNR process, but they were disappointed as the process was 'informal, messy, without clear guidance'. It was not clear who was leading and coordinating the process.
- **The VNR content was not satisfactory.** Stakeholders shared dissatisfaction with the content of the VNR. Because different SDG areas were not presented in a balanced way, there was a lack of focus, an evidence-based approach was missing, and the VNR did not show the situation in Serbia in a realistic way (some stakeholders said the report presented a 'pink picture'). Both the Government (who endorsed the report) and the development partner community were responsible for this, as they are often ready to accept and support a vision of Serbia as a big achiever of the SDGs, when in reality the situation is different.

According to the Advisor of the Prime Minister for Agenda 2030 the intention is to present the next VNR at the HLPF in 2022, and her desire is for it to be presented by the Serbian Prime Minister. The focus should be on the regional and local level, with participation of CSOs and the private sector and with a solid statistical annex. It is also hoped that the work of several agencies around strengthening budget and policy systems along the SDG indicators will lead to improved availability, quality and relevance of data.

All interviewed stakeholders expressed strong willingness to participate in the preparation of the next VNR. They indicated what could be the value added by their participation, and that includes expertise, data and information related to the SDGs in the areas of their mandates/responsibilities.

'There is process and there is substance. The VNR should be more inclusive, more coordinated. In terms of substance, it needs to have a more evidence-based approach. Identifying priorities. Showing some leadership on the topic. The next report would need better work. The consultative process should be more thorough. It needs critical perspective... The document should be produced by the government but in consultations with other stakeholders. The document was produced by experts, it didn't voice out the government.'

Stakeholder from community of development partners



4. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA

4.1 Challenges and Bottlenecks

Stakeholders identified diverse bottlenecks and factors inhibiting effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Formal, too generic and not operationalized links between EU accession and the 2030 Agenda. Various stakeholders indicated that lower effectiveness of the implementation of Agenda 2030 comes from — to a large extent — the lack of substantive and operational linkages between the EU accession process and Agenda 2030. While EU accession is highly operationalized around negotiation chapters and requirements related to the alignment of national policies and legislation with the EU *acquis*, Agenda 2030 remains too generic and broad, and consequently still very abstract for many stakeholders and citizens. In some cases, local stakeholders even see the two agendas as competing, which is a consequence of a lack of awareness.

Lack of nationally specific priorities and quantitative targets. The decision to treat all 17 SDGs equally, according to many stakeholders, undermined the effectiveness of the implementation. Identifying national priorities would better streamline the funds, means, human and other resources and would enable higher effectiveness in fewer areas. These areas could be accelerators, triggering faster changes in other areas as well. Non-state actors gathered around the platform *SDGs for All* conducted consultations on national SDG priorities. As a result of this consultation, a proposal of national SDG priorities was published and used for advocacy.³⁶

Lack of an integrated development strategy that would be aligned with the SDGs. Despite the Law on System Planning, which stipulates endorsement of one overarching Development Strategy, such a strategy has not yet been drafted. That strategy offers the opportunity to operationalize development priorities in line with the SDGs. However, the Government of Serbia has continuously emphasized

that the EU accession agenda is their de-facto development agenda and there is no indication that the Government intends to frame its country development agenda in terms of the SDGs. This indicates a strong need to promote the 2030 Agenda through closer links with the EU accession agenda. In addition, some informants found that a policy prioritization process was not set adequately. The endorsement of the Investment plan prior to the Development plan undermined the potential of development policies to be more systematically and effectively linked to the SDGs.

Insufficient institutionalization of Agenda 2030 and lack of political will to more effectively implement it. The implementation is not institutionalized, and it is not clearly set as an obligation in the regular work of civil servants working in different policy areas. There was a lack of cooperation between the MEI (responsible for the EU accession process and related programming) and the Minister without portfolio who was responsible for the implementation of Agenda 2030. Some informants expressed the opinion that if both agendas would be under the responsibility of the MEI, then this could possibly contribute to a more consistent and operational linkage between the two frameworks (EU and SDGs). Additionally, informants pointed to the lack of coordination between other line ministries, lack of initiatives among civil servants, and initiatives driven only from the top by key political actors. Frequent changes of staff at the decision making and technical level also caused delays in implementation. Some informants shared the impression of fragmentation with some institutions taking care of small segments of the 2030 Agenda, with no holistic picture, clear responsibility, or accountability. Opportunities are missed because of this.

Lack of political commitment. Some informants stated that while it is very important to have a participatory process that engages diverse stakeholders in the implementation, the responsibility for the implementation rests with the state. The state has signed the 2030 Agenda and has taken the obligation to implement it, and without full commitment of the state all other actors cannot make significant progress.

³⁶ Serbia 2030: development priorities. Report of non-state sector, 2020, https://sdgs4all.rs/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/SDG_Priority-Report_MASTER.pdf

Insufficiently effective programming coordination mechanisms. Development partners participating in sector working groups assess this mechanism of programming coordination as insufficiently effective. These groups meet only a few (usually two) times per year and they are not very functional, as indicated by informants. Some informants noted the lack of a high-level donor group, which could agree at the strategic level how the implementation of the 2030 Agenda can be accelerated. A lack of accounting mechanisms is particularly emphasized as one of the inhibiting factors. Currently, it is not possible to precisely trace the budget and donor funds towards the SDGs. Some informants provided good examples of policy coordination in other areas. These models should be analysed and possibly adjusted and implemented in coordination with Agenda 2030. An exemplar model was identified as the Council for Philanthropy, attached to the Prime Minister's Office. The Council has 4 working groups thematically profiled with members combined from the government, CSOs and companies.

