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Abstract

The United Nation Sustainable Development Summit held on 25th to 27th of September 2015 in New York resulted in the adoption of a document called “Transforming Our World: The Agenda 2030 For Sustainable Development.” The new global agenda consists of 17 Sustainable Development Goals that aim to guide the world towards sustainable development. 193 UN Member States, among them Slovakia, signed the document and pledged to implement the Agenda 2030 on a national and international level. This master’s thesis aims to answer the question in how far Slovakia has managed to create a political framework that provides the necessary conditions for further implementation of the Agenda 2030. It maps and assesses actions related to the Agenda 2030. More specifically, it identifies accomplishments, weaknesses and potential obstacles emerging in the initial part of the Agenda 2030 implementation process. The outcome of the undertaken research is thus an evaluation of Slovakia’s efforts within the global agenda for sustainable development. The first part outlines the history of sustainable development on a global level and the path towards adoption of the SDGs. Subsequently, the political development of Slovakia is presented, focusing on a deeper analysis of democratic transformation, the EU accession and the European integration. The research on the actions related to the Agenda 2030 focuses on numerous aspects. The thesis examines institutional framework that will oversee the implementation process, the existing documents reflecting the Agenda 2030 and initiated processes leading to the creation of conditions necessary for further implementation. It also investigates Slovak understanding of the Agenda 2030 that goes beyond the achievement of individual SDGs and is reflected in an attempt to stimulate an integrated government response to the Agenda 2030. Moreover, the involvement of NGOs and the private sector are analysed as well as Slovakia’s shaping expertise on the EU level. The thesis concludes with a set of recommendations that aim to improve identified weaknesses in Slovakia’s efforts. The recommendations cover a wide spectrum of issues, starting with the administrative obstacles such as a lack of financial and human resources. They further touch upon internal state matters including the functioning of the state administration alongside with the current state of democracy whereby strong political commitment and thorough implementation of strategies are strongly advised. The recommendations also address the need to raise the awareness of public administration staff as well as civil society about the topic and to increasingly engage private sector to fully realize the potential of SDGs.

Das Abstract

Vom 25. bis 27. September 2015 wurde auf einem Gipfel der Vereinten Nationen das Ergebnisdokument "Transformation unserer Welt: die Agenda 2030 für nachhaltige Entwicklung" verabschiedet. Die Agenda 2030 besteht aus 17 nachhaltigen Entwicklungszielen, die beabsichtigen, die Welt in die Richtung einer nachhaltigen Entwicklung zu bewegen. Alle 193 Mitgliedstaaten der Vereinten Nationen, darunter auch die Slowakei, verpflichteten sich, die Agenda 2030 auf nationaler und internationaler Ebene bis zum Jahr 2030 umzusetzen.

Das Ziel der vorliegenden Masterarbeit besteht darin, die Frage zu beantworten, inwieweit die Slowakei die Rahmenbedingungen für die Umsetzung der Agenda 2030 geschaffen hat. Die Masterarbeit untersucht und evaluiert die politischen Prozesse bezogen auf die Agenda 2030. In diesem Zusammenhang werden Errungenschaften, Schwachstellen und mögliche Hindernisse in der ersten Phase des Implementierungsprozesses identifiziert. Das Ergebnis der Forschung stellt eine Evaluierung der slowakischen Anstrengungen für die Umsetzung der nachhaltigen Entwicklungsziele dar.

Der erste Teil der vorliegenden Masterarbeit befasst sich mit der Geschichte nachhaltiger Entwicklung auf internationaler Ebene und beschreibt den Weg zur Verabschiedung der Agenda 2030. Im folgenden Teil wird die politische Geschichte der Slowakei dargestellt, mit Fokus auf demokratische Transformation, EU-Beitritt und EU-Integration.

Die empirische Forschung der Anstrengungen in der Slowakei erfasst unterschiedliche Aspekte: Der institutionelle Rahmen, die auf die Agenda 2030 bezogene Dokumente sowie die eingeleiteten Prozesse werden erforscht. Die Wahrnehmung von der Agenda 2030 wird analysiert, die in der Slowakei über die Erfüllung der Einzelziele hinausgeht. Aus dem breiteren Verständnis der Agenda 2030 ergibt sich der Versuch um die Umsetzung des Whole of Government Ansatzes in der Staatsadministration. Das Weiter wird die Teilnahme der Nichtregierungsorganisationen und des Privatsektors an diesem Prozess diskutiert und die Frage, der sich bildenden Expertise der Slowakei auf der EU-Ebene wird untersucht.

Abschließend wird eine Reihe von Empfehlungen formuliert, die auf eine Verbesserung der identifizierten Schwachstellen abzielen. Diese Empfehlungen betreffen administrative Hindernisse wie etwa einen Mangel an finanziellen und personellen Kapazitäten. Außerdem werden bezüglich einer funktionierenden Staatsverwaltung und im Sinne einer gesunden Demokratie starkes politisches Engagement und gründliche Umsetzung von diesbezüglichen Beschlüssen empfohlen. Ebenso wird das Bedürfnis einer Bewusstseinsbildung für nachhaltige Prinzipien in der Staatsverwaltung so wie auch in Zivilgesellschaft und im Privatsektor betont.

List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---------|---|
| ANO | -Alliance of New Citizens |
| CSOs | -Civil society organizations |
| CEE | -Central and Eastern Europe |
| CETIR | -Centre for Experience Transfer from Reforms and Integration |
| DEAP | -District Environmental Action Plan |
| EC | -European Commission |
| EU | -European Union |
| EUGS | -European Union Global Strategy |
| HZDS | -Movement for a Democratic Slovakia |
| KDH | -Christian Democratic Movement |
| ĽSNS | -People's Party Our Slovakia |
| MDGs | -Millennium Development Goals |
| NEAP | -National Environmental Action Plan |
| NGOs | -Nongovernmental organizations |
| NIP | -The National Infrastructure Plan |
| NPAA | -Slovak National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis |
| NSDGs | -National Sustainable Development Goals Strategy |
| ODA | -Official development assistance |
| OECD | -Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| OSCE | -Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe |
| REAP | -Regional Environmental Action Plan |
| SAV | -Slovak Academy of Science |
| SDGs | -Sustainable Development Goals |
| SDKU | -Slovak Democratic Coalition |
| SMER-SD | -Direction-Social Democracy |
| SMK | -The Party of Hungarian Community |
| SNS | -Slovak National Party |
| SIS | -Slovak Information Service |
| UN | -The United Nations |
| UNCED | -UN Conference on Environment and Development |
| UPPII | -Deputy Prime Minister's Office for Investments and Informatization of SR |
| WGA | -Whole of the Government Approach |
| ZSR | -Association of Workers of Slovakia |

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1. Introduction

The United Nation Sustainable Development Summit held on 25th to 27th of September 2015 in New York launched a new era of sustainable development on the global scale. Its resulting document, Transforming Our World: The Agenda 2030 For Sustainable Development has become a mantra of sustainable development. It serves as guidelines for numerous projects, campaigns and policies aiming at creation of equilibrium among environmental, economic and social aspects. As stated in the preamble, the Agenda 2030 “is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. It also seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom” (The Agenda 2030: 1).

193 member states of The United Nations (UN) signed the document that emerged from long-lasting negotiations, and committed to implement the Agenda, consisting of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), on the national as well as global level. The Agenda 2030 is not a blueprint for the action, every single state has a free will to decide how to implement the ambitious agenda. Each country has different conditions regarding economy, environment, social and political situation, thus the starting point of the implementation might differ enormously across the world. Slovakia is one of the signatory countries. As a member state of the UN it committed to mobilize the action in order to achieve the set of SDGs. Slovakia has been an independent country only since 1993 and just few years earlier, in 1989 the country experienced the fall of long-lasting communist regime and initiated transition to democracy and market economy. The path to democracy was rather complicated which also caused a delayed accession to the European Union (EU) in 2004. Democratic transition, dissolution of Czechoslovakia and European integration, all happening in last two decades, create a specific environment for the implementation of the Agenda 2030. Considering the given conditions, the Agenda 2030 might be an enormous challenge for Slovakia. The aim of this master’s thesis is to research in how far Slovakia has managed to create a political framework that provides necessary conditions for further implementation of the Agenda 2030. It intends to map and asses the actions related to the Agenda 2030. More specifically, the goal is to identify the achieved accomplishments, occurring weaknesses and potential obstacles emerging in the initial part of the Agenda 2030 implementation process. The outcome of undertaken research is thus an evaluation of Slovakia’s efforts within the global agenda for sustainable development.

The second chapter presents a history of sustainability and sustainable development concept. It reaches back to the times when those concepts were established and follows their historical development. Furthermore, it outlines the history and presence of sustainable development in global agendas adopted by the UN.

The third dedicated to the political development in Slovakia. They briefly describe the history of

Slovakia before 1989, however; the main focus is put on the period after the fall of communism and the democratic transition process followed by the process of accession to the EU and subsequent European integration.

The fourth chapter describes the current state of democracy in Slovakia illustrating its strengths and weaknesses.

The fifth chapter explains the purpose of the research, reasons the choice of employed methods and describes the overall process of data collection, analysis and interpretation.

The sixth chapter deals with the historic overview of sustainable policies in Slovakia and the implementation process of the Agenda 2030. It touches upon and evaluates various aspects relevant for the implementation. Firstly, the institutional setting and all relevant documents published by state bodies are presented. It further continues with current state of matters within the Agenda 2030 in Slovakia, showing how far the country is from achieving the goals. Afterwards, it analyses the process launched by the state bodies, the participation of other involved stakeholders and Slovakia's role within the EU. The chapter concludes with the final recommendations for successful achievement of the SDGs in 2030.

2. The Sustainable Development Goals: New Global Agenda

2.1 History of Sustainable Development

Sustainability alongside with sustainable development have become common terms used among politicians, academia, private sector and civil society organizations (CSOs) over the last decades. Often, these terms are being used in different contexts, pertaining to various situations and issues, however as often as they are automatically used, there is still the need to reflect on their content and meaning. The lack of the reflection on the concepts could lead to the misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the notions lying behind this terminology. So, what is sustainability and sustainable development and where do these terms come from?

The sustainability concept dates back to the 1713, when it was first used in the forestry where it represented the rule not to harvest more than the forest would yield in a new growth, thus making sustainability being concerned with the preservation of natural resources. Sustainability and the scarcity of resources have always been a topic within economics which was proven by the number of works published on this topic. One of the most famous is an essay written by Thomas Malthus called *Essay on the Principle of Population*, in which he articulated that the population grows faster than the agricultural output, therefore the population heads toward a future without resources to live from. Another popular theory related to exploitation of nonrenewable resources was coined by Harold Hotelling who concluded that there is an optimal rate of resource exploitation, namely *“if the social cost of losing the resource is outweighed by the social benefit which it yields over the period of use”* (Farrington, Kuhlman 2010: 3442). The Club of Rome threw an infamous popularity to a debate on material prosperity for all which, as published in the book *the Limits of Growth* seemed impossible to reach since the books predicated the depletion of many resources within few generations, a view quite opposed to the attitudes of the technological optimists (Owens 2003: 6).

Such a pessimistic view sparked off new discussions on the topic of interrelation among development, resources and environment that eventually lead to the release of the UN Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: *Our Common Future*, commonly known as Brundtland report after the Prime Minister of Norway. Brundtland together with her colleagues arrived at the conclusion that what the world needs is *“a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”*, thus shaping the term sustainable development (Farrington, Kuhlman 2010: 3438). Environmental aspects played an important role in the Brundtland report; however, they were always considered in a relationship to human needs, poverty and growth. *“Environment and development are not separate challenges; they*

are inexorably linked. Development cannot subsist upon a deteriorating resources base; the environment cannot be protected when growth leaves out of account the costs of environmental destruction." (WCED, 1987, p. 37 in Owens 2003: 6). The Brundtland report gained a significant popularity since it contradicts the pessimistic future prospects for humanity formulated by The Club of Rome. More than that, it did not only regard the present inequalities among poor and rich, but it took in the consideration the intergenerational relationships between current and future generation in relation to their needs. Nevertheless, Brundtland's definition of sustainable development was a target of criticism as it was deemed for being more of a slogan than a solid basis for theory and subsequent political actions (Adams 2009: 6). Moreover, some authors claim that the definition ignores the intrinsic value of environment and the only reason why we care about nature is due to its ability to fulfill the human needs (Farrington, Kuhlman 2010: 3438). However, some see the same issue in a positive way, claiming that the Brundtland's vision advocates the harmony between humans and nature (Adams 2009: 76). Despite of the number of proponents as well as opponents, Brundtland report brought sustainable development in the arena of international development and recognized the important link between development and environment. Furthermore, it argued that the poverty deteriorates the state of the environment and calls after global action (Adams 2009: 84).

The concept of sustainable development was further developed and mainstreamed on the occasion of the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), commonly known as Rio conference that took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The UNCED followed the ideas of Brundtland report and acted on the requirement to establish legal frameworks for sustainable development. The outcome of the conference was so called Agenda 21, a global action plan for sustainable development, that was negotiated alongside with other agreements, namely UN Framework on Climate Change, Convention on Biological Diversity and Rio Declaration (Adams 2009: 88, Chasek et al. 2016: 6). The main document, Agenda 21 contained 600 pages divided into 40 chapters that dealt with environmental and socio-economic aspects, elaborated the strategies for implementation and mentioned actors capable of putting the Agenda 21 into practice. The complex content touched upon high number of topics ranging from biodiversity and water quality to the role of women and children in achieving sustainable development. Nevertheless, the main three topics in Agenda 21 remained firstly the growth with sustainability, secondly sustainable living, dealing with the problems such as poverty, health and demographic growth and the third topic was related to urbanization issues such as water supply and water pollution (Adams 2009: 93-94).

Agenda 21 is a massive political agenda that applies to the whole world; however, it is a voluntary and non-binding agreement that did not bring any legal obligations. In that sense, it is considered to be a soft law since the national governments regard its principles and messages as highly

interpretative and discretionary (O’Riordan, Voisy 1998: 34). Although the commitment to and implementation of Agenda 21 was voluntary act of the states, it did not only include national strategies, but it recognized the need to act on the local levels. As stated in Chapter 28: *“Because so many of the problems and solutions being addressed by Agenda 21 have their roots in local activities, the participation and cooperation of local authorities will be a determining factor in fulfilling its objectives. Local authorities construct, operate and maintain economic, social and environmental infrastructure, oversee planning processes, establish local environmental policies and regulations, and assist in implementing national and subnational environmental policies. As the level of governance closest to the people, they play a vital role in educating, mobilizing and responding to the public to promote sustainable development.”* (United Nations Sustainable Development 1992: Agenda 21: Chapter 28). Due to the recognition of the role of local governments and municipalities in achieving sustainable development, many local initiatives, called Local Agenda 21 were launched in the signatory countries.

Apart from the sustainable development, poverty on its own has been a global matter over the last decades. Many governments, international organizations, aid agencies and NGOs have been active in the field of the development cooperation with the aim to tackle the poverty and lift people up from unfavorable living conditions. Their actions mostly targeted so called “developing countries”, most stereotypically located in Africa. The issue of poverty became important world’s concern and therefore found its way in the global political agendas, with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) being one of the most known. Eight development goals with 18 targets and 48 indicators were agreed at the United Nations Millennium Summit that took place in September 2000. MDGs were the North-South agenda, therefore the goals translated into donor countries’ actions towards developing countries. Conceptually, MDGs presented a single package that fit the new definition of what the development is supposed to be. Despite the fact that every single goal is important as an individual norm, they are all interrelated and build one supernorm that implies the eradication of dehumanizing poverty (Fukuda-Parr, Hulme 2011: 18).

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Goal 8: Global partnership for development

Table 1: Millennium Development Goals (Chasek et al. 2016: 7)

There is an ongoing disagreement regarding the question, whether the MDGs were success or failure, however certain figures show that some goals were actually achieved. Taking look at the MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger with its target to reduce the number of people living in extreme poverty by 50% between the years 1990 and 2015, the statistics show that the goal was achieved even 5 years earlier than expected. The world proportion of people whose income is less than \$1,25 a day has dropped from 36% in 1990 to 15% in 2011 (UN 2015: 15). Although such an achievement could be widely seen as a progress, it is to be noted that the poverty reduction was not geographically equal. China and India were leaders of poverty eradication compared to sub-Saharan Africa, where the poverty level did not drop under its level in 1990 by 2002. Nevertheless, the growth experienced in China and India was merely based on the industrialization and consumer-led growth, causing negative environmental side-effects such as pollution, resource-depletion and climate change (Adams 2009: 12).

As the MDGs were approaching their final year 2015, world leaders acknowledged the need to continue the efforts to fight the poverty. However, considering the experienced environmental outcomes of rapid poverty reduction based on industrialization, the need for more sustainable actions was recognized. The combination of environmental sustainability, economic development and social inclusion, three dimensions of sustainable development, emerged again as an important topic in the

policy discussions. The North-South aid axis, that formed the nature of MDGs, remained an important matter on the global scale; however, the sole focus on the poverty alleviation did not seem to be sufficient to solve the problems the world was facing few years after the turn of the millennium. The Rio+20 conference, held in June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, marked the beginning of the discussion on the new global agenda, that later became known as Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development consisting of 17 SDGs. Colombia proclaimed that global community needs benchmarks, so it can effectively develop approaches to address critical global issues, therefore, it together with Guatemala, proposed that the Rio+20 should lead to creation of a set of SDGs, based on MDGs, that would characterize the post-2015 framework (Chasek, Wagner 2016: 400). Inspired by Colombia's impulse, 193 Member states of UN set an ambitious goal to reach the agreement on an extensive post-2015 sustainable development agenda that would secure the well-being and decent life for current as well as future generations.