Insufficient awareness among local self-governments on Agenda 2030 and its potential in designing local development. Informants noted that there can be no effective implementation without strong engagement of local self-governments, which should know the best local specific needs, challenges and development potentials. Despite some initiatives (already mentioned), the engagement of local self-governments is still partial, not systematic and not sufficiently effective. Local authorities should understand what Agenda 2030 means, how to use it in local development planning, and how to define responsibilities.

Insufficient engagement of civil society. Although the Government has the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society, this cooperation is not satisfactory. The dialogue between state and civil society is more formal than substantive, consultative processes during drafting laws and strategies are not present as before, and there is a certain level of de-evolution of cooperation between the state and civil society organizations. This political gap is manifested in low activity of the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society. It was noted, even by some government stakeholders, that sometimes state actors perceive CSOs as competition and not as partners. Consequently, civil society resources are either insufficient or are not strategically deployed in pursuit of the SDGs.

Insufficient awareness of the private sector. The private sector dedicated to the advancement of the SDGs, inclusive of CSR, is not large in Serbia, but, as indicated by the representatives of the Global Compact, there is a growing interest and inclination to engage, particularly among bigger companies. However, even among those who have an interest in SDG acceleration, there is often a lack of awareness on the SDGs and a lack of recognition of opportuni-

ties to advance their work in line with the SDGs. As various stakeholders indicated, opportunities to shift models and promote the green economy in the energy, transport and agriculture sectors exist, as well as initiatives to upscale in the circular economy. The private sector plays a crucial role in achieving the SDGs through the creation of decent jobs, innovation, and responsible investments.

Lack of broad awareness of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. This lack of awareness among broader groups of citizens prevent their more proactive participation and contribution. Based on a survey conducted by IPSAS in 2020 for the occasion of UN75, 6 out of 10 citizens in Serbia have never heard of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. A DemoStat survey from 2019 found similar results, with 57% of citizens in Serbia saying they did not know what sustainable development meant.

4.2 Factors contributing to the effective implementation of SDG-related interventions

Alignment of the EU accession agenda and the SDGs. All stakeholders agreed that one of the main factors contributing to the SDGs is the complementarity of EU accession-driven reforms and the 2030 Agenda. This complementarity is visible in both directions. While obligations stemming from EU accession create strong pressures to implement reforms in the areas covered by the negotiation chapters, which contributes to specific SDGs, at the same time, Agenda 2030 is broader and covers areas of development that are not always in the core of the EU accession-driven reforms.

'Mutual reinforcement of reforms related to SDGs and EU accession act as strong accelerators of development in Serbia. Reforms that are higher positioned as priority due to the EU negotiation, will have more impact in the area of progress in achievement of correspondent SDGs or specific targets. At the same time, achievement of specific SDGs or targets will enable better preparation for fulfilment of the criteria for EU accession.'

Stakeholder from community of development partners

Particularly in areas that are not among the core EU accession reforms, the 2030 Agenda has an important role in fostering reforms. An example is in the area of health care. Since Serbia has not opened chapter 28 on Consumer and health protection, and due to the fact that the health system is in the area of the so-called 'soft Acquis', the adherence to SDGs and normative standards defined by the 2030 Agenda provide significant impetus to improvements

in health and well-being to meet regional standards. Here the role of the UN is of key importance, as the WHO country office works to ensure that all priorities are aligned with the WHO General and European Programme, which are in line with both the 2030 Agenda and the EU accession.

However, various stakeholders indicated that while this complementarity between the two agendas is often formally noted, it is not implemented in concrete mechanisms, operational plans, or in monitoring and reporting. One of the rare initiatives that attempts to more explicitly, concretely and systematically connect the two agendas is the project implemented by GIZ in partnership with the Ministry of Finance and with assistance from a Slovenian team of experts. The project focusses on linking the Economic Reform Program (ERP), which Serbia submits to the EU within the accession obligations, and the SDGs. This includes indicators for monitoring achievement of the goals, and the process includes line ministries. This is a very important step in implementing Agenda 2030, as the ERP is a key document that defines strategic reforms. The initiative was implemented upon request of the EU Delegation, which wanted to integrate the SDGs in the ERP. The informants found that such initiatives, driven from the top and with clearly defined procedures incorporating the SDGs, create effective and sustainable solutions in linking the EU and SDG agendas.

Regional cooperation is one of the potential accelerators, as Serbia is a party to a number of Environmental Conventions under UNECE and participates in the Western Balkan integration processes leading towards a common regional market, green agenda, labour force mobility and others. Complying with these processes can significantly accelerate achievement of the SDGs.

Establishment of governmental mechanisms for implementation of Agenda 2030. Several informants indicated the existence of state mechanisms for Agenda 2030 as a factor that contributed to the implementation of Agenda 2030.

'All that we do on our way to the EU contributes to the SDGs. The most positive factor is the fact that we are on our way to the EU, and that this is the one of the most important goals. The positive thing is also that we had Inter-ministerial working group and that we increased visibility. The positive is that the National Assembly has a supervising role.'

Special Advisor to the Prime Minister on Agenda 2030

UNDP has initiated and supported the establishment of a Focus Group on SDGs in Parliament (according to the Constitution, the Parliament is the supreme authority in the country). According to the opinion of the representatives of UNDP, the Focus Group acted as a good communication channel for promoting the integration of SDGs in various spheres (e.g. in the Law on the 2019 Budget).