SDGs attempted to correct the shortcomings of their forerunners MDGs, that were criticized for being too narrow and solely focused on ending poverty in a simplistic sense to meet basic needs for all humans, thus ignoring the underlying causes of poverty and inequality rooted in current power relations resulting from neoliberal economic model that values corporate profit more than human rights (Fukuda-Parr 2016: 45-46). Already, the negotiation process of MDGs was considered to be exclusive since it proceeded behind closed doors of UN agencies and lacked the further consultations and expertise from other sources. The actors from Global South were excluded from the negotiations although the countries they represented dominated the Millennium agenda. This raised a wave of disagreement and criticism and the negotiation process is often seen as a "*search for new rationale for aid in the context of post-Cold War geopolitics and neoliberal globalization*" initiated by heads of development agencies and development ministers. In comparison the formulation of SDGs was driven by environmental ministries' initiatives from both Global North and Global South and especially from the middle-income countries such as Colombia and Brazil (Fukuda-Parr 2016: 44-45).

The goal setting is conditioned by ability to recognize well- defined priorities and translate them into specific goals. The aim of goal setting is to select a small number of issues and give them the priorities in resources allocation (Young 2017: 33). The starting point of goal setting for sustainable development was the Rio+20 conference that called for an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process open to all stakeholders. The Open Working Group (OWG) was established and assigned the task to identify the priorities and subsequently negotiate the final set of SDGs. The OWG, co-chaired by Macharia Kamau, Permanent Representative of Kenya to the UN and Csaba Körösi, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the UN, consisted of 30 representatives,

nominated by UN member states from all five UN regional groups (Chasek et al. 2016: 8). The OWG's operating principles differed from those usually followed by UN General Assembly working groups. Typically, UN General Assembly working groups are "open-ended" meaning that all Member States can take part, but the observers are not allowed to participate. They have both formal and informal meetings, but they do not officially record the meetings and they are not allowed to adopt the resolutions and decisions. In comparison, OWG was open to all stakeholders and consisted of 30 representatives nominated by member states from all five UN regional groups. Moreover, it did not solely rely on the knowledge of country representatives, but it took into consideration expertise from the civil society as well as from the scientific community (Chasek, Wagner 2016: 401). The OWG's work proceeded in two steps. In the first stage, experts and stakeholders provided inputs on knowledge, developments and challenges regarding the relevant themes whereas in the second stage, the limited set of selected goals and targets was defined (Chasek et al. 2016: 8). In the course of thirteen negotiation sessions, OWG representatives managed to agree upon 17 goals that shaped the post-2015 agenda. They replaced the MDGs and extended their focus on poverty alleviation by environmental protection economic growth and social inclusion. The new set of goals was further agreed to be universal to ensure so that no single state or person is left behind (Chasek et al. 2016: 8).

Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation

Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (acknowledging that the UNFCCC is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change)

Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss

Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Table 2: Sustainable Development Goals (Chasek et al. 2016 : 9)

2.2 The Nature of The Sustainable Development Goals

The initiatives for sustainable development goals and subsequent long-lasting negotiations finally led to the creation of The Agenda 2030 which aim is to mobilize the action toward more sustainable globe. However, the selection of certain set of goals is just a first step in the complex transformation process. Inevitable condition to make the Agenda 2030 successful is to actually implement the SDGs on various levels, including policies, business practices and civil society actions. Nevertheless, the question is who is in the charge of putting SDGs into practice and how is this to be done and managed?

Considering the wide scope of 17 SDGs with its sub targets, the task of carrying out the implementation of the SDGs poses a significant challenge for all involved actors. As Underdal and Kim (2017: 243) point out *“the tasks of goal setting and goal attainment differ in important respects, and the Sustainable Development Goals agenda is clearly a case where the latter task will be far more demanding than the former”*.

However, the task of goal setting is also not to be underestimated. It is indeed a challenging work to identify the priorities that further evolve in the final goals. Young (2017: 35) argues that even individuals go through inner conflicts when establishing personal priorities. Therefore, when the goal setting is a collective effort (that was in the case of the SDGs taken as far as the global scope) that includes negotiations and consensus-building among large number of actors advocating self-interests, there is a chance that:

1. the collective decision making will establish more priorities and create more goals than needed for effective allocation of resources
2. the goals will have vague character and therefore they are hard to operationalize and monitor
3. individual goals will be incompatible or in the worst case contradictory

These eventual scenarios of goal setting process inevitably apply to the SDGs' designing as it was a collective endeavor to define the global issues. The scenario (a) is referred to by some authors who view the amount of goals as problematic. The argument is that SDGs agenda very much resembles MDGs agenda and the two only differ in the number of goals. The increase in the number of goals came about, despite the agreement reached at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development that there should only be a limited amount of the SDGs and this outcome is viewed as a result of limited capability of global conference diplomacy, including OWG's capacity to incorporate diverse attitudes and resolve conflicting positions (Underdal, Kim 2017: 249-250). However, the number of the SDGs on its own is not the only issue being discussed in relation to its implementation and new global governance direction. Much more than the fact that Agenda 2030 consists of 17 goals, their nature is

questioned, since most of the political and scientific discussions suggest that SDGs should be implemented as a whole; therefore, they have to be coherent and the goals targets have to address the causes of sustainability issues. It is therefore needed to analyze the synergies among SDGs as well as the aspects they address.

Spangeneberg (2016: 1-11) investigated the nature of the SDGs' targets with the aim to find out whether they have potential to bring about the change in global development trajectory. Using the DPSIR model, he evaluated the targets in relation to driving forces, pressures, states, impacts and responses of sustainability challenges. His analysis helps to recognize whether the targets are formulated in such a way that they are capable to prevent and mitigate the sustainability issues or they rather focus on restoration and adaptation. In his analysis he discovered that the targets referring to state and impacts are plentiful but there is lack of targets referring to pressures. Furthermore, targets referring to driving forces are mentioned but the alternative for the past directions that worked as driving forces are not elaborated. Spangenberg also pointed out that targets especially in social and environmental field are radical and ambitious, but the pressures that caused the issues are not addressed. An example of such a problem would be the ambitious target to overcome the unequal distribution, but redistribution itself is not mentioned as a target, or as a part of the political action at all. As long as the targets solely focus on the symptoms, but do not deal with the origins of the problem, SDGs will not be able to deliver the system changes leading to sustainable development. However, such gaps do not apply to all goals and all targets and as Fukuda-Parr (2016: 48) observes, the SDGs also include many issues that previously only civil society groups and developing countries were concerned with. Such issues also address the power relations that contribute to production and reproduction of poverty.

Another important aspect of SDGs is the coherency. The potential of SDGS to deliver the desired outcome depends on their interrelatedness, therefore the ability to build on the synergies among the single goals is a prerequisite for the success of the whole agenda. There are lessons to be learned from the MDGs that contradicted themselves in the attempt to attain the set outcomes. For example, the strategy to achieve MDG1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger was based on increasing of agriculture output requiring water, intensive use of machinery, synthetic chemical fertilizers and herbicides that with their negative impact undermine the attempts to ensure environmental stability (MDG7). Contradictions were also present within the single MDGs. The actions toward achievement of MDG7 called for expanding biofuel crop production as a means to reduction in CO₂ emissions. However, on the other hand, expanding the biofuel crops plantations is accompanied by deforestation which ultimately hinder the environmental stability (Underdal, Kim 2017: 247).

There is a widespread acceptance of the shortcomings of the MDGs in relation to their incoherency

and narrow formulation of the targets. Also, UN, the parent organization of MDGs, acknowledged the failures of MDGs related to their insufficient coherency and took into consideration largely criticized lack of synergies among the goals and weak integration among various sectors, and attempted to improve these aspects in the course of conferences and negotiations leading to the new set of global goals (Le Blanc 2015: 1). In his analysis David Le Blanc (2015: 1-17) sought to prove that SDGs indeed form a network with goals that are interlinked through different targets that refer to multiple goals. Based on network analysis technique, he demonstrated the links among single SDGs. He discovered that not all goals have the same amount of links among each other; therefore, the concept of interconnection is rather unequal. The analysis is based on the matrix that presents the links of every target of the SDGs to all goals to which its wording relates. Therefore, all the targets can be related not only to one SDG to which they originally pertain, but they can be linked to other goals as well. Le Blanc found out that out of 107 targets he analyzed, 60 directly relate to at least one more goal than their core one. As far as goals are concerned, those that have the most links to different (extended) targets than their core are

- SDG12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns (14 links)
- SDG10: Reduce inequality within and among countries (14 links)
- SDG1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere (10 links)
- SDG8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (10 links).

On the contrary, the goals that show the lowest number of links are:

- SDG7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all (3 links),
- SDG9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation (3 links)
- SDG14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development (2 links).

According to Le Blanc, these links have important implications for the institutions and agencies dedicated to SDGs. Due to the interrelated nature of SDGs, agencies dealing with one specific goal such as health or economic growth will at the same time include extended targets referring to other goals which may lead to more coherence and strengthened cross-sector cooperation.

2.3 Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

Despite various attitudes towards the nature of SDGs and their targets, once agreed, they have to be put into action. Next step after the goal setting part, actions to achieve the goals proceed in campaign mode. The core idea is to stimulate the attention, gather and allocate the resources to carry out a sustained push to achieve defined results in a fixed time frame (Young 2017: 34).

We have to bear in mind that most of the international commitments are nonbinding and voluntarily, therefore the way the actors live up to their commitments is in their free will. The case of The Agenda 2030 is not an exception. 193 UN Member States signed the Agenda 2030 and pledged to take actions towards sustainable development. Although no legal obligations emerge from the sole signatory act, there are certain factors and strategies that motivate and at the same time develop pressure on the signatory countries to adhere to their commitments.

Young (2017: 41-43) listed several measures that help to increase the effectiveness of goal attainment. He came up with the following observations and suggestions:

1. **Memorialize the goals in a high-profile document or declaration:** Although UN General Assembly resolutions are not legally binding, they can give the goals sense of legitimacy and thus raise the actors' efforts to pursue the goals. In this sense UN General Assembly resolutions serve as high-profile documents that increase credibility and visibility of goals. The UN General Assembly's Millennium Declaration as well as The Agenda 2030 provide good examples of such an approach.
2. **Formalize commitments:** Formalization of commitments might help even if there are not any legal obligations. Young depicts this on the case of fundraising strategy and explains that those who agree to contribute certain amount of money every month are likely to stick to this habit, even if they are not legally forced to continue. An important fact is that those who once started to contribute will most probably contribute additionally and even start launch monthly automatic payments. Such actions definitely work in favor of successful goal attainment.
3. **Make formal pledges so that nonperformance will cause embarrassment or loss of face:** The concept here is that the actors who pledged to the goals want to avoid the embarrassment and loss of the face that result from failed commitments. Copenhagen accord provides an example of such mechanism. Although it was largely criticized for stating too loose obligations, the actors still felt some sense of responsibility to the content of the Copenhagen

Accord.

4. **Establish well-defined benchmarks for assessing progress:** Establishment of timetable to measure the progress is an effective additional stimulus apart from developing indicators. Moreover, clearly defined benchmarks help to evaluate whether the actions to achieve the goals are on the track. Such initiatives often divide the goal into smaller, easier manageable sub-goals and provide checkpoints to assess the overall progress. Especially in cases when the goals are rather long term it is helpful to set benchmarks that serve as partial targets.

Indeed, taking look at the SDGs, some of the above mentioned principles are integrated in the way the SDGs are formulated. The Agenda 2030 is an official global plan anchored in the work of the UN General Assembly that provides the document with a sense of seriousness and legitimacy. All UN Member States formally committed to SDGs and we can observe, although on a different scale in different nations, that actions related to sustainable development are being taken across the globe. On the other hand, actors might be motivated to pledge to non-binding commitments not because of the pressures from the international bodies but because such commitments can provide them with certain advantages such as they offer space for lobbying, prestige, publicity, networking possibilities or they open access to certain communities or funding mechanisms (Leupschitz 2015: 9)

The SDGs are multiple agenda and the question is how the responsibility for their implementation is shared among the actors and what is their capability to pursue effective and efficient actions. Due to the existence of sovereign states which exercise their own national policies and do not fall under one executive body it would be impossible to develop a common global directive for the SDGs' implementation. Moreover, different states face different issues, dispose over different resources and their level of development differ as well. Based on these factors, the consequent decision was made, that each Government will set its own national targets taking the national circumstances into account. Each government will also elaborate how they integrate the goals into national planning (Spangenberg 2016: 8). However, not only Governments bear the responsibility for the SDGs' implementation. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) described nonbinding commitments and partnerships as a "*multi-stakeholder initiatives undertaken by Governments, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), major groups and others that aim to contribute to the implementation of inter-governmentally agreed SDGs and commitments in the Rio+20 outcome document The Future We Want*" (UNDESA in Leupschitz 2015: 5).

2.4 Implementation of The Sustainable Development Goals in The EU

European Union (EU) played an important role during the negotiation of The Agenda 2030 and subsequently also pledged to implement the SDGs. However, implementation of such targets is not possible unless the institutional and governance setting does not shift in favour of sustainable development (Spangenberg 2016: 8). Therefore, there is a need to undergo some institutional changes and develop new governance frameworks to incorporate the sustainable practices on the European level. Indeed, some initiatives were already launched in the European institutions. Within the European Commission a Special Advisor for Sustainable Development in the European Political Strategy Centre was assigned the task to develop the recommendations for the implementation of SDGs by June 2016. Secondly, a new Deputy Secretary-General who is in charge of sustainable development was selected. And thirdly the EC's Work Program 2016 from December 2015 released a new initiative that represents *“new approach to ensuring economic growth and social and environmental sustainability beyond the 2020 timeframe, taking into account the Europe 2020 review and the internal and external implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals”*. Finally, an Interservice Steering Group was founded and given the task to elaborate new approach beyond 2020 (Niestroy 2016: 17). Such steps provide proofs that institutional setting is slowly being adjusted in accordance with new challenges arising from The Agenda 2030.

Apart from institutional readjustments, new governance frameworks incorporating the sustainable practices are required as a means to successful attainment of SDGs. Pisano et al. (2015: 10) introduced a concept called Governance for Sustainable Development. This concept is focused on policies working in favor of sustainable development. It includes requirements and mechanisms that allow the formulation of new policies and adjustment of existing policies that support efforts and cooperation of various stakeholders in delivering sustainable development. Governance for SD has to face a number of challenges, due to the complexity of SDGs. There needs to be a clear understanding of mutual relationships and links in the sustainable development concept. This requires horizontal and vertical integration of policies, participation of diverse stakeholders who bring fresh insights and ongoing reflection of learning process. Pisano and his colleagues (2015: 11-16) developed so called taxonomy of four Governance for SD principles that explain which governance characteristics will be necessary for the promotion of sustainable development.

The principles are following:

1. **Long term principle:** Governance for SD demands long term strategies that involve intra and intergenerational effects and partial short-term policies and targets to complement the long

term strategies. The Agenda 2030 clearly builds on long term strategies and goals as its final year is 2030. Nevertheless, The Rio+20 final document stimulates urgent actions. Moreover, it has a potential to serve as a framework to reformulate and adjust national and regional sustainable development strategies and launch the short terms processes that lead to achieve the goals in long term.

2. **Integration principle:** Governance for SD demands coordination and integration of economic, social and environmental policies across various governance levels. It refers to vertical integration mechanisms that call for policy integration among diverse political levels as well as for coordination of activities on EU, national and sub national level. Secondly it refers to horizontal integration mechanisms that deal with policy integration among different ministries and administrative units. Thirdly, it refers to integration of all three pillars of sustainable development.
3. **Participation principle:** Governance for SD requires all stakeholders (private sector, scientists, civil society organizations) to be allowed to take part in decision-making process in order to include different types of knowledge. Participation was already a central principle in the formulation of SDGs and the final document also calls for the establishment of multi-stakeholder partnerships in order to accelerate the cooperation among various actors.
4. **Reflexivity principle:** Governance for SD requires ongoing reflection and policy learning. Effective monitoring practices, evaluation schemes and reviewing frameworks have to be established and put into practice. Reflecting however needs sufficient amount of data to be able to evaluate the actions that were taken. The Agenda 2030 includes the part focused on follow-up and review that can serve as a foundation for reflexive policy learning process. On the regional level there is an emphasis on peer learning, sharing the best practices and voluntary reviews that strengthen the mutual policy learning.

Clearly, on the policy level there are lot of actions to be taken to fully integrate the SDGs. Frameworks such as above illustrated Governance for SD, can definitely serve as guidelines for complex process of implementation of The Agenda 2030. Establishment of guiding principles helps to provide clues for policy making and makes the whole process more structured. When considering the EU as a political entity and implementation of SDGs, we must bear in mind that there are several policy

sections that have to be distinguished. Firstly, there are domestic policies that shall be pursued by all EU Member States to improve their national conditions. Secondly, there are EU's domestic policies that affect foreign countries such as consumption and production patterns, environmental policy, fishery policy etc. Thirdly, EU has international policies such as trade or migration policies (Niestroy 2016: 8).

Looking into domestic policies, we can observe that sustainable development concept has already found its way into European policy making. There are several strategies that have already introduced sustainable development therefore the governance of sustainable development also partially took place within the EU.

The first strategy, **The EU Sustainable Development Strategy** was launched in 2006 and includes 7 key priorities (Pisano et al. b. 2015: 20) :

- 1. Climate change and clean energy:** to limit climate change and its costs and negative effects to society and the environment;
- 2. Sustainable transport:** to ensure that our transport systems meet society's economic, social and environmental needs whilst minimizing their undesirable impacts on the economy, society and the environment;
- 3. Sustainable consumption & production:** to promote sustainable consumption and production patterns;
- 4. Conservation and management of natural resources:** to improve management and avoid overexploitation of natural resources, recognizing the value of ecosystem services;
- 5. Public Health:** to promote good public health on equal conditions and improve protection against health threats;
- 6. Social inclusion, demography and migration:** to create a socially inclusive society by taking into account solidarity between and within generations and to secure and increase the quality of life of citizens as a precondition for lasting individual well-being;
- 7. Global poverty and sustainable development challenges:** to actively promote sustainable development worldwide and ensure that the European Union's internal and external policies are consistent with global sustainable development and its international commitments.

The second strategy, with the title **Europe 2020, Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth** was released in the 2010. It sets out three main priorities:

- 1. Smart growth:** developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation
- 2. Sustainable growth:** promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy

3. Inclusive growth: fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion.

Europe 2020 also defined five headline targets that are to be reached by 2020:

- I.** 75% of the population aged 20-64 should be employed;
- II.** 3% of the EU's GDP should be invested in R&D;
- III.** the "20/20/20" climate and energy targets should be met (including an increase to 30% of emissions reduction if the conditions are right);
- IV.** the share of early school leavers should be under 10% and at least 40% of the younger generation should have a tertiary degree;
- V.** 20 million less people should be at risk of poverty.

Considering the fact that Europe 2020 as well as The EU Sustainable Development Strategy already introduced sustainable development approach into the policy of EU, it appears as a logical step to link the SDG's implementation process to these two strategies. However, the intersections and synergies between strategies and SDGs have to be analyzed in order to successfully link the content of all documents. Although the Europe 2020 has been recognized as a main path to implementation of SDGs, certain factors limit its potential to integrate the SDGs. In fact, Europe 2020 includes all three pillars of sustainable development and visualizes the transition to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Yet, it does not cover the international context, such as effects of EU domestic policies in foreign countries or external policies such as development cooperation (Niestroy 2016: 39). A comparison of EU SDS and Europe 2020 showed that almost all EU SDS priorities are somehow embedded in Europe 2020; however, the way they appear in Europe 2020 is debatable as some priorities are not addressed sufficiently and some priorities are not mentioned at all. Eurostat concluded that EU SDS, in spite of the obvious links with the Europe 2020, provides more eligible framework to address social, environmental and economic factors rather than growth oriented Europe 2020 (Gregersen et al 2016: 8).

While EU SDS and Europe 2020 mostly deal with the domestic and internal policies, the EU has to install SDGs in its external policies as well. The opportunity to embed SDGs into external policies, was on the occasion of drafting the European Union Global Strategy (EUGS). The ambitious idea to synchronize EUGS with the content of the Agenda 2030 required "a whole of government approach" from within the EU and a plan that consolidate internal and external policies. The unifying of SDGs and EUGS would have provided adequate circumstances for enabling coherent policy-making and reduction of disparities among EU institutions. EUGS provides an overarching policy framework that

has a potential to deal with interdependent global issues. Moreover, EUGS served as an extended opportunity for bringing the sustainable development into wider foreign and security policies and thus complement its implementation into development cooperation. SDGs are in fact referred to at the beginning of the final EUGS document that was released on June 28th 2016. Further in the document, SDGs relate to issues coping with resilience, human rights, trade and development and peace and security (Gregersen et al 2016: 9-10).

International cooperation of the EU is another external policy section that opened a space for SDGs implementation. Previously, international cooperation was governed by European Consensus on Development from the year 2005 and more recent Agenda for Change from 2011. However, upon adoption of the Agenda 2030, it was recognized that the framework guiding the development policies has to be revised so that EU dispose of coherent strategy that strengthen the cooperation among all actors and accelerate the implementation of SDGs (Gregersen et al 2016: 10). In 2017 revised version of European Consensus on Development was adopted. The primary focus of the Consensus is still the poverty reduction, although the readjusted version supports the EUGS and integrates social, environmental and economic aspects of sustainable development. It also relies on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and strengthen the Policy Coherence for Development approach (www.ec.europa.eu)

2.5 Implementation of the SDGS on the National Level

Apart from the fact that the EU is responsible for implementation of the SDGs, the member states are crucial actors within the whole process that significantly influence the long-term outcomes of negotiated goals. Most of the signatory countries also committed to the Agenda 21, which required the governments to create national strategies on sustainable development. Most of the countries founded National Councils for Sustainable Development that supervised the implementation process. Having elaborated National Sustainable Development Strategies based on the Agenda 21, national governments already have inputs they could be further helpful in National Sustainable Development Goals Strategy (NSDGS). Also, the national institutional frameworks installed at the time of realization of the Agenda 21 provides useful lessons for current governments. The experience with the Agenda 21 on the national level showed that the best results are achieved when the prime minister or president's office directly are assigned the task to manage the implementation (Doods/Donoghue/Leiva 2017: 139).

Although, the commitment to SDGs is not legally binding, the UN (paragraph 78 of General Assembly Resolution) encouraged signatory countries to develop practicable and ambitious national

responses that facilitate the transition to the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition to that signatory countries are also encouraged (paragraph 79 of General Assembly Resolution) to present reviews on progress on national and subnational level on regular basis (United Nations 2015b: 33/35). The Voluntarily National Reviews are to be presented at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) that was created under the auspices of Economic and Social Council and is responsible for follow-up and review of the Agenda 2030. HLPF will held annual meetings and conduct reviews that are *“voluntary, while encouraging reporting, and include developed and developing countries as well as relevant United Nations entities and other stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector. They shall be State-led, involving ministerial and other relevant high-level participants. They shall provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders.”* (United Nations 2015b :34/35).

2.6 The Role of Private Sector and CSOs in SDGs Implementation

Since the SDGs are framed as inclusive and participative agenda, it implies that multiple actors contribute to the realization of the goals. Alongside national governments, private sector and CSOs have potential to significantly influence the outcome of the Agenda 2030. Particularly, private companies have resources and leverages for implementation, however the question is, in how far is the content of Agenda 2030 matches the interest of profit generating organizations. Despite such a polemics the UN launched the cooperation with private sector in 2000 when the UN Global Compact was founded. It is a voluntarily initiative based on the CEO commitment to comply with sustainability principles and mobilize actions to support the UN objectives. To become part of the Global Compact, companies have to demonstrate that their business reflect the ten principles related to following sections: human rights, labour, environment and anticorruption (Doods/Donoghue/Leiva 2017: 145-146). Currently, 9670 companies from 163 countries participate in the UN Global Impact (www.unglobalimpact.org).

The CSOs operate in a different setting compared to the private sector, mostly regarding their resources. Nevertheless, CSOs play an integral role within the Agenda 2030. They were actively participating in the intergovernmental negotiations and Open Working group sessions, where they provided useful insights and expertise and pushed for a holistic approach in final SDGs framework. The role of CSO did not finish, once the final document was signed. Quite to the contrary, the participative nature of the Agenda 2030 allows CSOs to actively contribute to the realisation of SDGs.

CONCORD argues that based on rights-, value- and evidence-based analysis of policies and strategies CSOs are able to come up with innovative and ambitious proposals to complement the overall strategy at different levels (CONCORD 2015: 1).

The second chapter presented a historical development of sustainability and sustainable development concepts. The chapter focused on the sustainable development in the UN agendas, and lastly analysed the Agenda 2030. The following chapter withdraws from the topic of sustainable development and puts it focus on Slovakia, a signatory country of the Agenda 2030, and its political development in last decades.

3. Political Developments in Slovakia

3.1 Path Towards Independent Slovakia

Slovakia is a relatively young state that only became an independent republic in 1993. Nowadays, Slovakia is a member state of the European Union, that aspires to be the part of the “core” of the EU. However, Slovakia had gone through various political constellations and changes before it gained its independence.

Particularly, 20th century was a turbulent period, characterized by numerous changes not only in the government system but also for the state and its sovereignty. At the turn of 20th century, Slovakia was still part of the multinational formation called Austro-Hungarian Habsburg Empire. The last decades of 19th century were for Slovaks shaped by the process called Magyarisation, that meant no less than the Hungarian attempt to extend its powers over Slovaks, accompanied by cultural suppression of the Slovak minority within Austro-Hungarian Habsburg Empire. Previously important institution of Slovak culture Matica slovenska was closed under the Magyarisation between the years 1870 and 1880 and secondary education was only held in Hungarian language. Abandonment of their own national and cultural roots was an inevitable precondition for Slovak people seeking upward social mobility, provided that they did not emigrate which was also the step that many Slovaks did. Around 20% of Slovaks emigrated to the USA and other non-Slovak parts of Austro-Hungarian Habsburg Empire during the period of Hungarian suppression. The Hungarian efforts to fully assimilate Slovaks might have been successful if the Austro-Hungarian Habsburg Empire had not fallen apart before the 1st World War (Henderson 2002: 3-4).

Already in 1916, the Slovak Milan Rastislav Štefánik who lived in Paris and the Czech Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk who lived in London started to discuss and promote the formation of a common Czecho-Slovak state. Such a solution seemed to be favourable especially for Slovaks who tried to extricate themselves from the Hungarian suppression experienced during the existence of the Austro-Hungarian Habsburg Empire. The first Czechoslovakia legally came into existence on signature of The Declaration of Independence of the Czechoslovak Nation on 18 October 1918 (Henderson 2002: 5). Czechoslovakia was the only democratic state that was formed and managed to maintain the democracy after the first World War, however it only existed in the interwar period and it split again in the 1939. It is predominantly believed that Czechoslovakia was brought down due to the external influences, but the internal political factors also contributed to the separation of Czechoslovakia after the Munich conference in 1938 (Henderson 2002: 11).

The first Slovak State was an ally of Germany during the Second World War and it also became its

base for its arm industry. Germany also tried to use Slovakia as an example to show other Eastern European countries what are the benefits of cooperation with Germans. The authoritarian regime installed in Slovakia by the prime minister Josef Tiso, who later also became the president, quickly encountered the resistance from Slovak citizens that culminated in the Slovak National Uprising launched in August in 1944. The uprising was labelled as “a moral victory but a military defeat”. In the end it brought terror to Slovakia as it was still occupied by Germany, but because of demonstrated resistance towards the Nazi regime, Slovakia reunited with the Czech Republic as an ally rather than defeated nation after the second World War (Henderson 2002: 13-14). The first three years after the formation of the second Czechoslovakia were characterized by democratic regime, however the domestic support of communist parties was steadily raising which led to communist takeover in 1948. After communists gained the power, they started to change the economy as well as society. The nationalization processes were initiated and affected all enterprises that had more than 50 employees and land holdings embracing more than 50 hectares. Furthermore, Catholic church, that did not fit the new ideology was the target of communist attacks, especially in Slovak part of the country where it was linked with the fascism during the existence of the first Slovak Republic as well as because its larger influence it had in Slovakia compared to the Czech part of the country. Communist regime had been gradually strengthening its influence, becoming stricter and stricter. In 1963 a new constitution was adopted that claimed Czechoslovakia to be the first of the Soviet bloc countries to have laid the basis of socialism. Czechoslovak Republic turned into the Communist Czechoslovak Republic and officially stated the leading role of Communist Party (Henderson 2002: 18-20). In 1968 however, new leader of Czechoslovakia Communist Party Alexander Dubcek, introduced several reforms that aimed to loosen the strict regime installed by his precursors. The way of his ruling became later known as a socialism with human face, where people enjoyed more freedom than before (Henderson 2002: 23). Starting in March in 1988 a civil society demonstrated its power when the wave of demonstrations raised in Czechoslovakia that eventually led to Velvet Revolution, a non-violent resignation of communists. The avalanche of demonstrations peaked during 17th and 20th November 1989 when peaceful protests mostly organized by student took place across whole Czechoslovakia. Afterwards, the events escalated quickly, only a week after the 17th of November the leaders of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia resigned and by the end of the year 1989 communistic regime collapsed. The revolution is marked as “velvet” due to its peaceful character and because Czechoslovakia was the only communistic federation where the citizens of different republics cooperated together to defeat the communistic regime. Both Slovaks and Czechs formed movements (Civic Forum in Prague and Public Against Violence in Bratislava, both later became political parties) at the same time, reacting to the same political and economic problems and raised the same demands (Henderson 2002:

29-31).

Such a constellation seemed to be a promising starting point for a fresh beginning of the democratic Czechoslovakia, however, the path that seemed to be predicted for the country quickly changed its direction. The period after the federal elections in 1990 that resulted in establishment of the federal parliament dominated by members of Civic Forum and Public Against Violence, was characterized by two challenges. Firstly, on the one hand the country had to install new institutional framework for market economy and transfer the public property to private owners. Secondly, the two constituent republics had to figure out how to divide the power within the federation. As far as the power division and state structure is concerned, four options were discussed (Elster 1995: 115):

1. Common state with large powers vested in central government
2. Common state with large powers vested in Slovak and Czech governments
3. Confederation
4. Two completely independent states

Many tensions, disagreements and different interests arose among Slovak and Czech politicians as well as citizens regarding the topic of power division and state structure. Also, the political preferences in Czech lands and Slovakia grew apart during the first two years of democratic parliament. In Czech part of the country, right wing market reformist were gaining more and more support, whereas in Slovakia left wing forces that promoted separatists, populist and communistic ideas, emerged as the strongest parties (Elster 1995: 118).

A distinct personality in Slovak political scene at this time was Vladimir Mečiar, elected as a prime minister in 1990, who established his own political party Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) in 1991 and won the support of the majority of Public Against Violence voters. In his strategy he officially promoted the idea of keeping the country united as a confederation which served as a coverage for his real intention to gain independence for Slovakia. He slowly demanded independence for Slovakia in many aspects which culminated in his proposal to write Slovak constitution, to create Slovak Central Bank and elect Slovak president (Elster 1995: 118). In the elections in 1992 Mečiar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia landed at the first place in Slovakia and Vaclav Klaus's successor party of Civic Forum gained the majority of Czech votes. This victory opened space for them to negotiate the future of Czechoslovakia. Since the Mečiar's vision of confederation was not in line with Klaus's vision of functional federation, they opted for their second preference, namely, to split the country into two independent states. However, such a decision had to be officially agreed in a referendum which did not fit the Mečiar's and Klaus's plan as the dissolution of Czechoslovakia

was the decision of political elites and not of the majority of citizens. Eventually, Mečiar and Klaus managed to adapt laws in such a way that they avoided the referendum and were still able to push through the dissolution of Czechoslovakia. In November 1992 Federal Assembly passed the bill to dissolve Czechoslovakia and on the 1st of January 1992 Slovak Republic and Czech Republic came to existence (Elster 1995: 119-120, Henderson 2002: 35).

3.2 Politics in the Early Years of Second Slovak State and Crooked Path to Democracy

It is a challenging task to characterize the first years of Slovak Republic and its transition to independent democracy and market economy. The situation in the country was rather different than in Czech Republic and other Visegrad countries. After the collapse of Soviet Union most of the countries, in which the communistic regime was previously installed initiated, democratic transition, a process when the nondemocratic regime is replaced by the democratic regime (Gasiorowski, Power 1998: 743). Democratic transition process can largely vary in its character, demonstrated by the two transition paths that emerged in Eastern and Central Europe. The one typical for East Central European countries is characterized as an irreversible systematic change in political system and economy aiming at establishment of the rule of law, market economy and emerging civil society. On the contrary, the typical features of the transition path of the South Eastern countries include lack of the respect for the principles of constitutionalism, centralization of executive power and tendency to establish powerful oligarchic class. The developments in Slovakia did not particularly fit any of these two paths, therefore the Slovak case is often referred to as a mixed case, deviant case of Central Eastern transition path, or the country with the pariah regime (Szomolányi 2004: 150 - 151).

Slovakia drifted away from its neighbouring countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland) due to its decline in political freedom and reversion from democracy in early 90ies, followed by rapid restoration of democracy by 2002. In the Freedom House rating, between the years 1990 and 2000, Slovakia occupied a distinct position compared to its neighbours. In the years 1996 and 1997 Slovakia showed higher rates of unfreedom than Bulgaria and Romania, thus drifting away from the rates of other Central Eastern European states. However, in 1999 its score dropped again and equalled those in Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland (Krause 2003: 47).

The undemocratic developments even hindered Slovakia's attempt to join NATO and the EU in 1997, when the country was evaluated as insufficiently democratic and was subsequently separated from other Visegrad states in the EU and NATO in the accession process. Several occurrences led NATO and EU to arrive at such a classification of Slovakia, including the police brutality against the Roma

minority, politically conspired kidnapping of president's Kováč's son, hidden spying on citizens and issuing of the book that denied Slovakia's participation in the deportation of Jewish citizens during the wartime (Henderson 2002: 41, Janos 2000: 369). However, it is to be noted that it was not solely the nature of politics that was exercised in Slovakia that made the transition rather unsmooth. Additionally, Slovakia faced more challenges than its neighbouring countries such as the lack of the experience with the statehood and democracy, given the fact that the first Slovak Republic had an authoritarian regime and only lasted from 1939 to 1945 and secondly, the high rate of ethnic diversity (Roma population and Hungarian minority) complicated the situation in newly founded state (Szomolányi 2004: 153).