Alignment of the initiatives (projects/programmes) with national strategic priorities which due to the relevance and coherence with national policies provide more effective contribution to the SDGs. When the UNCT is in focus, this is particularly related to the alignment of Country programmes of UN agencies with respective national policies and strategic priorities.

National ownership of initiatives contributing to the implementation of Agenda 2030. One of the factors contributing to the more effective implementation of policies leading to the achievement of specific SDGs is national ownership over targets and policies/interventions. An example is the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) implemented by ILO. National constituents had the opportunity to express what they need from ILO in the process of implementation of the DWCT, which instigated their genuine interest in the programme. This resulted in the commitment of the focal points in ILO constituent organizations to their role in DWCP Overview Board, ensuring more effective work towards programme objectives.

Application of cross-cutting issues and principles across SDGs to avoid silos effects and to provide a more integrated approach to sustainable development, more firmly linking work on the different SDGs and multiplying effects. This is particularly important for issues such as migration and gender equality, but also to issues that are multifaceted, such as decent employment (SDG 8) and reduction of inequalities (SDG 10) or ending poverty (SDG 1). The 'Leave No One Behind' principle is one of the most integrative principles that extends across all SDGs and enables the linking of stakeholders committed to different SDGs. Development partners sometimes have the role of convener to forge cross-sectoral coordination across government, as emphasized based on UNICEF's experience, but also relevant for other UN agencies.

Abundant expertise in various areas of SDGs in the country. Several informants indicated that one of the more important factors contributing to the implementation of Agenda 2030 is the abundant domestic expertise in all the SDG areas, present in development partner organizations, CSOs, academia and the research community, which can be used for Agenda 2030 implementation and monitoring.

Partnerships. Through partnerships between government and development partners, strong technical advisory support is delivered which increases the capacities of the government in implementing policies contributing to SDG achievement. UN agencies reported diverse examples of good cooperation and solid partnerships with the national government, ministries and governmental bodies and institutions, as well as local self-governments, such as enhancing state capacities for disaster risk management, implementing obligations in the area of climate change (UNDP), supporting local development in numerous municipalities (UNOPS, UNDP), improving social dialogue (ILO), contributing to SDG 5 through gender responsive budgeting (UN Women), improving diverse aspects of children through improved education and social protection (UNICEF), improving migration management aspects (ILO, UNHCR), improving health care, and particularly sexual and reproductive health care and awareness (WHO, UNFPA). Other examples of this cooperation are presented in Annex 2.

Important programming coordination mechanisms are sectoral working groups coordinated by the Ministry of European Integration. These groups are created around 9 priority topics, gathering diverse stakeholders from the relevant government ministries, development partners and others. Although appreciated by stakeholders, these groups are not optimal. There were complaints that meetings were infrequent, too short to achieve effective coordination, and overlap of meetings put a lot of pressure on development partners to attend meetings of several groups in just a couple of days. This leaves unused potential of diverse stakeholders for the achievement of the SDGs and for the closer links between EU accession and Agenda 2030, as IPA programming and programming of other donor support is based on this prioritization. During the last several years, through the GEF project, UN Women have contributed to the gender mainstreaming of programming which has been done based on the prioritization of these sectoral working groups, so this could be an example of possible SDG mainstreaming that would closer link the EU and SDG agendas.

Horizontal coordination between development partners. All interviewed representatives of development partners expressed the opinion that horizontal donor coordination is of great value for the achievement of Agenda 2030, as it enables streamlined action, synergy and avoidance of overlapping and wasting resources. They reported on different coordination initiatives, many of them informal and ad hoc. At the same time, they emphasized that better coordination among donors would be much appreciated. Some good practices from the past were mentioned such as the Gender synergy group, the informal mechanism of donor coordination in the area of gender equality.

Previously, when the main national mechanism for gender equality was the Directorate for Gender Equality of the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs — this group composed of representatives of Directorate, SIDA, OSCE, UNIFEM (predecessor of UN Women) and other bilateral or international organizations engaged in gender equality, as well as representatives of civil society — it would meet once a week to exchange information that enabled them to better plan their projects and avoid overlaps. Regarding the SDGs, there is strong inclination of GIZ and SDC to more firmly and systematically cooperate with the UNCT as they consider them one of the key partners in the implementation of Agenda 2030.

‘We have great interest for cooperation with UN agencies as we think they have key role in coordination and monitoring of SDGs. Our project is not intending to monopolize work on SDGs in Serbia. We would like to build open partnership with UN colleagues and to implement activities jointly. Whenever we can, to place our two logos, we would be very happy. This is our invitation, coming from our project. Great openness or willingness to work jointly.’

Representative of GIZ

SDG Fund as coordination mechanism. During the interviews the idea of establishing a specific SDG fund was discussed. While most development partners supported the idea of better and more systematic coordination, the idea of a specific fund was not fully supported without doubts. Some of the informants indicated that the major problem is not a lack of funding, but rather grounding development interventions in the SDGs and better linking EU accession with the 2030 Agenda. Informants representing development partners indicated that ‘soft coordination’ would be more realistic, because of the differences in funding mechanisms of different donors. Such mechanisms could also have different working groups centred around sets

of SDGs. There are some experiences of such practices from other countries and they delivered good results. This kind of informal donor coordination group already exists in Serbia. As reported by World Bank representatives, this coordination is developed around environment, natural resources and the economy. UNDP participates in this group (team engaged in climate change). They exchange information about current work and future plans, successfully avoiding overlaps and discussing what would be important intervention areas that will accelerate the achievement of respective SDGs.