Political scene in first years of independent Slovakia was significantly influenced by two governments (1992-1994, 1994 -1998) under the leadership of Vladimir Mečiar and his Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS). During his second government (1992-1994) Mečiar formed so called "red-brown" coalition consisting of ex-communists and Slovak National Party (SNS), the successors of wartime state's Slovak People's Party. In spite of the fact that SNS was part of the coalition the majority of parliamentary seats were occupied by the ex-communists. The President Michal Kováč and Chairman of the Constitutional Court Milan Čič, both previous members of communist party, were also appointed to their new roles based on their loyal relationships to the prime minister Mečiar. This somehow ironic nationalist-populistic formation was in the charge of state building process and democratization. Such a constellation was unique and did not have a parallel in any other Visegrad country, not only because its contradictory character but also because of obvious continuity of old communist regime represented by newly appointed elites (Szomolányi 2004: 153, 158-159).

The government period between 1992 and 1994 was characterized by authoritarian style and institutional encroachments, however it was the third Mečiar's government (1994 - 1998) that presented the most serious threat for the democracy. After the elections in 1994 Mečiar allied his power with the Slovak National Party (SNS) and the Association of Workers of Slovakia (ZSR) thus gaining the majority in parliament. Without a strong opposition the government gained access to significant amount of money and was able to use the executive power for its own benefits, especially in the field of privatizations, broadcast media and intelligence. The government used the Fund of National Property to manage the privatization processes so that the money flowed to politically connected investments and financed future election challenges. Having control over broadcast media enabled the government to eliminate critical voices and reframe the issues and present the coalition cabinet in positive light. Furthermore, Mečiar appointed his allies to the Slovak Information Service (SIS) which allowed him to observe and when necessary intimidate his opponents (Krause 2003: 48-49).

Mečiar further wanted to centralize the power, when he tried to transform the parliamentary system into the presidential. Despite the fact, that only simple parliamentary majority was needed to enforce the change, Mečiar failed on his attempts due to the resistance of his junior coalition partners as well as the opposition, who viewed such a change as unfavourable. Moreover, HZDS also endeavoured to introduce the first past the post or mixed electoral system, which would have been favourable for HZDS as the largest party. Such a system could have been extremely problematic in Slovakia as it can produce two-party system, but it is also likely to result in one-party system where one party repeatedly gains the power and there is not any alternative in government. Smaller and less famous coalition partners were aware of such danger and did not allow this proposal to enter into force (Szomolányi 2004: 163, Henderson 2002: 45-46, 56).

The third HZDS government was also infamously famous due to its hostile actions towards its political opponents. The president Michal Kováč also became a regular target of Mečiar's attacks. Although they were previously allied, the independent nature of president's post allowed Kováč to oppose the authoritarian efforts of third Mečiar's government which resulted in Mečiar's attempt to oust the president. Since the legal means did not prove to be sufficient to discredit Kováč, Mečiar, as the evidence strongly implied, arranged the abduction of the president's son in order to remove Kováč from his position (Szomolányi 2004: 154, Krause 2003: 49).

The nature of Mečiarism (term for Mečiar's politics style) did not go unnoticed by civil society that showed less and less support for HZDS and inclined to different political parties. The political scene in the period before the parliament election in 1998 became significantly polarized with new parties emerging and steadily gaining more support. Newly established Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDKU) appeared to be the strongest rival of HZDS. Indeed, the election was not a success for HZDS. Even though, it found itself with 29 % seats in parliament it was not able to form a coalition, which was not the case of the SDK led by the Mikuláš Dzurinda, which allied with three other opposition parties and formed the new government (Krause 2003: 51, Henderson 2002: 49). What followed the elections in 1998 is described as a consolidation of democracy, a process in course of which a democracy becomes stable and durable so that the return to nondemocratic regime is not likely to happen. Although it is hard to define when exactly a regime is stable it definitely requires strengthening and legitimation of democratic institutions (Gasiorowski, Power 1998: 743). In Slovakia it referred to the period of stabilization, when the main goal of the government was to restore Slovakia's reputation abroad and revise the constitution as well as democratic institutions, that had indeed existed since the 1993, but their effective operation was crippled by previous elite's mistreatments (Szomolányi 2004: 168, 172). The new government indeed initiated processes to alter the political environment. During the Mečiar's time, opposition parties were excluded from

representation in parliamentary committees, which changed after 1998, furthermore Dzurinda's government launched the direct election of president and amended the constitution (Henderson 2002: 50). It was exactly the act of adoption of direct presidential elections to Constitution in 1999 that is viewed as a proof that the transition to democracy was completed and definitely marked the end of Mečiarism era (Szomolányi 2004: 173). The constitution guarantees freedom of speech and forbids censorship. Also, the broadcast media were freed from the control of political elites and most of them were privately owned in 1998. Moreover, the judicial independence was improved and the Dzurinda launched actions against corruption (Freedom House 2001).

As far as the foreign policy is concerned, Dzurinda managed to rebuild the infamous reputation thrown on Slovakia by Mečiar's government. During the period between 1992 - 1998 EU sceptically observed the political developments in Slovakia, issued a demarche on several occasions and restricted Slovakia from entry to EU due to the lack of democracy. However, in February 2000 negotiation about the EU accession were relaunched, Slovakia was accepted into OECD and was one of the two leading countries for the NATO accession in the second wave of eastward expansion (Henderson 2002: 54). In general, Slovakia under Dzurinda experienced return or better said a real beginning of democracy accompanied by civil right and political liberties. In 2001 Slovakia scored 1,5 in freedom rating, 2 in civil liberties and 1 in political rights (Freedom House 2001).

3.3 Slovakia and European Union

3.3.1 Slovakia's Accession to the EU

Slovakia found itself in a challenging situation regarding foreign affairs and foreign policy. The lack of the experience with the statehood and formulation as well as implementation of its own foreign policies was strikingly apparent. Most of the former diplomats were Moscow-trained which lowered their credibility in dealing with the non-communist issues since they had not enjoyed many opportunities to do so during the existence of Czechoslovakia. Moreover, Czechs were always dominant in foreign affairs in the years of common federation and were also advantaged in the prestigious diplomatic work in the Foreign Ministry located in Prague which also contributed to the lack of qualified staff in independent Slovakia. However, it was not just the lack of human resources that complicated the situation, but Slovakia was neither equipped with the necessary physical assets needed to create a well-functioning Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Despite these internal obstacles, Slovakia, had demonstrated its ambitions to become part of international community. In 1993 Slovakia became a member of UN and in the same year it was assigned four seats in Parliamentary

Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) in Europe. Later in 2000 Slovakia was fully admitted to OSCE (Henderson 2002: 86-87).

However as far as the accession to the EU is concerned, the process did not run smoothly at the first try, which could be reasoned by the superficial attempt made by Mečiar's government. The accession to EU is necessarily linked with the political conditionality, that has enormously evolved during last decades. It guarantees the EU certain powers over the member states that in exchange hand over some of its national powers and agree to comply with the EU's requirements within their national matters. The EU first official accessions conditions were published as early as 1962 in Birkelbach Report. They were established in reaction to Spain's and Greece's interest to join the EU, which was complicated because of the fact that both countries were still under the authoritarian rule. Therefore, the first EU accession conditionality mostly related to the introduction of democratic values (Pridham 2007: 451). The EU conditionality was further elaborated, especially with the regard to Central and Eastern European countries in Copenhagen in 1993 when the EU claimed that every country from above mentioned region shall become a Member State provided that it fulfils stipulated conditions that included following points (Agenda 2000):

1. the candidate country has achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities
2. the existence of a functioning market economy, as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union
3. the ability to take on the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.

In the final conclusion the EU stated that Slovakia had for the most met its obligation, mostly the economic results were very satisfying. However, Slovakia did not manage to sort out the problems within its democratic functioning. Therefore, Slovakia did not qualify to access the EU in 1997, but the Commission express its hope to reopen the negotiations with Slovakia once it improves its shortcomings identified in the evaluation (Agenda 2000).

As already elaborated in previous part, the political culture in Slovakia radically changed in 1998 on the occasion of Dzurinda's appointment as prime minister. The previous superficial interest to join the EU was replaced by the real intentions which was demonstrated by the fact that only few days after his election, Dzurinda visited Brussels and initiated high political level discussion and together with the European Commissioner for Enlargement, Van den Broek, decided to establish European Commission/Slovakia High Level Working Group which aimed to support Slovakia in its attempts to recreate "the momentum in the process of preparation for accession to the EU following the political changes in Slovakia in 1998 (Pridham 2002: 215).

The new government installed both municipal and presidential elections, enabled the opposition parties to be involved in parliamentary committees and strengthened the fight against corruption as well as independence of judiciary. These positive developments towards meeting the Copenhagen criteria were praised at the meeting of the EU Council in Helsinki in December 1999 which resulted in reopening of the Slovakia's EU accession negotiations that resulted in signing the Accession Treaty in 2003. The same year a referendum was held, and the majority of the electorate expressed the agreement with their country's entry to the EU. Slovakia officially became a member state on the 1th of May 2004 (Pridham 2002: 217, Henderson 2004: 652).

3.3.2 Impact of the EU Acquis and Further EU Integration

The decision to enlarge the EU was an important step that determined future economic, institutional and political framework. The enlargement process of the EU provides some advantages and disadvantages for both the EU and the candidate state. As far as eastern enlargement is concerned, the previous 15 member states were not united in their opinion whether eastern countries should have or should not have accessed the EU since it would have had different consequences for each country. Generally, in the old member states there was a nervous awareness of potential implications of eastern enlargement for the functioning of the EU, since the national administrations in candidate states were not considered to be fully reliable (Pridham 2008: 369). On the other hand, old member states were aware of positive aspects of the eastern enlargement. The old members would have benefited from expanded market, which would have brought new export and investment opportunities. Moreover, it would have provided supply of cheaper but skilled labour and strengthened the EU competitiveness on the global market. On the other hand, it was calculated that eastern enlargement would cause the drop in GDP per head by 16% and raise in the transactions and decision costs. In addition, low income and wealth levels would have received the largest amounts of money from structural funds. Apart from these general positive and negative implications, each of the old member states had its own concerns or interests that were reflected in their support of or resentment toward the enlargement process.

The accession countries would have benefited from almost unrestricted connection to their most significant foreign markets and would have experienced increased inflow of capital. The EU membership would have provided them with the financial resources to cover the costs of economic adaptation and catching-up process (Schimmelfennig 2006: 205). From the point of view of candidate countries from the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region the geopolitical, sociocultural and

economic benefits outweighed the threat of increased economic vulnerability and diminished national sovereignty accompanying the EU membership. The ambition to join the EU thus created the asymmetrical powers between CEE countries and EU since they were more in need of the EU than EU was in need of them. Also, the candidate countries meet conscious decision that they wish to join the existing countries which puts the candidate country into inferior position to the EU and limits the ability to raise too many or too ambitious requirements. Moreover, the EU as a party in the negotiations is much more experienced than the candidate countries and is able to use this in its advantage (Javorčík 2005: 30). As Vachudova (2005: 63) argues, this asymmetrical power constellation formed the CEE countries' interactions with the EU before they became full members and maybe even afterwards.

Vachudova (2005: 63) distinguishes between the concepts of the EU as a passive and active leverage to illustrate the influence the EU has on its future members. While passive leverage refers to the attraction of the EU membership, the active leverage refers to deliberate conditionality applied in the accession process.

Taking look at the Slovakia during the years 1992 and 1998, we observe that, the strength of the EU as the passive leverage did not overweight the interest of domestic political elites that did not comply with the conditionality imposed by the EU accession. Clearly, the period after revolution 1989 and the period during complicated path to democracy in Slovakia went almost unnoticed by any external influences from the EU, even though, the EU membership was on the list of the state policy goals of Mečiar's government at that time. However, as illustrated in the previous section, Slovakia eventually demonstrated the real intention to become the member of the EU, therefore the passive leverage of the EU influenced future political direction in Slovakia, when Dzurinda's government in 1998 showed the willingness to implement the economic reform, respect the rule of law and support ethnic tolerance. As Vachudova (2005: 140) points out, newly formed government in Slovakia also had its material incentives to aspire to join the EU and adopt western oriented political agenda since it was a promise of long term rewards in the form of political power.

The active leverage of EU demonstrated itself during the accession process when Slovakia had to accept numerous political and economic conditions. Thus, by raising the demand for membership in the EU, Slovakia subjugated the domestic policy to the examination and evaluation by the EU. Clearly, such a process would not have been possible if Slovakia had not willingly and actively participated, therefore the active EU leverage also refers to an interaction between the state and the EU. This interaction is characterized by three mechanisms. Firstly, the conditionality forces the country to launch certain reforms of economy and policies. Secondly, a credible commitment demonstrated during the progress made in accession process, makes any reversal attempts very

expensive. Third mechanism is the impact on society, economy and polity that enables certain groups to benefit from the reforms much more than others (Vachudova 2005: 110).

The EU conditionality is a complex set of reforms. Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004: 669) differentiate between democratic conditionality and *acquis* conditionality. Democratic conditionality embraces the fundamental political norms and principles of liberal democracy. It is a prerequisite of *acquis* conditionality when the institutional ties are established. Once the accession negotiations are open, democratic conditionality steps in the background.

Acquis conditionality is based on the *acquis communautaire* that plays an important role during the accession negotiations. Its credibility is the most important criteria for its success. Previously Central and Eastern European countries adopted EU rules or mixed them with other models, but once the policy adjustment became an issue in accession negotiations, *acquis* conditionality fulfilment became common feature and highest interest in candidate countries in Central and Eastern European region. An important aspect, that decision makers had to bear in mind, were the domestic power costs resulting from the political conditionality imposed by the *acquis*, as allowing political conditions to be dictated from the outside could have interfered with the domestic political powers. However, *acquis* does not touch upon bases of political powers as such, therefore the decision makers did not have to feel threatened by loss of office or any other prohibitive consequences (Schimmelfennig 2006: 215).

The European Commission (EC) defines *acquis* as „*the body of common rights and obligations that is binding on all the EU member states*”. Its content is continually evolving but always relates to (EC n.d.):

1. the content, principles and political objectives of the Treaties
2. legislation adopted pursuant to the Treaties and the case law of the Court of Justice
3. declarations and resolutions adopted by the Union
4. instruments under the Common Foreign and Security Policy
5. international agreements concluded by the Union and those entered into by the member states among themselves within the sphere of the Union's activities

In the course of the accession negotiations and from those resulting requirement to implement *acquis*, Slovakia undertook many political, institutional and economic changes. In 2000 the revised version of the Slovak National Programme for the Adoption of the *Acquis* (NPAA) was adopted. The revision set the short and mid-term priorities for the *acquis* implementation and further focused on strengthening of administrative structures, specified the technical aid and financial needs for implementation of EU legislation (Fígel' 2000: 99). The NPAA served as guidelines for the process of the complex reforms along the *acquis* conditionality fulfilment. In 2002 the EC published its regular

report on Slovakia's progress towards accession, in which it evaluated Slovakia's reforms and progress in 29 chapters of *acquis*. According to the EC Slovakia managed to overcome the shortcomings identified in the previous report. Also, the issues that were problematic during the negotiations, such as situation of Roma population and judicial reform, were improved (Haughton 2007: 7). Slovakia was praised for its progress in legislative alignment, strengthening the administrative capacity, free movement of goods, freedom to provide services, agriculture, energy, environment, justice and home affairs. Although, weaknesses were identified in some areas such as company law, transport policy or financial control as well as the scale of corruption remained a concern. Overall Slovakia met the conditions that were stipulated during the negotiations and incorporated the *acquis* conditionality (COM 2002: 123-127).

3.3.3 Impact of the *acquis* and compliance after the EU accession

In case of Slovakia the EU conditionality demonstrated its power. Yet, we still have to distinguish between the democratic conditionality and *acquis* conditionality. As far as the democratic conditionality is concerned, the opinions on whether that Slovakia accomplished its democratic transformation based on the motivation to join the EU, or it was rather the incentive stemming from domestic political will after Mečiar's defeat in the elections in 1998, widely vary across scientific discussions (Haughton 2007, Pridham 2010, Tomini 2014). On the other hand, Slovakia actively complied with the *acquis* conditions that undoubtedly affected Slovak institutional mechanisms and policies as reported in the regular progress reports published by the EC. Fulfilment of *acquis* conditions built the path to Slovak convergence to the European values and standards.

Once the accession process is finished, and the candidate state becomes the member state of the EU, authoritative position of the EU shifts. Strict monitoring and evaluation procedures, characteristic for the accession period disappear and the membership, that previously served as the highest motivation is acquired. While the EU institutions are endowed with sanction mechanisms in case of non-compliance that might to some extent compensate the disappearance of external motivation, the threat of membership denial is no longer present. Therefore, without the membership incentive, the post-accession compliance of new member state might take reverse course. Such arguments fit the rationalist approach on post-accession compliance (Pridham 2008: 424, Sedelmeier 2008: 807).

On the contrary, a constructivist approach is based on more positive projections. According to constructivist point of view, new member states are likely to maintain the compliance since the implementation of conditionality during the accession becomes a habit. Adaptation to the norms of

the EU became part of domestic policy making. Identification with the new rules and persuasion about their rightness also contribute to positive post-accession compliance. External threat is thus replaced by the domestic persuasion. In combination with the availability of new financial resources from the EU and possible shaming effects, the probability of non-compliance decreases (Pridham 2008: 370).

During the accession, Slovakia was an enthusiastic actor in the European convergence and managed to catch up with the leading candidate countries in terms of closed negotiation chapters. It was an impressive progress, considering the fact that Slovakia entered the negotiations two years after Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary (Malová, Haughton 2006: 323). All along the negotiations Slovakia played a passive role and without much resentment or raising any strong demands accepted all conditions imposed by the EU. According to Malová and Haughton (2006: 326-327) Slovakia partly resembled “an obedient dog faithfully following its master’s instructions”. Láštic (2006: 15) sees the behaviour of Slovakia in a milder manner and argues that Slovakia attempted to build an image of “pro-integration country” and “good European”. Such a position is partly understandable, since Slovakia’s national priority was the EU membership and playing the role of the obedient dog certainly limited the chance of repeated accession denial. On the other hand, Slovakia obstructed itself from the discussions about the type of EU it wanted to be member of (Malová, Haughton 2006: 327). Indeed, by the year 2001, not even a one politician expressed any opinion on the future character of the EU. The only opinion Slovakia expressed was support of proposals coming from other countries. For example, the reaction of former Foreign Minister Eduard Kukan in relation to an opinion of French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, who envisioned the EU as a federation of strong national states, was, that he preferred the version presented by German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, who proposed enhanced integration and clear division of power. Bilčík and Világi (2007: 9) also argue that such a restrained position in the discussion is reasoned by the deficient foreign policy expertise among politicians.

Witnessing Slovakia as the passive actor in negotiations with the tendency to uncritically accept all rules and conditions dictated by the EU, we could assume that Slovakia as a member state would maintain such a position and deepen the efforts in European integration. However, as elaborated above the power constellation between Slovakia and the EU changed in favour of Slovakia once the accession treaty was signed. Subsequently, Slovakia was not solely policy taker but also policy co-maker within the EU. In the domestic field, Slovak politicians had more space for formulating their real interests and intentions.

Indeed, since the enlargement, Slovakia supported further harmonization with the EU norms and rules, especially in the field of strategic issues such as enlargement to Western Balkans, Constitutional

Treaty and The Hague programme's aim of strengthening freedom. Especially the enlargement to the east with the focus on Ukraine and Western Balkans was prioritized on Slovak foreign policy agenda. The Minister of Foreign Affairs came up with policy documents based on the EU's Stabilization and Association Process, the European Neighbourhood Policy and the quest of even wider EU. Slovakia proved its engagement into Western Balkan membership when it actively supported the opening of accession negotiation with Croatia and set up the embassy in Bosna and Herzegovina. Slovak enthusiasm for enlargement was partially explained by the security reasons. Premier Mikuláš Dzurinda stated that the safety within the EU would be significantly enhanced if Western Balkan and former Yugoslavia countries developed in a desirable way. However, Slovakia was sceptical regarding Turkey accession to the EU, mostly due to its culture that is based on different religion and different values than the European culture (Malová, Haughton 2006: 324, 327, Bilčík, Világi 2007: 38, Láštík 2006: 16).

Slovakia also demonstrated the initiative to improve weaknesses identified upon the EU accession, that were undoubtedly serious, but did not hinder the membership itself. One of the sections that had to be further improved, was the judiciary since it was marked as being in a state of weak functioning (COM 2002: 26). The judicial reform was initiated during the first Dzurinda's government and was conducted by the two successive Ministers of Justice Ján Čarnogurský and Daniel Lipšic. Both ministers were keen reformers and committed to efforts to fight corruption and bring about the judicial reform even after 2002 when the EC stopped monitoring Slovakia. Within the reform, judicial independence was guaranteed through a constitutional amendment, a special court dealing with major corruption and organized crimes cases was established and new system in the administration of justice and criminal law was installed. The efforts continued until 2006 when a new government was elected and did not bring as much enthusiasm for further changes in the judiciary (Pridham 2008: 375-376). Another aspect in which Slovakia was lagged behind the expected results upon the EU entrance was corruption. The EC report emphasized that corruption remained cause for serious concerns in Slovakia (COM 2002: 24). In terms of corruption Slovakia was exposed to the external pressure not only from the side of the EU but also from other international organizations such as OECD, World Bank and Transparency International that used to regularly pinpoint the shortcomings in the fight against corruption. Otherwise, the case of corruption resembles the developments in judiciary. Dzurinda's government continued its efforts to eliminate corruption even after 2004 when the EU did not act as a watchdog of happenings in Slovak administration. They launched a series of direct measures aimed at reduction of corruption. Positive effects indirectly resulted from the public finances, judiciary and health care reform. These developments were reflected in more positive corruption ratings around this time. Nevertheless, the fight against corruption was set on a reverse

path in 2006 after the change in government. Robert Fico and his party Direction-Social Democracy (SMER-SD) was criticized in their first in government for the missing enthusiasm in the fight against corruption (Pridham 2008: 378).

Another issue that the EC identified in its 2002 report was the protection of minorities and minorities rights. There are two substantial ethnic minorities in Slovakia, namely Hungarians and Roma people. While the situation for Hungarian minority had been gradually improving between 1998 and 2006, mostly due to the pressure from The Party of Hungarian Community (SMK) that was part of the government, the situation of Roma population remained difficult (COM 2002: 30, Pridham 2008: 380). In case of Roma minority, the EU pressure was far more visible than in previous two cases. It was the EU which managed to push this issue to the Slovak political agenda in the time when there was almost no domestic interest to improve the situation of Roma population. In 2001, Roma Plenipotentiary's Office was established and further participated in the Regular Reports of the European Commission on Roma matters. After the EU accession, Roma issues were part of the political agenda. Therefore, some of the funds coming from the EU were invested in projects targeted at Roma communities related to education, infrastructure, labour market promotion and training. Also, within the Decade of Roma Inclusion initiated in 2005, Balkan countries and Central Eastern European Countries pledged to advance the improvements in the Roma matters. In general, the EU membership prompted the consolidation of actions related to Roma minority issues, however fully satisfactory developments in this question have not been observed yet (Pridham 2008: 381).

Looking into post-accession conditionality we can indeed detect deeper attempts to maintain some of the adjustments and reforms introduced before 2004, however there also has not been a unified pattern across all of the sectors. Also, in terms of European integration Slovakia was not a keen devotee in all regards. To the contrary of pro-European tendencies Slovakia tried to maintain its national dominance in various policy areas such as fiscal policy and welfare. The EU provided an opportunity for Dzurinda's government to catch up with other European countries in terms of economic performance. The government did not necessarily support further integration policies, also due to the costs resulting from their implementation (Láštic 2006: 16). Prime Minister Dzurinda, together with the Finance Minister Mikloš, an important person in Slovak neoliberal turn, strictly defended the preservation of national veto on tax and social policy (Malová, Haughton 2006: 324-325). Furthermore, the Ministry of Justice opposed the proposal to create the post of European Prosecutor and set the minimum standards relating to member states' internal criminal proceedings. Slovakia also refused the shift from unanimous to qualified majority decision-making in the economic and social cohesion policy (Bilčík, Világi 2007: 22, 26).

Overall, Slovak policies under Dzurinda's government, after the EU accession, became ideologically

based on neoliberalism which was very welcomed by some international organizations such as World Bank. The faith in superiority of markets over public administration was reflected in numerous reforms. Without a strong opposition from leftist parties, government significantly cut welfare benefits and introduced 19% flat-rate tax. The health reform turned hospitals and health insurance companies into market actors competing for patients and insurance clients. The pension reform provided citizens with the opportunity to transfer part of their contributions into personal accounts administrated by private pension fund company. Yet the government itself was fractured in that time; therefore, the political agenda that was pushed through in that period was mixed. Apart from neoliberal tendencies, advocated by Dzurinda's party SDKU and Alliance of New Citizens (ANO), the other friction consisting of the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) and the Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK) endeavoured the agenda inspired by religion. Such tendencies appeared in an attempt to integrate a reference to God into constitution. Therefore, the agenda implemented since the second half of 2003 and afterwards is described as religion and neoliberal agenda (Malová, Haughton 2006: 328-329).

Clearly, the policy making mostly originated in domestic politicians' will and was not in line with the social democratic tendencies of Western Europe member states. Further European integration could indeed have had negative effects on domestic policies, such as in the case of the abandonment of national veto on tax, quite to the contrary to the intentions of Slovak policy-makers. While Slovakia was able to retain its national veto in tax policy and defence matters, as anchored in the EU Constitution from 2004, the national sovereignty was weakened in areas such as social policy, criminal law, judicial and police cooperation (Malová, Haughton 2006: 330, Bilčík, Világi 2007: 29-30). Considering the conditions in Slovakia in 2003, it was not difficult for the proponents of neoliberal reforms to implement those, since the weak opposition and almost non-existing civil society and trade unions mobilization did not resist the reform, even if they did not agree with the neoliberal turn. On the other hand, the wave of criticism came from the side of the EU, for example in relation to low corporate taxation rates, which further led to deeper integration demands from old member states (Malová, Haughton 2006: 334).

Slovak political patterns after the EU accession were not unified. Some efforts to fix the shortcomings identified in the pre-accession conditionality had been maintained even after the Slovakia entered the EU. However, the issues had not been fully solved. Therefore, Slovakia does not strictly fit either rationalist or constructivist line of argumentation. As far as deeper integration is concerned, Slovakia did not imminently advocate integration policies and was not willing to diminish its national sovereignty as might had been expected after its pro-integration attitude during accession process. On the one hand, Slovakia supported integration policies such as common EU foreign and defence policy,

enlargement to Western Balkan and voted for the European constitution. On the other hand, it required national sovereignty to be retained in policy field that were mostly influenced by neoliberal tendencies, because the loss of decision making power on national level could have interfered with neoliberal turn initiated by Dzurinda's government.

This chaptered shortly illustrated the history of Slovakia before gaining independence and analysed Slovakia's political development up until the period after the EU accession. The next chapter deals with the internal state of affairs in Slovakia and examines the state of democracy and policy-making in the country.

4. State of Slovak Democracy and Issues in Governance

4.1 Satisfaction with The State of Democracy

Since its independence gained on 1.1. 1993 Slovak Republic is a parliamentary democracy with autonomous legislative, executive and judicial branches. The legislative power is represented by the National Council of the Slovak Republic, that consists of 150 Members of Parliament elected every four years. The members of parliament are elected by universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot (Constitution: Article 72,73,74). The executive branch is represented by government consisting of Prime Minister, Deputy of Prime Minister and Ministers. All of them are elected from the parties forming coalition. There are 13 ministries in Slovakia. The president has right to appoint and recall the Prime Minister (Constitution: Article 108, 109, 110). The president is the head of the state. The president represents Slovakia both externally and internally and shall ensure the regular operation of Constitutional bodies by his or her decisions (Constitution: Article 101). Judiciary consists of Constitutional court and general courts (district courts, regional courts and Supreme Court). The judiciary shall be independent of other state authorities at all levels (Constitution: Article 124,140). Slovakia is officially a democratic republic, with the rule of law, constitution and autonomous legislative, executive and judicial branches. However, considering its history and numerous changes in political system, it is apparent that Slovakia as a country does not have a long history of well-functioning democratic system. As elaborated in chapter 2, even after the fall of communism and end of Russian influence, the path towards democracy was difficult, and Slovakia faced various setbacks during its democratic transition. We could assume that the legacy of such complicated political history is still reflected in current governance and political culture. Also, the process of democratic transformation does not happen overnight but requires longer period. As Pridham and Agh (2001: 5) argue, democratic consolidation can take minimally decade and maximally two or more decades. Moreover, one aspect is to introduce and build democratic system, the second is to maintain stable democratic system that is perceived as fair and responsible by the citizens (Bútorová, Gyarfášova 2015: 366).

Before proceeding to an analysis of democracy and governance in Slovakia, it is useful to define what falls under the term democracy. We can come across various definitions and labels of democracy relating to various contexts and political setting or adjusted according to interests of actors deploying the definitions. For the purpose of this master thesis, we stick to the definition coined by Bollen (2009: 369) who describes liberal democracy as *“the extent to which political system allows political*

liberties and democratic rule. Political liberties are present to the degree that freedom of expression and the freedom to organize groups that can support or oppose the government exist. Democratic rule refers to the accountability of the elites to the general population where this is nearly always manifested in the presence of free and fair elections held at reasonable intervals. It also includes the notion that each individual is entitled to participate directly or indirectly (through representatives) in the government”. The functioning democracy should also prevent the misuse of power, because power is not concentrated in hands of small group of decision makers but is distributed among several authorities that control each other. Yet, if democracy demonstrates deficits it can easily result in negative consequences such as emergence and further support of extremists and populists in politics which has been the case in Slovakia (Goliaš, Hajko, Piško 20017: 3-5). Such developments are typical in post-comunistic democracies. The euphoria from newly acquired freedoms quickly fades away and is replaced by dissatisfaction and disappointment from government functioning, public administration and loss of social security. Experience with democracy contributes to raising disenchantment that results in political apathy and disinterest in public affairs. Such political environments also provide space for increased populist and nationalistic moods (Bútorová, Gyarfášová: 2015: 365).

In Slovakia, populist tendencies started to appear in 2006 when SMER party, headed by Robert Fico won the parliamentary elections. Once in charge, Robert Fico came up with a myriad of harmful promises. The ignorance and disruption of fair discussions and misuse of power in combination with failure to attain the promises contributed to increased dissatisfaction of Slovak citizens. In March 2016, ten years after the first electoral victory of SMER, it won the parliamentary elections again. 5% limit to enter the parliament was also reached by extreme right-wing party People’s Party Our Slovakia (ĽSNS) and by another populist party We Are Family (Sme Rodina) (Goliaš, Hajko, Piško 20017: 3-5, 15).

Institute for Economic and Social reforms (INEKO) has recently published a survey about the state of democracy in Slovakia from the perspective of citizens. Generally, the satisfaction with democracy is low. The findings showed that 40% of the population perceives the democracy in Slovakia to be of a poor quality and 43% of the population believe that democracy has deteriorated during the last 5 years. The mistrust is mostly rooted in the numerous corruption scandals connected to politicians in power, that have not been thoroughly investigated, entry of extreme right party into parliament and reaction of politicians to the refugee crisis. The most mistrusted institutions in Slovakia are parliament and government, followed by justice system and police. The survey also showed the dissatisfaction of citizens with the politicians because of the tendency to represent their own interests or follow the interests of affiliated businesses rather than work in the public interest. Also, the poor law enforceability is a concern of Slovak citizens (Goliaš, Hajko, Piško 2017: 9, 12).

4.2 Participation of Civil Society in Public Matters

Another important aspect of democracy is the participation of civil society. It is indeed a condition for well-functioning democracy, since the participation of civil society in the government decision is foreseen in democratic systems. Although a democracy has to fulfil other conditions to be well-functioning, we cannot talk about democracy without civil society participation in administration of public affairs. It applies even more in post-communistic countries where the legacy of suppressing an active citizenship is still present (Bútorová, Gyarfášová 2010: 451). Through participation, citizens express their requirements, elect public officials and influence political decisions. Yet, the extent of participation of civil society in old democracies differs from extent of participation of civil society in post-communistic countries. The latter are characterized by the decrease of civil society participation after so called revolution euphoria, that emerged after the fall of communistic regime. Although the reason has not been clearly identified yet, such tendency has been observed (Vrábliková 2009: 868). Once the civil society loses interest in voting, discussing politics, or membership in politic groups, it is described as a collapse of civic community as it stands for general loss of interest in and consideration for the common good and ideals of democratic system. While 80% to 90% of voters took part in the first free elections in most of the new democracies in Eastern and Central Europe, so called post-honeymoon was identified soon after, when the electoral turnout declined (Letki 2004: 665-666). In Slovakia, the situation developed in similar way. Although, the first two free parliamentary elections had high electoral turnout (75,65% in 1994 and 84,25% in 1998), the figures have been decreasing in following years.

| Year | Electoral Turnout |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| 2002 | 70,07% |
| 2006 | 54,67% |
| 2010 | 58,84% |
| 2012 | 59,11% |
| 2016 | 59,82% |

Source: www.vysledkyvolieb.sk

Parliamentary elections are elementary form of civil society participation; however, it is not the only way the citizens are able to affect public matters. Bútorová and Gyarfášová (2010: 454-457) conducted a research on civil society participation in Slovakia within the period from 1994 to 2008.

They focused on 16 different forms of civil society participation that fall under 4 categories: 1. Political activities based on the individual initiative (candidature for public official, work for political party, approach a public official, participation in public negotiations and discussions).

2. Participation in mass civil activities (contribution to charity collections, participation in elections, petition signing, involvement in problem-solving in municipality)

3. Participation in protest activities (participation in demonstrations, political meetings, active participation in trade unions)

4. Participation in public discussion and problem-solving (involvement in internet discussions, commenting the public matters in media, involvement in the work of non-governmental organization).

They illustrated a percental rate of previous active and future potential participation in these categories in three selected years: 1994, 2004, 2008. The results do not show, as might be expected, an increasing tendency. Quite to the contrary, more respondents were involved in some of the researched forms of civil society participation in 1994 in comparison to 2008. All four categories were affected by lower rates of interest, however in different extent. The most striking decrease of civil society participation was observed in demonstrations and political meetings. The least affected activities fall under mass civil activities, with petition signing, as the only one, which demonstrated increased rate of participation in 2008.

Even though there is no a single explanation for weak civil society participation in post-communistic countries, there are several assumptions in this regard. The political history in post-communistic countries has been complicated and numerous factors have influenced the current passivity of civil society. One of the explanations argues that communistic regime forced participation of citizens created current passivity within new democracies. Under the communistic regime, citizens were obliged to take part in elections or organized marches. Such regulations put people under pressure, enhanced by the threat of punishment. Such obligations clearly did not teach the civil society to participate in public matters in a democratic system. Also, engagement in civil society organizations controlled by non-democratic regime was not a manifestation of authentic civil society engagement but it was rather a sign of subordination to political pressure. Thus, the civil society participation might bear a connotation of restricted personal freedom. In other words, citizens in post-communistic countries did not go through “a school of citizenship” and therefore are not experienced enough to voluntarily take part in public matters. In addition to lacking experience, forced participation contributed to apathy and reluctance towards active citizenship, therefore the newly gained freedom to participate after the fall of communism was perceived as a freedom not to participate (Bútorová and Gyarfášová 2010: 458-459; Vrablikova 2009: 868).