Internal UNCT partnerships were emphasized by UN agencies as important forms of partnerships, bringing joint multi agency projects and approaches. These bring added value due to the merged competencies, funding sources, and bigger human or organizational resources that are put at the disposal of actions directed towards achievement of SDGs. The DPF evaluation confirmed the importance of joint UN initiatives, but also found that there were not so many within the previous strategic framework. It recommended planning and implementing more joint initiatives that can accelerate the achievement of the SDGs.

Private sector as a partner. Global compact representatives indicated very good cooperation between businesses and civil society, since members of this platform are banks, businesses and strong CSOs. Some of these CSOs are now organizations implementing a GIZ project through which the non-state actor's platform *SDGs for All* is established. These organizations have strong social capital in terms of developed links with both civil society and the private sector. On the other hand, the cooperation with Global Compact, its members from the private sector, IMWG and other state actors was not systematic. It was more infrequent and informal. Linkages with the National Assembly and Global Compact were not established, as well as with local self-governments, while linkages with academia are very weak. Global Compact supported some internship programmes in partnership with a few faculties, but nothing further. Cooperation with development partners is evaluated as good, particularly with UNDP and UNICEF. Cooperation with International Financial Institutions is sporadic, as was cooperation with the media.

A **public-private partnership (PPP)**³⁷ is one of the most important parts of the multi-stakeholder partnership for the SDGs and is considered a financing mechanism that, when successful, can act as one of the key SDG accelerators.³⁸ The growing need to build new public infrastructure,

invest into projects of general interest, and provide services of public interest in Serbia required the creation of a legal and institutional framework for attracting private investment. The Law on Public-Private Partnership and Concessions was enacted in November 2011 and is particularly important for activating private capital to build roads, waterworks, landfills, and other projects that are not able to either access traditional funding from the budget or attract affordable financing from international financial and donor institutions. Private sector involvement is critical, primarily in reducing fiscal pressures on local budgets, accelerating investment into infrastructure, and improving services while reducing their costs. So far, Serbia has implemented 15 PPP projects with a value of 6,020 mil USD across sectors including public transportation, public lighting, energy, water and maintenance of roads and other infrastructure. The Serbian market is, however, yet to see a large-scale complex PPP project in full operation.

How is the acceleration of SDG implementation understood?

Acceleration is understood in various ways among interviewed stakeholders as:

- creating a favourable environment — political, legislative, financial, democratic, public discourse wise;
- adopting and implementing international standards more consistently in different areas, and particularly in the area of labour and employment;
- securing sustained combination of expertise, tools and funding;
- localizing SDGs, integrating the 2030 Agenda into local development plans and mobilizing local stakeholders;
- supporting more civil society organizations, particularly grassroots organizations and those reaching diverse groups of vulnerable populations, in order to bring development to all. In local communities with a strong tradition of grassroots organizations, new organizations and centres that provide services are not needed, but rather it would be favourable to fund those that are already experienced and provide good quality services in line with various SDGs (improved social protection, access to health care, education, employment services, etc.);
- increasing synergies between agencies and other development partners;
- focusing on results and better communication of results, not through numbers but through topics that people can understand better;
- political will, better communication, coordination and more work in the field with companies and civil society organizations, when supported to understand and implement Agenda 2030, they facilitate linkages between 'big and small' actors;

³⁷ PPP refers to relationships formed between the private sector and public bodies with the aim of introducing private sector resources and/or expertise in order to help provide and deliver public sector assets and services. This is EIB definition, cited from DESA Working Paper No. 148, Public-Private Partnerships and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Fit for purpose?, p 26.

³⁸ UN, The SDG Partnership Guidebook.

- recognising and understanding migration as an accelerator of development, not solely as a humanitarian issue;
- stronger engagement of the private sector, using the outstanding experience of some companies, including SDG champions such as IKEA, NORDEUS, Hemofarm, or platforms such as Global Compact. The private sector is one of the key accelerators whose potential is not sufficiently realized.

'Instilling and integratory approach would accelerate the pace of implementation, where multiple issues are viewed through a single lens, recognizing potentials for integration. An example would be a portfolio approach that enables actions to be implemented taking into consideration their relations and impact on other actions and objectives. 'To put in simple terms — authorities usually dig a road multiple times, once for pipes, another time for cables, etc. Proper planning and integrating priorities into a single action would enable implementation at an accelerated pace and at lower cost of resources.'

Stakeholder from development partners community



5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The mapping identified numerous stakeholders engaged in the planning and implementation of the 2030 Agenda, but only a few of these are comprehensively engaged, leading and advancing processes towards the achievement of the SDGs. These are categorized as immersed stakeholders and they include the UNCT, GIZ and the CSO platform *SDGs for All*. Despite strong commitment and very diversified engagement in the 2030 Agenda, the UNCT has lost the role of custodian of the SDGs according to the other stakeholders. Expectations are high to regain its leading role, particularly considering the low government commitment.

Committed stakeholders contribute significantly to the 2030 Agenda, but their engagement is often complementary to their main mission, or partial. This category includes, besides individual UN agencies, a number of international partners (the EU, CoE, SIDA, WB), only a few national institutions (such as SORS and the Institute for standardization), and some private sector stakeholders, particularly those gathered around Global Compact.