Another explanation is rooted in the transition processes. Democratic transition took place along economic transition which alienated citizens in new democracies from public matters. The economy restructuring was in the forefront of public interest since the citizens were more concerned with fulfilment of their material needs which respectively pushed politics to the lower place in their interests and priorities. On the other hand, political elites often reduced democracy transition process to the issue of economy restructuring and implementation of capitalism. This in combination with political elites' lack of experience with democracy, overall political instability and populism did not stimulate civil society to actively engage in politics (Vráblíková 2009: 869). Another reasoning claims that specific model of civil society and civil society organizations functioning emerged in post communistic countries during the democratic transition. The characteristic feature of this model is missing mobilization capacity. Due to the lack of mobilization power, people do not have incentive to participate in public matters (Vráblíková 2009: 869).

Slovakia demonstrates an accurate example of the state of civil society participation in post-communistic democracies. After the euphoria that accompanied the fall of communism and emergence of democracy that stimulated the civil society participation, this did not continue to raise, but contrarily decreased. Although, many theories explain such developments as having origins in the communism and democratic transformation, current issues within Slovak state and general distrust of civil society in politicians and institutions definitely do not strengthen the urge of citizens to engage in public sphere.

4.3 Weaknesses in Public Administration and Policy Making

Apart from issues in the democratic functioning in Slovakia, the state also shows several shortcomings in public sphere administration. As identified by OECD (Demmou, Price 2015: 3) Slovakia's public sphere suffers from budget fragmentation, corruption and lack of cooperation among ministries.

Weak cooperation among ministries or in other words departmentalism refers to a situation when decision makers operate within sectorial silos while being less concerned with cross-government objectives (Russe, Jordan 2009: 1203). Hood (2005: 22) describes departmentalism as a "*vision tunnel*" and "*mutual export of problems and preoccupation with defending institutional turf in what are commonly termed vertical silos*". He points out that departmentalism has been identified as a bureaucratic failing.

According to OECD report, the problem of Slovak public administration is its fragmentation and organisation around strong ministerial silos, which hinders the creation of synergies across policy

areas and contributes to duplication of policy outcomes. Considering that many strategic objectives are cross-sectoral, departmentalism hampers the formulation of effective policies (Demmou, Price 2015: 15).

Láštík (2006:19) in *Yearbook of Foreign Policy* highlighted a continuous tendency of single ministers to present the attitudes and make decision on behalf of Slovak Republic without previous deeper discussions with other relevant stakeholders. All this, in spite of government being defined in the constitution as a collective institution. It is not rare to witness that the decision-making within single ministries is based on the positions of political party to which the current minister pertains. Decisions emerging from such a constellation do not reflect constructive parliamentary discussions and negotiations, nor they result from the negotiations on ministerial level, but they represent the preferences of the political party that had right to nominate the specific minister. Policies and decisions made under such circumstances are not sustainable, since they are based on random factors rather than having basis in institutional coordination on national level. We can observe that decision-making is mostly reduced to influence of ministries and current governing political parties. Traditionally, senior ministry officials have vastly taken part in coordination processes in drafting stage, however their role under the Fico's government was significantly reduced and coordination within Fico's party SMER SD has been strengthened. Moreover, as legally stipulated, line ministries are obliged to include different institutions and interest groups defined as stakeholders in their policy development processes and consult those with the Government Office and legislative council. However, the line ministers are responsible for the final bill drafts. Thus, the role of the Government Office consultancy remains mainly technical. Also, there is a wide-range of advisory boards, usually working with specific ministries that mostly concentrate on the policy areas within single ministries which creates advisory and expertise gaps when complex policies that cut across traditional ministerial silos and need to be dealt with collectively (Demmou, Price 2015: 15, Kneuer, Malová, Bönker 2017: 21,22).

The exclusion of other relevant stakeholders from decision-making processes subsequently leads to a question, what space is civil society guaranteed in this regard. As Láštík (2006: 17) points out, the civil society participation in decision making processes in Slovakia is largely missing. Therefore, the problem with civil society is not solely the passivity, as elaborated in the previous sub-chapter, but their exclusion from policy-making processes by the policy-makers.

Another weakness identified in Slovakia's public administration is strategic planning capacity. The institutional capacity for strategic planning as well as impact-assessment is not sufficiently developed. The Government Office does not have a central policy-planning unit, and strategic planning capacity within ministries is limited. Moreover, there are numerous processes for various short-term and long-

term plans, which exist alongside the Programme Declaration of the Government. Ministers are responsible for conceptualization of those plans; therefore, the methodologies and timelines can be significantly different. Furthermore, the implementation of structural policies within the ministries is also hindered by insufficient in-house expertise in concerned areas (Demmouc, Price 2015: 15, Kneuer, Malová, Bönker 2017: 21).

The analysis of state of democracy in Slovakia concludes the theoretical part of this master's thesis. The following chapter explains the research process, introduces the research question and describes the methodology.

5. Research Process

5.1 Research Purpose

The concepts of sustainability and sustainable development have recently gained more importance on the global level than ever before. Although the ideas have been present in political discussions for few decades, The Agenda 2030 marked a milestone in the history of sustainable development. 193 member states of the United Nations signed the final document and pledged to adapt their policies with the regard to 17 sustainable development goals. Slovakia is one of the signatory countries.

This master's thesis deals with the subject of sustainable development and implementation of the Agenda 2030 in Slovakia. The sustainable development concept is not a new topic in Slovak politics, quite to the contrary, it has been a subject in politics for longer period of time. Slovakia partially implemented Agenda 21 and elaborated The National Strategy for Sustainable Development in 2001. However, adoption of the Agenda 2030 and its implementation requires new approach to sustainable development. The SDGs apply to numerous policy areas and pose ambitious targets that Slovakia pledged to attain. Therefore, policies across various fields have to be adjusted so that the environmental, social and economic aspects are compatible. Not only single policies have to be adapted but the Agenda 2030 challenges traditional way of governance because the SDGs are not designed to be implemented individually, but rather as a set of interrelated goals. Interrelated character of the SDGs thus requires deeper cooperation of various actors that might not have been of such importance before. Considering the complexity of the Agenda 2030 and realities within Slovakia such as recent democratic transformation, transition to market economy and the EU accession and the EU integration, implementation of the Agenda 2030 may be a serious challenge for Slovakia.

The aim of this master's thesis is to research in how far Slovakia has managed to create a political framework that provides necessary conditions for further implementation of the Agenda 2030. While answering this question, I will take a short look into the history of sustainable development concept in the context of transition to Agenda 2030. The master's thesis also intends to map and asses the actions related to the Agenda 2030. More specifically, the goal is to identify accomplishments, occurring and obstacles emerging in the course of the implementation of the Agenda 2030. The outcome of undertaken research is thus an evaluation of Slovakia's efforts within the global agenda for sustainable development. Such an evaluation can serve various purposes. Firstly, it is most probably the first research in Slovakia related to the topic of Agenda 2030. It provides a complex overview of actions and processes initiated by various stakeholders involved in the implementation. The complexity of the master's thesis provide fresh insights and open new points of view for decision makers that traditionally work within the separated state structures. Secondly, since there is not an

official report on the Agenda 2030 implementation in Slovakia, it can be a valuable contribution for the public interested in the topic. The same applies for the stakeholders from abroad who might be for various reasons interested in developments in Slovakia. Methods deployed during the research are elaborated in the next section.

5.2 Research Methodology

This section discusses and presents methodology applied in the research in order to sufficiently elaborate the answer for the main research questions and its subpoints. It provides the explanation of the choice of research methods and their suitability for researching the topic of this thesis and ensuring the quality of the research.

The aim of this paper is to evaluate the efforts Slovakia has made in regard to the Agenda 2030, with the focus on the question: “In how far Slovakia has managed to create a political framework that provides necessary conditions for further implementation of the Agenda 2030”. The nature of the research is qualitative since it is not possible to quantify the processes that take place within the public administration. The qualitative methods were chosen in order to interpret the actions taken by various state offices involved in the implementation and policy making process. Moreover, qualitative methods also serve the aim to interpret the opinions of the state officials on the capability of Slovakia to successfully face the new challenge posed by the commitment to put the Agenda 2030 in the action. In order to be able to sufficiently analyze the questions, it is necessary to obtain the data from several sources. Slovakia has already published several documents and concepts for strategies related to the implementation of the Agenda 2030. Those together with not officially published information about implementation processes obtained in the interviews with the stakeholders from public administration and non-governmental sector create the basis for the analysis. The use of multiple methods (qualitative documents analysis and expert interviews) allows for a more precise approach to the researched topic and take into account existing information in various forms, which subsequently enhance the complexity of the research. Especially, the qualitative document analysis is often employed in combination with other qualitative methods as a means of triangulation, which refers to the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon. The researcher thus works with multiple sources of evidence and seeks convergence and corroboration through the analysis of various data sources such as interviews, observations or physical artifacts (Bowen 2009: 28). Such rationale fits the nature of this research in which qualitative document analysis complements, validates and deepens the data obtained in the interviews. However, the same role applies to expert

interviews, as they complement, validate and deepen the data from documents. As Beyers et al. argue (2014: 175, 176), the limited amount of observational data implies that interviews are a necessary, sometimes even crucial, complement to the analysis of publicly available sources for research. Also, interviewing is specifically beneficial for capturing more informal interactions and processes. Official recordkeeping, position or policy papers, do not show much about the precise tactics and strategies adopted. This notion indicates the equal importance of both data sources and methods, as well as the value they add to the quality of research.

Qualitative document analysis is defined as a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic material. In this case, the policy papers, strategies and concepts published by different state bodies in Slovakia were analyzed. Like any other analytical methods in qualitative research, document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Bowen 2009: 27).

Semi-structured expert interviews were the second method employed. Although discussions around definitions and criteria of experts have been evolving and differ to a certain extent in the methodology literature, for the purpose of this thesis I stick to a brief definition of expert, as a person who is ascribed the status of expert and possesses the relevant knowledge about technical aspects, organizational procedures and interpretative knowledge about their field (Littig, Pöchhacker 2015: 1088). In the case of this research all interviewees are representatives of state bodies or NGOs, work with the SDGs and have been to a certain point involved in the preparation of official government documents linked to the SDGs, therefore they have hands on experience and knowledge about the process.

I conducted 6 qualitative interviews with experts involved in the process of implementation of the Agenda 2030. The goal of the interviews was to talk to persons who directly deal with the SDGs in Slovakia in order to explore current developments and proceedings in relation to the topic. Five of the participants were representatives of state bodies. Two of them were from The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (the head of The Directorate General for International Organizations, Development Assistance and Humanitarian Aid and the representative of Department for Development Assistance and Humanitarian Aid). Other two experts who were interviewed at the same time were representatives of Deputy Prime Minister's Office for Investments and Informatization of Slovak Republic (UPPII) (Agenda 2030 Coordination Department). The next interviewee was the representative of the Ministry of Environment (Department of International Relations). Another interviewed expert was the representative of Slovak Nongovernmental Development Organizations Platform. All interviews lasted approximately 40 minutes and were recorded for further transcription and analysis purposes. The character of conducted interviews falls under the definition of systematizing expert interviews

that serve to systematically reconstruct the expert's professional knowledge that means, the relevant technical knowledge and assessment of the field (Mayer, Biegelbauer, Grießler, & Iwae, 2009 in Littig, Pöchhacker 2015: 1088).

The semi-structured questions achieve depth by providing the opportunity on the part of the interviewer to probe and expand the interviewee's responses. When undertaking semi-structured interviews, researchers are recommended to use a basic checklist that includes all relevant areas (i.e. research questions). The advantage of such a checklist, is that it provides an opportunity for in-depth probing while permitting the interviewer to keep the interview within the parameters traced out by the goal of the research (Alshenqeti 2014: 40). I opted for semi-structured interviews as it allowed me to explore new topics and ideas that emerged during the interviews. Before interview, I developed a set of questions that touched upon areas relevant for the research topic (above mentioned checklist), however numerous additional questions appeared during interviews that helped me to deeply explore certain aspects. The questions were also adapted according to the professional background of the interviewees. For example, question set for the representatives of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs slightly differed and focused more on foreign policies than the set of questions developed for the representatives of UPPII.

Once the process of data collection in form of relevant documents and interviews was finished, all the data were analyzed and interpreted. I applied a thematic analysis to both data sources. Thematic analysis is defined as “a form of pattern recognition within the data, with emerging themes becoming the categories for analysis.” (Bowen 2009: 32). The process requires careful and focused re-reading and review of data. Afterwards, data coding is performed, and categories are constructed to uncover the themes pertinent to the phenomena. Since the content of both documents and interviews contained data related to the same topics, I applied the same codes and categories to both data sources. Such approach allowed me to integrate all the data in a unified analysis and discover underlying patterns as well as mutually validate the data. In a final phase of the research, I summarized all the major themes emerging within the collected data.

This chapter explained the main purpose of the research, reasoned and explained the choice of the methods. The following part of the master's thesis presents the data analysis.

6. Implementation of the Agenda 2030 in Slovakia

6.1 History of Sustainability in Slovakia

The involvement with sustainability concept in Slovakia does not have its origin in the commitment to the Agenda 2030. Indeed, sustainable development had already been on the political agenda before 2016. Slovakia was one of the signatories of Agenda 21 resulting from the UNCED in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Following the UNCED, the Minister of Environment was given the responsibility to analyse the outcomes and principles accepted at the conference and subsequently apply those in the environmental policies and prepare the strategy of national environmental policy. Hence, the implementation of Agenda 21 was delegated to the Ministry of Environment that elaborated the Strategy, Principle and Priorities of the Environmental Policy. The strategy was approved by the Government's Resolution N. 619 from 1993 and was further accepted by National Council of Slovak Republic (MINZP n.d). While the year 1993 was a milestone for Slovakia since it adopted a strategy of such nature for the first time, member states of the EU were in the same year adopting 5th environmental action plan called *Towards Sustainability: a European Community Programme of Policy and Action in Relation to Environment and Sustainable Development – 5th Environmental Action Plan* (Klinda 2000: 133).

The Slovak strategy was based on internal conditions (deterioration of the environment and its negative impact on the citizens) and external conditions (state of the environment in Europe, raising environmental consciousness on European and global level). According to the national environmental policy, the improved state of environmental matters which is an integral part of the overall development of the society alongside with its economic and social needs, depends on prevention of root causes of environmental damage and elimination of existing major causes and negative impacts of environmental damage. Within the general framework of environmental matters, five focus points were selected for the strategy:

1. Climate protection against polluting substances and global environmental protection
2. Securing sufficient amount of drinkable water and reduction of pollution of other water sources
3. Soil protection against degradation and ensuring safety of foods and other products
4. Reduction of waste production, proper use and disposal of waste
5. Preservation of biodiversity, protection and rational use of natural resources, optimization of spatial structure and land use (MINZP n.d).

1993 was an initial year of Slovakia's membership in the UN. Its rapid response to the UNCED

conference in the form of the Strategy, Principle and Priorities of the Environmental Policy proved the interest and commitment to international affairs. However, the strategy did not fully embrace the contents of Agenda 21 since its focus was put exclusively on the environmental matters which undermines the idea of sustainable development based on harmony between environmental, economic and social aspects. Hence, this strategy was not able to serve as an official country's sustainable development strategy. Another question that emerges is, in how far the strategy was executed, firstly, because of the political turmoil the country was experiencing after gaining independence and during the democracy transformation process, and secondly, because the adoption of the strategy on its own does not guarantee its implementation. Indeed, the changes in government caused the late release date of an action plan which only occurred three years after the adoption of the strategy. Nevertheless, in 1996 the strategy was complemented by the National Environmental Action Plan I (NEAP I) that introduced the measures to attain the goals of the strategy. Further documents focused on regional and local scale (related NEAP) were subsequently released, namely: 9 Regional Environmental Action Plans (REAPs) and 79 District Environmental Action Plans (DEAPs) (Zolcerová 2016: 23). In comparison to its neighbouring countries, Slovakia did not lag behind, since many of them were developing and adopting their first environmental concepts, policies and strategies at the same time (Czech Republic 1995, Hungary 1997, Poland 1995, Slovenia 1995). Countries in the central European region mostly set similar goals, principles and priorities in their environmental strategies; they only moderately differed based on the distinct national conditions. The most significant difference was noticed in the organization of single sectors of environment, institutional setting and economic tools in environmental policy. Slovakia lagged behind mostly in the sector G: Economy of environment. NEAP I foresaw development of concept of financial policy of the environment, development of pricing system and system favouring the producers of environmental products, development of more effective natural resources pricing, parametrization of environmental tax system and other concepts by the year 1998. None of these goals had been achieved by that time. Another shortcoming in environmental policy was the decrease of the expenses of Ministry of the Environment by more than 32,74 % between 1993 and 1998 and closing of 38 district councils and 121 local environmental councils approved by the act n. 222/1996. In total, 630 employees of environmental councils were made redundant by the year 2000 which significantly contradicts all trends in the preparation for the EU accession as well as approved environmental policy (Klinda 2000: 134). The second strategy related to the Agenda 21 is The National Strategy For Sustainable Development in Slovak Republic. This document, adopted in 2001 attempted to overcome the shortcomings of Strategy, Principle and Priorities of the Environmental Policy and embrace numerous topics in line with the content of Agenda 21. Plans related to culture, education, demography an economy were

added to original environmental intentions. The strategy itself is extensive and embraces many issues that fall under sustainable development. Moreover, the strategy was prepared in a participative manner, because many experts from different fields contributed to the overall strategy. However, there is a slight disagreement, whether the strategy has been implemented. As almost all interviewees stated, the volume of the strategy was eventually inconvenient rather than helpful (despite extensive level of expert content), since the length of the documents discouraged the responsible policy-makers to actually implement the strategy and the strategic goals have never been reflected in the budgets and plans of the ministries. However, the Ministry of Environment was the only exception since they integrated the environmental goals into their policies and continuously made efforts to develop sustainable environmental policies. Based on this experience and evidence of insufficient execution of the national strategies in the past, certain concerns arise in regard to the implementation of Agenda 2030. Firstly, if there is poor experience with the implementation of strategies resulting from global political agendas, especially those relating to sustainable development, Slovakia might find itself in the position where it does not have the know-how, nor the baselines on which the path to sustainable development can be built. Secondly, it might be doubtful in how far the Agenda 2030 is taken seriously and in how far the official strategies guarantee the implementation itself.