CSOs could be spread across different categories, as they are a very heterogenous group, but most of them can be found between committed and associated stakeholders. The latter category is marked by indirect or occasional engagement and, in addition to part of civil society, includes international financial institutions and regional initiatives.

Engagement only as a formality is found among the Government of Serbia, local-self governments, academia (as an institution that is only marginally involved in policy processes), as well as the vast majority of the media.

The main impression is that international stakeholders draw on their institutional strategies and importance assigned to Agenda 2030. National stakeholders do it in line with their own perception of the importance of the Agenda, or supported by international partners, but there is a lack of motivation or impetus to develop more coherence and synergy among different stakeholders, as the Government of Serbia does not seem to prioritize the Agenda highly. Individual initiatives or joint actions are discouraged by the lack of effective national mechanisms and a lack of incentive to keep Agenda 2030 high in the national policy agenda.

Interviewed stakeholders show high interest in accelerating Agenda 2030 and they would like to see the UNCT take a more leading role, as well as better coordination of different stakeholders, with or without the Government.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the multi-stakeholder mapping, a set of recommendations are proposed for the UNCT. The recommendations are limited only to those that contribute to more effective SDG engagement of the UNCT through their own work, or through their actions related to other key stakeholders whose engagement is of crucial importance for the implementation of Agenda 2030.

5.2.1 Improved action for accelerating the achievement of the SDGs

1. The UNCT could jointly with the EU Delegation and other development partners advocate/support for higher commitment of the Government of Serbia to define national priorities and have a more nationally specific 2030 Agenda.
2. The same efforts could be directed to advocate for the development of a National Development Strategy in line with the Law on System Planning that will be fully aligned with both key agendas — EU accession and Agenda 2030.
3. The UNCT can contribute to closer and more operational linkages between the EU accession agenda and Agenda 2030. This can be done through several processes and frameworks:
 - By advocating and supporting the development of key national strategic documents and reports which will define priorities and achievements in twin track approaches — linking to both agendas: future development strategy, investment plan, ERP (the initial SDG mainstreaming was supported by GIZ, but it could be supported in the future by UNCT as well), VNR (should incorporate links on how Agenda 2030 contributes to the EU accession, more precisely, linking SDGs and EU negotiation chapters).

- Through programming international development cooperation, with clear links of each intervention to both agendas, and advocating for incorporated monitoring of the SDGs in the work of sectoral working groups. This can be done through some form of SDG mainstreaming tool, which can help sectoral working group members, as well as teams working on programming to cross-check how programmes and projects contribute to specific SDGs and targets.
 - Through SDG accounting, tracing funds from the state budget and donor sources to negotiation chapters and SDGs.
4. The UNCT should strengthen its role vis-à-vis other stakeholders and become recognized as one of the leading international stakeholders driving the processes in line with Agenda 2030. After its initial leadership when preparing, and immediately after endorsing, Agenda 2030, UNCT lost the role of leader and its engagement became fragmented. This was also recognized by the DPF evaluation, which recommended that the UNCT will need to clearly define its role in supporting the nationalization of the SDGs amid the growing interest of multiple development partners, in a way that accentuates the importance of full national ownership of the agenda.
 5. Programmes and projects should be designed in a manner that connects and cuts across multiple SDGs to avoid silos effect. In this endeavor, the UNCT should explore the use of an opportunity provided by the SDG integration function of UNDP.
 6. The UNCT should continue to design and implement projects and programmes, and to initiate new ones, that are focused on making the environment more favourable for the achievement of the SDGs, particularly in the area of implementation of international standards and recommendations issued by the international mechanisms monitoring the implementation of conventions.
 7. The UNCT should engage more systematically and comprehensively in the localization of the SDGs or make more traceable and visible UNCT contributions to the SDGs through their engagement at the local level.
 8. The UNCT can use its authority to bring on board broader civil society, as currently there is not enough participation of CSOs in governmental initiatives focused on Agenda 2030, directly or indirectly.
 9. Partnerships with the private sector should be planned in a much more systematic way. The majority of agencies did not develop continuous and sustainable cooperation with companies nor developed the road map for systematic engagement with private sector. The experience of UNICEF could be shared and the lessons learnt used for guidance of other agencies.
 10. Through conducting the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of the COVID-19 pandemic, the UNCT has proven its comparative advantages in, for example, its capacity to pool resources and its high-level expertise in diverse areas covering all SDGs. This advantage should be used in the post-COVID recovery phase, as UN Agencies can contribute significantly to domestic capacities to produce and implement effective recovery plans. Focus on recovery should also be used for SDG prioritization and promoting the long-term processes that lead to sustainable development.

Future VNR engagement

11. The process of VNR preparation should be more participatory, ensuring more consistent, systematic and substantive participation of diverse stakeholders, including CSOs, private sector, international partners, academia and the expert community and media. Participation of the UNCT in the VNR should be more effectively coordinated, with a clear division of roles between the individual UN agencies and responsibilities divided.
12. The VNR should be grounded in a solid, evidence-based methodology, relying on SDG indicators and robust data that measure progress. The UNCT can significantly contribute with expertise and data.
13. The VNR should be written with proper self-reflection and critical insights in order to clearly indicate areas on which further interventions should be more focused. UNCT contribution and support in reviewing and editing the document should contribute to this.

5.2.2 How to use partnerships to address the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to accelerate SDG achievements?

Based on the present findings as well as on the logical framework of the 2021-25 UNSDCF, two mechanisms are proposed for multi-stakeholder partnerships of the UNCT:

- UNSDCF Result group partnership platforms
- High-level donor SDG coordination mechanism.

UNSDCF Result group (RG) partnership platforms

In order to improve the partnerships necessary for the implementation of the next UNSDCF, but also of the 2030 Agenda, it is proposed to establish three partnership platforms, each linked to one of the UNSDCF Result groups.

Each UNSDCF Result group partnership platform will include — in addition to the UN Agencies who have a role in the implementation of the specific Result group outcomes and outputs — representatives of the government (relevant line ministries, governmental bodies), CSOs, development partners, international financial institutions, private companies, higher education or research institutions, and

media. Each cluster would be coordinated by one UN agency — acting as a co-chair of the Result group. Keeping in mind the difficulties of coordinating larger groups, each Result group partnership platform should include only up to 10 members (key UN agencies and one representative of each stakeholder listed). The stakeholders’ representatives can bring the perspective of specific stakeholder groups into the programming, planning and implementation processes. At the same time, they can play a role in connecting actors with other stakeholders from the same group when needed. The role of clusters would be the exchange of information on available funding sources, implemented initiatives, identified gaps that should be targeted by future intervention, visibility strategies, and coordination with other stakeholders in different areas, based on the knowledge and links of members of cluster groups from these areas.

Each UNSDCF Result group partnership platform would gather to discuss strategic issues and monitor, for example, annual implementation and achievements. In the following table, an initial proposal of stakeholders for each Result group partnership platform is listed that can serve as a starting point for discussion on the specific composition of each Result group partnership platform.