6.2 Institutional Setting

Slovakia is one of the countries that signed the document *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* on 25.9. 2015 in New York and thus pledged to its implementation on the national level. Implementation of such a broad agenda is on its own challenging task that requires readjustment on various levels within a state. One of the necessary prerequisites for the integration on the national level is the establishment of an effective institutional framework including various mechanisms that secure the incorporation of SDGs principles in domestic as well as foreign policy. Since there is not a single model, it is each country's responsibility to come up with institutional mechanisms for promotion, implementation and monitoring of SDGs. Although, there is not a unified model, most of the signatory countries of the Agenda 2030 were also previously involved in the implementation process of the Agenda 21; therefore, they already have experience with establishment of national institution frameworks for global political agendas which might provide useful lessons for current governments. The research on the Agenda 21 implementation on the national level showed that the best results are achieved when the prime minister or president's office directly are assigned the task to manage the implementation (Doods/Donoghue/Leiva 2017: 139). Although in Slovakia, the Ministry of Environment was mainly in charge of the Agenda 21, Slovakia seemed to grasp the complex nature of the Agenda 2030 and the necessity of integrated approach that inevitably requires more ministries and resorts to engage in the process. The prime responsibility for the implementation of the SDGs thus does not lie with any individual ministry, but with The Deputy Prime Minister's Office for Investments and Informatization (UPPVII) that attempts to replace silo approach by whole-of-government approach to the Agenda 2030. As Adam and Juds (2016: 2) point out, the commitment to the SDGs essentially needs the integration of the Agenda into national policies and budgetary plans with a whole-of-government approach. It is the task of high-level political leadership to ensure that the Agenda 2030 is not captured by single or few ministries and guarantee that the policies of all ministries including those pushing through trade and finance policies are accountable to the Agenda 2030 and shall make effort to attain the goals in democratic and transparent style.

Five months after accepting, Slovak government negotiated the content of the Agenda 2030 for the first time. The negotiation was initiated by the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and resulted in the document called *Baselines for The National Implementation For the Agenda 2030 For Sustainable Development*.

As far as the institutional setting is concerned the government agreed on divided responsibility for the implementation of the Agenda 2030. UPPVII (headed by Deputy Prime Minister for Investments and Informatization Peter Pellegrini) was assigned the task to oversee the implementation of the

Agenda 2030 on domestic level and The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (headed by Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Miroslav Lajčák) was assigned the task to oversee the implementation of the Agenda 2030 on international level. The government also cancelled the Government's Resolution N. 665 from 1997 Proposal for the Implementation of the Agenda 21 and Review of the Indicators of Sustainable Development in Slovakia.

UPPVII's responsibility is to coordinate all involved stakeholders, coordinate the cooperation and experience transfer from abroad (Czech Republic, Finland, OECD) and support the activity of The Government Board of Slovak Republic for Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (further The Government Board for SD). Within UPPVII a specialized Agenda 2030 Coordination Department was established. It bears the responsibility to integrate the OECD's expert opinion in the strategic management and based on this, elaborate a concept of effective ministerial cooperation and complex integrated strategies that will in the future contribute to the stable and predictable baseline for public decision. Key projects and programs needed for attainment of long-term development needs of Slovakia in accordance with Agenda 2030 will be established based on the priorities of Slovakia. The Agenda 2030 Coordination Department will bridge OECD knowledge in the process of preparation of national infrastructure plan as well as other strategic documents which will enable incorporation of the experience from the OECD as well as from its other member states into Slovak public administration.

Another body active in the implementation of the Agenda 2030 is The Government Board for SD that was officially established by the government resolution no. 350 adopted on 24th of July 2017. The main task of this board is to ensure that sustainable development principles become integral part of all politics while the integration principles are maintained. The board consists of 22 permanent members and 5 non-permanent members. All ministries have a representative in the board, either the current minister or a person holding different position within the given ministry. The rest of members are representatives of various associations, unions, government plenipotentiaries and NGOs. Each of them is focused on a different field within the state, working either with civil society, private sector or church or other sectors. Thus, we can observe that the board provides a space for representatives promoting different interests to collaborate within the implementation process of the Agenda 2030. However, proportionally, the majority of the members are state officials which implies the superior role of the state.

Permanent Members:

| No. | Name and Surname | Organization | Function |
|-----|------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | Richard Raši | Deputy Prime Minister's Office for | Deputy Prime Minister |

| | | Investments and Informatization of the Slovak Republic | for Investments and Informatization |
|-----|------------------|---|--|
| 2. | Miroslav Lajčák | Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs | Minister of Foreign and European Affairs |
| 3. | Peter Kažimír | Ministry of Finance | Minister of Finance |
| 4. | Peter Žiga | Ministry of Economy | Minister of Economy |
| 5. | Arpád Érsek | Ministry of Transport and Construction | Minister of Transport and Construction |
| 6. | Martina Lubyová | Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport | Minister of Education, Science, Research and Sport |
| 7. | Tomáš Drucker | Ministry of Health | Minister of Health |
| 8. | Ján Richter | Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family | Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family |
| 9. | Gabriela Matečná | Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development | Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development |
| 10. | László Sólymos | Ministry of Environment | Minister of Environment |
| 11. | Martin Giertl | Government Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society | Government Plenipotentiary |
| 12. | Anton Marcinčin | Government Plenipotentiary for the Support of the Least Developed Regions | Government Plenipotentiary |
| 13. | Jaromír Pastorek | Government Plenipotentiary for Research and Innovation | Government Plenipotentiary |
| 14. | Alexander Ballek | Statistical Office of Slovak Republic | Chairman |
| 15. | Milan Muška | Association of Towns and Villages of Slovakia | Executive deputy chairman |
| 16. | Ivo Nesrovnal | Union of Towns and Cities of Slovakia | President |
| 17. | Rudolf Kropil | Slovak Rector Conference | President |
| 18. | Pavol Šajgalík | Slovak Academy of Sciences | Chairman |
| 19. | Mária Sliacka | Slovak NGDO Platform | Executive Secretary |

| | | | |
|-----|---------------------|--|-------------------|
| 20. | Juraj Mesík | Chamber of Nongovernmental Non-profit Organizations | Deputy |
| 21. | Miroslav Kiraľvarga | National Union of Employers | President |
| 22. | Oto Nevický | Federation of employers' associations of the Slovak Republic | Secretary-General |

Source: The list of The Government Board for SD members published by UPPII

Non-permanent Members:

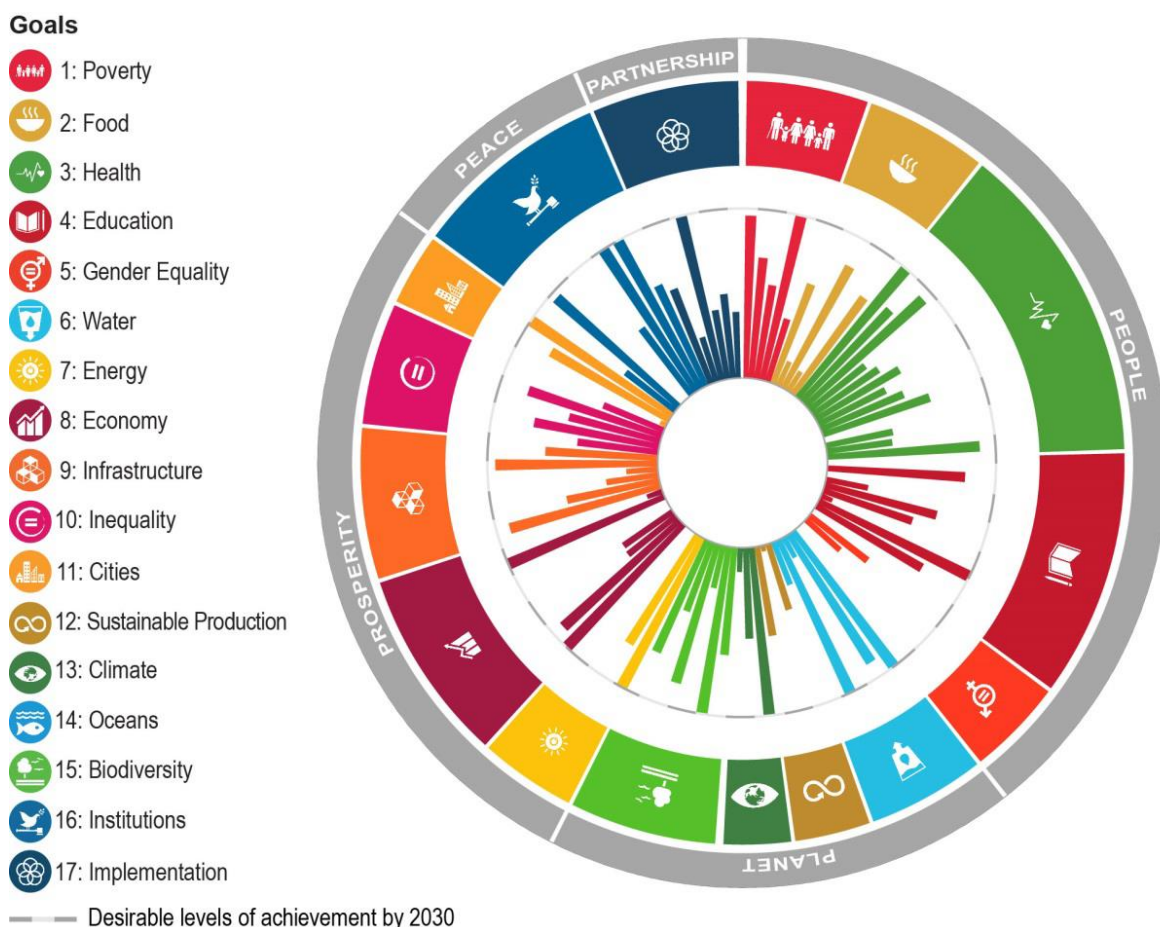
| | | | |
|-----|-----------------|---|----------------------------|
| 23. | Emília Kršíková | Ministry of Culture | Secretary General |
| 24. | Jozef Szarvaš | Ministry of Defence | State Advisor |
| 25. | Mária Kolíková | Ministry of Justice | State Secretary |
| 26. | Samuel Arbe | Ministry of Interior | Chairman |
| 27. | Ábel Ravasz | Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities | Government Plenipotentiary |

Source: The list of The Government Board for SD members published by UPPII

6.3 Starting Point of Slovak Implementation Efforts and Current Achievements in Implementation of Agenda 2030

Slovakia as a signatory country of the document The Agenda 2030: Transforming our World voluntarily committed to implement the content and reach the Sustainable Development Goals till the year 2030. The Agenda 2030 is a complex set of goals covering numerous fields. Although the Agenda 2030 as a single official document of such scope is new, the goals themselves and public policies related to them do not have to be necessarily new for the signatory countries. Also, some targets or even goals might have been achieved earlier than officially set by the international community. Considering different conditions and factors in every single country, the starting point of the implementation process varies; therefore, the actors involved in the implementation have to make more efforts within some issues, whereas there is less activity required in other issues. In June 2017, OECD published a report called Measuring The Distance To The SDGs Targets that evaluates the current state of SDGs attainment in OECD countries.

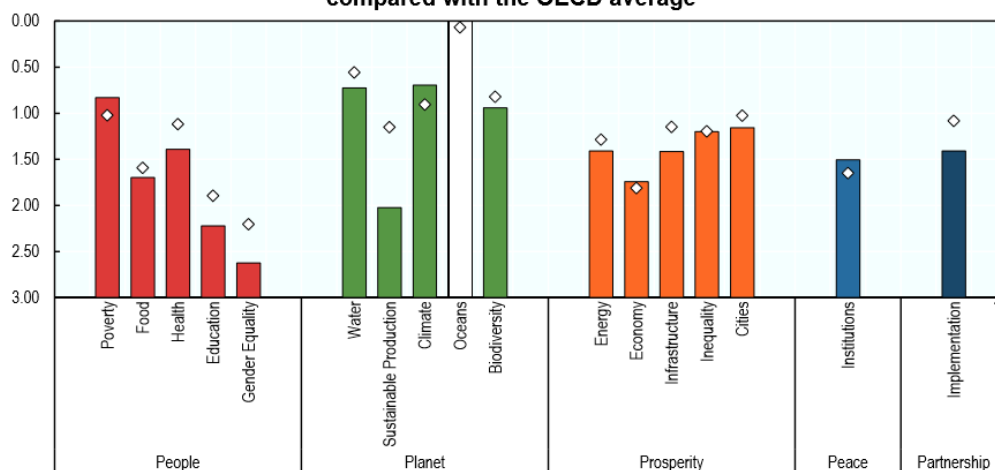
Following graph shows Slovakia and its distance from the SDGs' targets:



Source: Measuring Distance to SDG Targets pg. 52

In the study, 127 indicators were assessed allowing to measure 94 out of the 169 SDG targets. Due to the lack of indicators, only health and education are the goals with full target coverage. On the contrary, sustainable production, oceans and cities have less than 30% coverage. Slovakia fully achieved 13 targets. Several other targets are almost fully achieved; however, there are also numerous areas showing considerable distance from the achievement of the indicators. Slovakia performs particularly well in the Planet category, since it has reached most of the targets. It also demonstrates good results in the poverty targets. On the other hand, indicators of gender equality goal are far away from being reached. Compared to OECD average, Slovakia is either ahead or at very similar level on several goals such as poverty, climate change, inequality and institutions (Goals 1,13,10,16). The main deviations from OECD average are gender equality and infrastructures (Goals 5,9) (OECD 2017: 52-53).

Figure 3. The Slovak Republic's current distance from reaching the goals and the 5Ps of the 2030 Agenda, compared with the OECD average



Source: Measuring Distance to SDG Targets pg. 53

As mentioned earlier, the efforts developed within the implementation have to be based on and adjusted to the national conditions. Clearly, some sectors in Slovakia performed better than the others in 2017; therefore, we can assume that the SDGs as a political agenda were not entirely new for Slovak policy makers as they had obviously already in the years before 2015 developed policies and activities in certain sectors. For example, the representative of the Ministry of the Environment stated that the planet goals are not really new for their department. The Ministry of Environment had already begun to work on the same issues around the year 2000. However, the concept was not titled Sustainable Development Goals, but just Sustainable Development. Creation of environmental

policies was also the part of the implementation of Agenda 21, which naturally fell under the SDGs agenda after the year 2015. On the other hand, the previous goals within sustainable development policies were also extended on the occasion of commitment to the Agenda 2030; therefore, it cannot be claimed that SDGs did not bring anything new at all for the Ministry of the Environment but rather that this department had been already familiar with similar matters (Beriac 2018).

As a result of the past familiarity with sustainable development topic, planet goals stand out in the overall Slovakia's achievements which subsequently supports the argument that environmental policies reflecting the principles of sustainable development were created in the course of the Agenda 21 implementation. We can assume that if those had not been designed earlier, Slovakia would not perform that well in the environmental goals nowadays. Also, the representative of the Ministry of the Environment stressed, that the department started to introduce some aspects of the SDGs as early as 2012, when the actual goals were being specified. Moreover, the Ministry of Environment actively promoted the SDGs among other departments and tried to integrate SDGs into the environmental policies (Beriac 2018).

The representative of the Slovak NGDO Platform expressed similar opinion on the Agenda 2030, stating that Slovakia has been developing public policies and strategies in all sectors included in SDGs even before 2015. Therefore, he considers the Agenda 2030 to be a campaign that promotes the goals, and eventually could initiate some progress, but generally SDGs themselves were not completely new as they include already functioning policies (Žaludko: 2017). Yet, even if Slovakia already had all the public policies that direct the country towards fulfilment of SDGs (although this matter might need deeper research to indisputably claim such statement), the Agenda 2030 serves as a self-reflection tool. Based on the above-mentioned graph, measuring the distance to the targets, Slovakia is able to assess its accomplishments and accordingly adjust future policy making.

6.4 Official Documents Reflecting The Agenda 2030

Implementation of any political agenda inevitably requires creation of appropriate strategy and strategic documents. Since Slovakia opted for a divided responsibility within the Agenda 2030 meaning, that UPPII oversees the internal implementation and The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs holds responsibility for the external implementation, both bodies are required to develop the strategies suitable for specific environments.

Up to now, several documents have been drafted and accepted. UPPII elaborated the document called Proposal for Internal Implementation of Agenda 2030. The document was the subject of the government negotiation on the 24th of July 2017. During the same negotiation, the government also accepted establishment of The Government Board for SD. It also assigned the Deputy Prime Minister for Investments and Informatization to present The Proposal for National Priorities of the Agenda 2030 Implementation by 31st of May 2018 as well as to present A Report on Achieved Results in National Priorities of the Agenda 2030 Implementation by 30th June 2018. Moreover, the president of The Statistical Office (in cooperation of other involved ministries) was assigned the task to elaborate the indicators of national priorities by 31st of May 2018 (www.rokovania.sk). Further important document elaborated by UPPII is The Roadmap To National Infrastructure Plan 2018-2030 adopted on 1st of March 2017. The aim of this strategic document is to introduce the elements of strategic management in order to create national conditions for actual National Infrastructure Plan. It complements the Proposal for Internal Implementation of Agenda 2030.