FIGURE 4 | Composition of UNSDCF Result group-level partnership platform

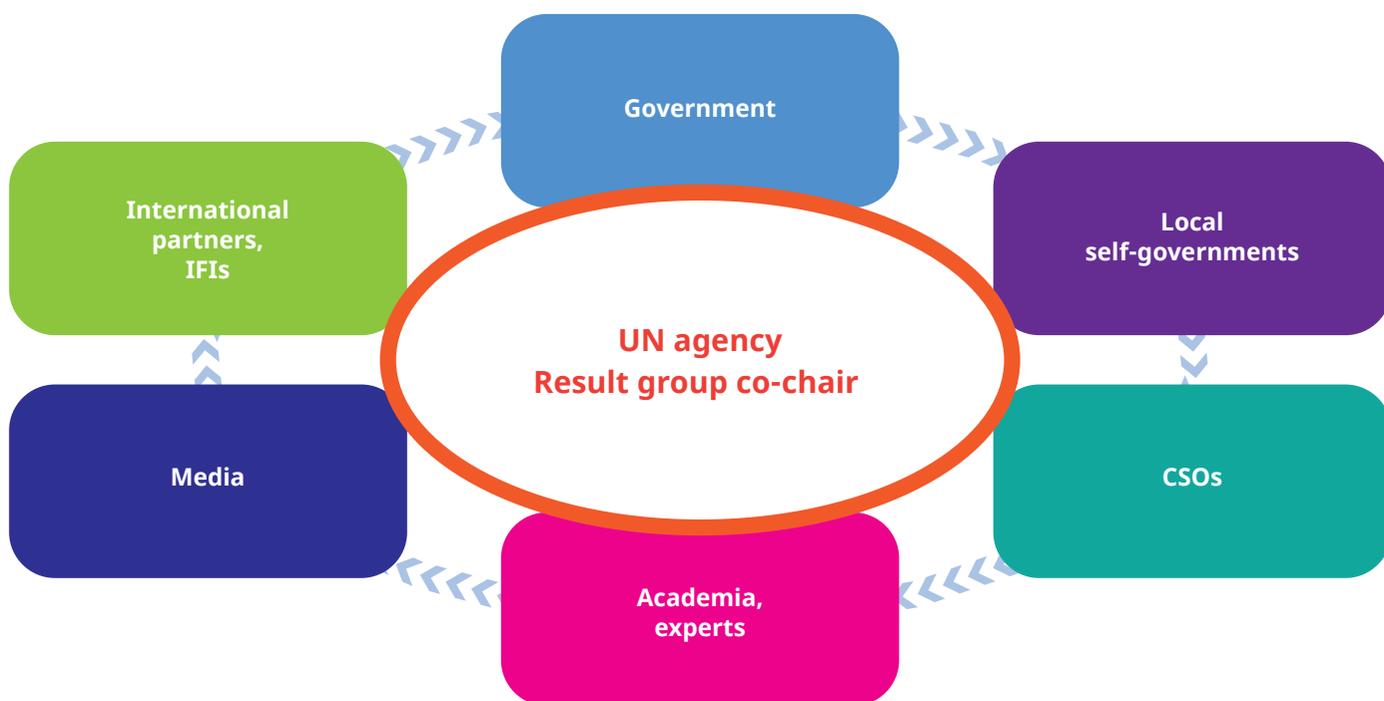


TABLE 4 | UNSDCF Result group 1 partnership platform proposal

Stakeholders	
UNCT	FAO, UNDP, UNECE, UNEP, UN habitat, UNOPS, WHO, UNDRR, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNFPA, UNICEF, ILO, UNHCR
Governmental	Ministry of Environmental Protection; Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management; Ministry of Mining and Energy; Ministry of Economy; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs; Ministry of Construction, Transport and Industry; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Interior; Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue; Ministry of Culture and Information; Ministry of Education Science and Technological Development; Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications; Ministry of Village Care; Ministry of Youth and Sports; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Finance; the Provincial Secretariat for Urban Planning and Environmental Protection; the Public Investment Management Office; the Secretariat for Public Policies, Institute for Standardization of Serbia
Local self-governments	To be proposed by UN agencies
Public institutions	The Republic Hydrometeorological Service; Institute for Nature Conservation; Republic Institute for Protection of Monuments; Statistical Office; Institute for the Research on Cultural Development; the National Employment Agency
Non-governmental	The Development Agency of Serbia; the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities; Coalition 27, SDGs for All, Women’s Platform for Development
Private sector	Commercial banks, Global Compact
Academia, experts	Faculty of Technology (Department for Environment), University of Arts, Faculty of Economics
Media	Danas, RTS, Vreme
Development partners	EU Delegation, Council of Europe, GIZ, SIDA
IFIs	WB Group, EBRD, EIB, KfW, potentially MMF and COEDB

TABLE 5 | UNSDCF Result group 2 partnership platform proposal

Stakeholders	
UNCT	OHCHR, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNODC, UNOPS, WHO, IOM, UN Habitat, UN Women, FAO, ILO
Governmental	Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs; Ministry of Youth and Sport; Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue; Ministry of Family Care, Children and Demographics; Ministry of Culture and Information; Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Interior; Ministry for European Integration; Ministry of Economy; Ministry of Finance; Office for the Diaspora
Local self-governments	To be proposed by UN agencies
Public institutions	The Institute of Public Health; Agency for Accreditation of Health Care Institutions, Centers for Social Welfare, Protector of Citizens; Commissioner for Protection of Equality, Institute for Standardization of Serbia
Non-governmental	SDGs for All, Women’s platform for Development, SCTM,
Private sector	Commercial banks, Global Compact, health care providers
Academia, experts	Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Philosophy — Departments for Pedagogy, Psychology
Media	Adria, Danas, RTS, Vreme
Development partners	EU Delegation, Council of Europe, GIZ, SIDA, SDC, OSCE
IFIs	WB Group, EBRD, EIB, KfW, potentially MMF and COEDB

TABLE 6 | UNSDCF Result group 3 partnership platform proposal

Stakeholders	
UNCT	IOM, OHCHR, UNDP, UNFPA, UN Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOPS, UN Women, UNODC, WHO,
Governmental	The Parliament; Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs; Ministry of Public Administration and Local-Self Government; Ministry of Youth and Sport; Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue; the Secretariat for Public Policies; Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Youth and Sport; Ministry for European Integration
Local self-governments	To be proposed by UN agencies
Public institutions	Office of the Protector of Citizens; Commissioner for Protection of Equality; Commissariat for Refugees and Migration; Office for Kosovo and Metohija; Coordination Body for Bujanovac, Presevo and Medvedja; National Statistics Office; the Institute for Social Protection; Centers for Social Welfare; High Judicial Council; the Anticorruption Agency; the State Audit Institution; Institute for Standardization of Serbia
Non-governmental	SDGs for All, Women’s Platform for Development, SCTM, Transparency Serbia
Private sector	Commercial banks, Global Compact, health care providers
Academia, experts	Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Philosophy — Departments for Pedagogy, Psychology
Media	Danas, RTS, Vreme
Development partners	EU Delegation, Council of Europe, OSCE, ODA
IFIs	WB Group, EBRD, EIB, KfW, potentially MMF and COEDB

High-level donor SDG coordination mechanism

While the previous mechanism would be linked to UNSDCF implementation, this mechanism would have the purpose of gathering the biggest development partners, in terms of size of the funds invested in development of Serbia, where coordination would be organized at the strategic and operational level. At the strategic level, stakeholders participating in the mechanism would annually discuss key country strategic priorities in line with EU accession and the SDGs and identify priority areas and missing links. At the operational level, partners would plan joint initiatives, share information on available funds and accordingly plan actions, increase their visibility, and merge forces in advo-

cating for more effective ways in which the government can implement the 2030 Agenda. This coordination mechanism would gather representatives of the EU, key bilateral and multilateral organizations, international financial organizations, as well as funds whose presence is of key importance to faster advance specific policy areas toward the SDGs. This mechanism or coordination hub could have thematic operational working groups that can work at the operational level in planning concrete programmes and projects. This will also enable overlaps and concentrated efforts in particular areas, while other areas remain without sufficient initiatives.



ANNEX 1

LIST OF REVIEWED DOCUMENTS

Government of Serbia, Voluntary National Review of The Republic of Serbia on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development- Towards Equality of Sustainable Opportunities for Everyone and Everywhere in Serbia Through Growing into Sustainability

United Nations, *The SDG Partnership Guidebook* (2020)

UNCT *United Nations Development Partnership Framework for Serbia (2016-2020) Final Evaluation* (2020)

Government of the Republic of Serbia, *National Priorities for International Assistance until 2025 Serbia and Agenda 2030- Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA) Report for Serbia* (February 2018)

UN DESA (2016) *Public-Private Partnerships and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Fit for purpose?*, https://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2016/wp148_2016.pdf

United Nations Mainstreaming, Acceleration, and Policy Support Team: National Development and Agenda 2030- Policy Support for Advancing SDG Progress in Serbia- Promoting Inclusive and Sustainable Growth “Leaving No-one Behind” (May 2019).

UN SDG, *Common Minimum Standards for Multi-stakeholder in the Development Assistance Framework*, (2020)

UN SDG, *United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework* (2019)

UNCT Serbia (2020) *COVID 19 Socio-Economic Response Plan*, UNDP, Belgrade, https://www.rs.undp.org/content/serbia/en/home/library/crisis_prevention_and_recovery/covid-19-socio-economic-response-plan.html

UNCT Serbia (2020) *COVID 19 Socio-Economic Impact Assessment*, UNDP, Belgrade, https://www.rs.undp.org/content/serbia/en/home/library/crisis_prevention_and_recovery/covid-19-socio-economic-impact-assessment-.html



ANNEX 2

KEY PROJECTS CONTRIBUTING TO THE SDGs IMPLEMENTED BY UN AGENCIES IN SERBIA IN THE PERIOD 2015-2020

FAO implements projects focused on agricultural and food security, emergency assistance to flood affected small-scale farmers, increasing resilience of livelihoods of small farmers to threats and crisis, sustainable forest management, disaster risk reduction, and improved regulations for fisheries, which is one of the rare initiatives that contribute to SDG 14, often considered as not relevant for Serbia.

ILO implements the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP), which covers a range of topics and priorities agreed with tripartite constituents in the country. ILO's work also contributes to the project on the elimination of child labour and supports through Employment and Social Affairs platform the Western Balkans countries in adopting and/or implementing reforms in the areas of employment/labour market and social policy needed for advancing their EU pre-accession process.

IOM implements projects focussed on ensuring development benefits from migration and on reducing the negative effects of migration for host and home communities, migrants and members of their families. It contributes to the global, regional and national understanding on the development benefits of migration-sensitive policies and to the enhancement of social protection of migrants in vulnerable situations. It applies a comprehensive and holistic regional approach to migration management systems in the framework of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II) and as part of the EU accession processes. It supports better management of migration on the Balkan route.

UN Women implements projects that contribute to gender responsive governance, strengthening gender equality mechanisms at different governance levels as well as gender mainstreaming of policies, budgets and programming. It also contributes to the economic empowerment of women, redistribution of unpaid care through targeted gender transformative policy interventions and contributes to the improved safety of women in Serbia. It promotes the development of a green economy and raises gender equality issues in policy areas related to environmental protection, climate change and energy efficiency.

UNDP has a broad portfolio supporting processes that lead to good governance at all levels, through enhanced accountability and representation. It also implements projects contributing to gender equality and the protection of women and girls, particularly those from vulnerable groups, in order to live lives free from discrimination and violence. Some interventions are focused on creating an effective enabling environment that promotes sustainable economic development, focused on an inclusive labour market and decent job creation. UNDP contributes to improved capacities of stakeholders in Serbia to combat climate change and manage natural resources and supports communities to become more resilient to the effects of disasters, triggered by natural and human-made hazards.



UNFPA enhances national capacities to deliver integrated sexual and reproductive health services with a focus on marginalized populations. It strengthens the national framework to incorporate human rights and the needs of adolescents and youth in national laws, policies and programmes related to sexual and reproductive health. It strengthens institutional capacity for the formulation and implementation of rights-based policies that integrate evidence on emerging population issues (low fertility, ageing, gender equality, gender-based violence and migration, etc.) and their links to sustainable development.

UNICEF greatly contributed to the improvement of maternal, neonatal and child health, and to the increased equity and quality of maternal, neonatal and child health care services (with a special focus on perinatal health and immunization). UNICEF significantly contributed to early childhood development (ECD), increased accessibility and quality of parenting services with a focus on the most vulnerable families (including Early childhood interventions for children with disabilities), across health, educational and social welfare systems. Projects have also contributed to the increased equity and quality of preschool education, and one of the areas where UNICEF provided crucial contribution to is the area of ending child marriages. Another area with significant contribution is prevention and protection of children from violence.

UNOPS provided technical Assistance to the Ministry of Health in the management of the reconstruction of the four Clinical Centres in Serbia, with the aim to contribute to the modernization of the tertiary healthcare system. UNOPS has provided significant assistance to municipalities in Serbia, in their capacities to foster local sustainable development. The projects are focused on the improvement of infrastructure, enhanced competitiveness, improved business environment and stronger social cohesion, but also on good governance, social inclusion and gender equality. Some projects are focused on the most vulnerable populations, such as Roma families in Belgrade.

WHO provides support to Serbia in the development and implementation of national multi-sectoral policies and plans to prevent and control noncommunicable diseases (NCD), including work on the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). It implements the Immunization programme, Environment and health (E&H) programme and provides support to both ministries, for health and environmental protection, to develop the National Portfolio of Actions on Environment and Health (NAP). WHO had a very active role in supporting the Government of Serbia in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, all support under the program Health emergency preparedness and response contingency planning was related to the COVID-19 response and the efforts made by the state and the health care system in this pandemic. Another important area of WHO engagement is Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

UNHCR supports the implementation of laws relevant for provision of access to services and social protection mechanisms to refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs and persons at risk of statelessness. UNHCR has been working with the Serbian Commission for Refugees and Migrants (SCRM) to support the local inclusion and integration of refugees and asylum-seekers who have arrived in Serbia since 2008. It invests efforts to ensure protection of refugee children in line with their best interests. Special focus is placed on unaccompanied and separated children (UASC). UNHCR also aims to prevent SGBV among migrant groups.



**STRENGTHENING
THE MULTI-STAKEHOLDER
DIMENSION OF NATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT PLANNING
AND THE SDGs**

SERBIA