At the government negotiation on 1st January 2017, The Concept of Agenda 2030 Implementation in External Environment prepared by The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs was adopted as an official strategy. The document will not only guide the integration of the SDGs into the official development assistance but also into the security policy and into the overall focus of foreign and European policies of Slovakia.

Further documents adopted are Baselines for the Preparation of National Priorities of Agenda 2030 Implementation and Proposal for Participative Process of Establishment of National Priorities elaborated by The Government Board for SD.

Another important document to be created in a near future, due to the participation in High-level Political Forum in July 2018 in New York, is Voluntary National Review.

In total Slovakia is equipped with several documents that will guide the implementation of the Agenda 2030. The number of prepared documents might strengthen the impression that the Agenda 2030 is being taken seriously and there is indeed a will to put the global political agenda to action. However, for the future success it is essential that involved stakeholders carefully oversee the implementation

of all plans and strategies, since Slovakia has already in the past demonstrated the tendency to create numerous strategies, but their execution stayed at poor level.

Overview of current strategic documents:

| Nr. | Publishing Office | Document |
|------------|---|--|
| 1. | The Deputy Prime Minister's Office for Investments and Informatization | Proposal for Internal Implementation of Agenda 2030 |
| 2. | The Deputy Prime Minister's Office for Investments and Informatization | The Roadmap To National Infrastructure Plan 2018-2030 |
| 3. | The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs | The Concept of Agenda 2030 Implementation in External Environment |
| 4. | The Government Board of Slovak Republic for Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development | Baselines for the Preparation of National Priorities of Agenda 2030 Implementation |
| 5. | The Government Board of Slovak Republic for Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development | Proposal for Participative Process of Establishment of National Priorities |

Table prepared by the author of the thesis

6.5 Slovakia's Understanding of the Agenda 2030

The Agenda 2030 consists of 17 specific goals and 169 associated targets. Seemingly, such content is clearly defined. Every single country is in charge of the implementation process. The policy-makers in each country bear the responsibility to live up to the commitments that emerged out of the long-lasting negotiations. However, most of the decision makers, who find themselves in a position to integrate the goals into the national policies and develop new frameworks for governing the SDGs, did not take part in the global negotiations. Such exclusion might lead to a misinterpretation of the underlying idea of the Agenda 2030. For that reason, it is of great importance to look into the governments' perception of the Agenda 2030. Subsequently, this perception will shape all the actions related to the implementation process. Also, we have to bear in mind that the Agenda 2030 is not a blueprint for specific actions. It leads us to the question, what is Slovakia's understanding of the Agenda 2030. As mentioned in previous part, the institutional setting demonstrates the understanding of complexity and need for integrated approach towards the SDGs. The representatives of UPPII stated in the interview that the interpretation of the Agenda 2030 goes in two ways. Firstly, there is a commitment to achieve the global goals. This interpretation solely refers to the goals themselves as a stimulus for enhanced actions towards sustainable development. Secondly, Slovakia perceives the Agenda 2030 as a tool for new approaches to public administration and governance, more specifically for more efficient cooperation and communication among ministries. It is necessary to improve the interdepartmental cooperation, because Slovakia faces several issues that fall under the competencies of multiple ministries, thus there is not a single ministry able to solve those issues. Missing solutions to cross-departmental issues are rooted in the weak cooperation among ministries that do not accurately communicate and cooperate. Moreover, single ministries set their goals and write strategies individually, which leaves very limited room for cross-ministerial solutions. Also, if ministries act on their own behalf and follow their own interests without consulting other departments they miss important insights. Such silo-based approach than further stimulates policy incoherence. The Agenda 2030 aims to serve as a platform which brings all involved stakeholders together, so they can develop integrated solutions to those problems and in participative way attain the goals (Bankoova, Kinces 2017, Zaludko 2017).

Such a notion reveals that the stakeholders responsible for the internal implementation admit the issue of departmentalism and acknowledge the necessity to overcome this problem in order to implement the SDGs and its complex nature. At this point, it is important to notice that departmentalism is not an issue that solely occurs in Slovakia and its public administration. Other states, with longer history of democracy as well as international organizations suffer from the same, the lack of cooperation

among different departments and agencies respectively. Referring to the UN as an example, Doods (2017: 138) points out, that current UN system, including its intergovernmental bodies, lacks the promotion of integration and set too little focus on implementation. Also, the funding mechanisms and flows within UN encourage more fragmentation. Throughout the Agenda 2030 negotiations, delegations kept stressing that the mindset has to be changed. However, changing the culture and working methods at the UN might be one of the toughest but at the same time one of the most important tasks ahead.

If we consider, that the UN as the initiating and mother-organization of the Agenda 2030 has severe problems with departmentalism, it can decrease the credibility of the UN's promotion of integrated and participative implementation. Promoting certain procedures and administration frameworks while being infamously famous for managing the organization in very opposite manner might leave a hypocritical impression, neither can it serve as a positive example. On the other hand, Slovakia's efforts to overcome the issue are a sign of progress in public administration and attempt to change the silo-based policy development and implementation, that is part of the legacy of communism. However, it is an ongoing long-term learning process that requires certain period of time to demonstrate results. The departmentalism in Slovakia is also stimulated by a competence law that strictly defines the competencies and responsibilities of individual ministries (Bankoova, Kinčes 2018). In accordance with the competence law, ministries solely act within the scale of their responsibilities and priorities which does not encourage either united approach to complex issues or policy coherency. Thus, the elimination of departmentalism is a necessary prerequisite for successful implementation of the Agenda 2030. As illustrated above, the actors responsible for the implementation are aware of this problem. The former Deputy Prime Minister's Office for Investments and Informatization Peter Pelegriny also stated at the first meeting of The Government Board of Slovak Republic for SD that 'as long as we do not overcome the departmentalism we will not able to move forward' (Pellegrini in TASR 2017).

On the contrary of the notion that departmentalism is a severe problem in Slovakia, interviewees evaluated the cooperation among various ministries in a positive way. Few ministries seem to collaborate very well. Very positively was evaluated the cooperation between Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and Ministry of Environment in the context of water economy, cooperation between Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport in terms of global education and cooperation with Ministry of Interior in terms of Interior in terms of humanitarian aid. The question is what makes these collaborations positive. We can argue, that different resorts might work on the same goals and thus show more willingness to support each other. Or their cooperation has been established for longer period of time which provided them with

sufficient time to adjust the working processes. Problems may arise while trying to initiate the deeper cooperation between resorts that have not previously worked together or their points of view on certain affairs differ according to the nature of the ministry. For example, as far as soil and land is concerned the aspirations and interests of Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development differ which might cause obstacles. Seemingly, there are also positive examples of cross-departmental cooperation, which might eventually be an example of good practices for the future efforts in this direction (Bankoova, Kinčes 2017, Beriac 2018, Wursterova 2018).

The awareness of the issue is indeed vital to its solution, but essentially, there has to be a strategy and it has to be executed in order to evoke a change. In terms of public administration restructuring, Slovakia closely cooperates with OECD to build Whole of Government Approach (WGA) that sees public administration and governance as a part of interconnected whole (OECD 2005: 2). The representatives of the ÚPPII positively evaluate this partnership and admit that the cooperation with OECD develops positive pressure on Slovakia and provides expert consultation and stimulates competition between member states which forces Slovakia to accelerate the plans and procedures (Bankoova, Kinčes 2017). The Roadmap To National Infrastructure Plan 2018-2030 foresees the changes in this regard, however it is not a real strategy at the moment, but as the title implies it is a roadmap for upcoming strategy. The National Infrastructure Plan (NIP) will define key programs and projects through which new economic and social infrastructure will be built or respectively improve the state of existing infrastructure. The aim is to fulfil long-term development needs of Slovakia and contribute to better predictability and stability of public decisions. Estimated time frame for the NIP are the years 2018-2030 which correlates with global sustainable development commitments anchored in the Agenda 2030. The NIP will include investment programs and projects focused on building of green economy, mostly in following sectors: transport, information communication technology, energy, green infrastructure, water and waste management, adaptation to and mitigation of climate change, research development and innovation, health care and education. The document also stresses the need to build the WGA as an essential tool for long-term strategic management in public sphere. Currently, there are three strategies (that have potential to significantly influence the development of economy and society) being prepared by three individual offices. The Ministry of Economy prepares The Strategy for Economic Policy by 2030, The Ministry of Environment prepares The Low-Carbon Strategy and ÚPPVII prepares The Sustainable Development Strategy. Since all of them are being prepared simultaneously, there is a need to provide space for all involved stakeholders to act together and create cooperative institutional framework for public strategies. For example, the nature of Strategy for Economic Policy 2030 itself is cross-departmental. Also, according to the competence law, The Government Office is responsible for coordination and preparation of economic

and social policy and UPPVII is responsible for strategic planning of investments. The strategy necessarily has to include the financial framework, as well as environmental ambitions and human capital development factors. If the content of the strategy includes all of the mentioned aspects, The Government Office, UPPVII, The Ministry of Finance, The Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and Ministry of Transport and Construction should participate in the creation of the strategy (The Roadmap To National Infrastructure Plan 1-7).

It is clear, that Slovakia's understanding of the Agenda 2030 goes beyond achievement of the goals. Within the internal implementation, the emphasis is significantly put on making the public administration more efficient and on the development of integrated framework for the long-term strategic management that will provide basis for the goals attainment. Increasing the efficiency of public administration is of crucial importance in the context of complex challenges and people-centred sustainable development. The UPPVII's initiative is thus progressive, however, three years after the New York summit there is just a vision of future functioning of public administration which currently lacks a specific strategy. The slow progress might be caused by numerous reasons, but essentially, the Agenda 2030 Coordination Department is understaffed, considering that there are only three employees overseeing the internal implementation.

6.6 National Priorities

The mission of the Agenda 2030 is to transform our world and shift the global heading of our globe to sustainable path. The 17 goals are to guide the global community. Yet, as Young (2017: 35) argues, when the goal setting is a collective effort including negotiations and consensus-building among large number of actors advocating self-interests, there is a chance that the collective decision making will establish more priorities and create more goals than needed for effective allocation of resources. This argument precisely fits the SDGs and circumstances in individual countries.

Considering different economic, socio-demographic and geographic aspects in various parts of the world we can assume that not all 17 SDGs are equally relevant in all countries. Nor do the countries possess enough resources to provide sufficient funds for all SDGs. Therefore, countries have to prioritize certain goals and focus on attainment of those. Both arguments precisely apply to the situation in Slovakia and force the country to set certain priorities within the SDGs. The question is how Slovakia approaches the process of priority setting. On one hand, priorities could be related to the most urgent issues the country is suffering from, so that they can be solved, and situation improves. On the other hand, it can decide to focus on the areas in which Slovakia has expertise and perfect those areas in order to share the experience on the international level. Either way Slovakia chooses, national priorities must be specified before the presentation of voluntarily national review takes place at HLPF in New York in July 2018.

The interviewees mentioned several fields, Slovakia has expertise in, and that might eventually be further prioritized within the Agenda 2030. However, those fields were mentioned within the single ministries and they have to be aligned on the national level. As confirmed in the OECD study *Measuring The Distance to the SDGs targets*, environment is one of the strengths in Slovakia. Clearly, environmental policy is a very bright field, comprising many sub-issues and not all of them are Slovakia's strengths. Nevertheless, there was an apparent agreement that the water economy is the field in which Slovakia possesses significant expertise, not only on the national level but within official development cooperation (ODA) as well. Water and sanitation with the emphasis on drinking water supply, water and waste economy are one of the sector priorities of the Slovak ODA. Other fields of expertise are education and global education as well as transfer of transformation and integration experiences. The transfer runs under the project called Centre for Experience Transfer from Reforms and Integration (CETIR) that was launched in 2011 and targets the countries in Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership (Wursterova 2018).

It is indeed necessary to know what the areas of expertise are; however, such knowledge is not sufficient to set the national priorities. Deeper self-assessment is needed to objectively evaluate

national strengths, weaknesses and needs to specify the priorities. UPPVII together with the The Government Board for SD started to deal with this task at the first session of the board on the 12th of December 2017. UPPVII charged Slovak Academy of Science (SAV) with the preparation of the report Baselines for The Preparation of National Priorities of Agenda 2030 Implementation that was alongside with Proposal for The Participative Process of National Priorities Establishment for the Implementation of The Agenda 2030 adopted on the 12th of December 2017.

The first document, prepared by the experts from SAV aimed to analyse global and local trends to arrive at the baselines for the identification of the national priorities, and provide knowledge for wider public discussion regarding the long-term priorities. As a result, 5 key topics emerged from the questionnaire in which experts from SAV and analysts from public sphere evaluated 17 SDGs and additional 10 topics based on the relevance and urgency for Slovakia as well as Slovakia's capability to accelerate the transformation towards sustainable development on the national and international level.

| Nr. | Topic |
|------------|--|
| 1. | Sustainable economic growth in the context of aging population and changing global environment |
| 2. | Education for sustainable development (inclusive and high quality education for labour market needs) |
| 3. | Health and life quality |
| 4. | Sustainable settlements and country in the context of climate change |
| 5. | Poverty elimination and social inclusion |

Table created by the author of the thesis

The 5 topics are a pre-requisite for further process for national priorities establishment that is supposed to be of a participative character. As stated in the Agenda 2030 document “all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement this plan” (Agenda 2030: 1). Since the process of implementation of the Agenda 2030 consists of multiple steps, the stakeholders (national governments, local governments, academia, civil society, business) are to be involved at every stage in order to maintain the participative character.

Slovakia can be reproached for the lack of participation within the creation of Proposal for Internal Implementation of Agenda 2030 and The Concept of Agenda 2030 Implementation in External Environment, since both documents result from the cooperation between UPPVII, Ministry of

Foreign and European Affairs and NGDO Platform (Žaludko 2017). On the contrary, the process of national priorities setting aims to involve stakeholders outside of the public and non-governmental sector. The timeline for participative process according to Proposal for The Participative Process of National Priorities Establishment for the Implementation of The Agenda 2030 is following:

1. Preparation of participative process (December 2017- January 2018)
 - a. Stakeholders identification
 - b. Establishment of expert group on participation, that will guide the process
 - c. Finalization of the participation process design

2. Participation activities (January- April 2018)
 - a. Information campaign
 - b. Dialogue with involved stakeholders: conferences and seminars in various parts of Slovakia
 - c. Processing of outputs: integration of the outputs into the Proposal for National Priorities for Agenda 2030 Implementation

3. Final decision and adoption of national priorities by The Government Board for SD (end of April 2018)

By the end of March 2018, the first round of regional meetings took place. Each meeting was dedicated to one of the 5 topics identified in the SAV report. Each meeting will have a second round in April. In total, 10 meetings attended by representatives of non-governmental sector, self-government and interest associations, will be held. The effort to include wider range of stakeholders and let them express the opinion is unique in Slovakia; however, in order to live up the promises of participatory process, UPPIVV has to ensure that the outcomes of the meetings will be taken seriously and will find the way into to the final proposal. While this is not possible to evaluate at this stage, since the process has not been finished yet, we can observe some promising signs. At the meeting in Nitra on 7th March, rule of law, strong institutions and effective public administration emerged and strongly resonated as a new topic alongside the main topic discussed. The urgency of this issue was taken into the consideration and it is already decided that the topic will be added (to previous 5 topics) to the agenda for the government negotiation on national priorities.

Overview of past meetings :

| Date | City | Topic |
|------|-----------------|--|
| 7.3 | Nitra | Sustainable economic growth in the context of aging population and changing global environment |
| 8.3 | Banská Bystrica | Education for sustainable development |
| 9.3 | Zvolen | Sustainable settlements and country in the context of climate change |
| 12.3 | Poprad | Health and life quality |
| 13.3 | Prešov | Poverty elimination and social inclusion |

Table created by the author for the thesis

The identification of the priorities is not the final step in the process. Once set, the priorities have to be transformed into specific national goals of the agenda 2030 that have to fit the SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time bound). Subsequently, the goals and priorities have to be essentially integrated to the strategies, policies and investment plans on the national and regional level. As mentioned in the previous section, there are currently few strategies being prepared on the national level, which will significantly influence the development of Slovak society and economy.

- The Strategy for Economic Policy by 2030: deadline in June 2018
- Low-Carbon Strategy: preparation starts in second half of 2018
- Enviro-Strategy 2030: first proposal presented in December 2017

Considering that the final year of two out of three strategies corresponds with the final year of the Agenda 2030, it would be beneficial to find the intersections between strategies' goals and national priorities and thus incorporate the national priorities into long-term strategic documents. Such step would be effective implementation of the SDGs into the national policies. In this regard however, involved decision makers have to show the will to cooperate and align the processes of preparation of all involved strategic documents, so they are not finalized before national priorities and goals are defined.

6.7 Role of NGOs and Private Sector in The Agenda 2030 Implementation

In order to transfer sustainable development principles to all areas of society, it is necessary for NGOs and private sector to actively participate. NGOs and private sector representatives took part in the intergovernmental negotiations and working group sessions leading to final decision on SDGs. However, their role reaches further than that.

We can assume that NGOs mostly focus on the work with public and civil society, which leaves them with the valuable insights in how to engage wide parts of society in various processes which is of great importance within the Agenda 2030. As far as the internal implementation of the SDGs is concerned, The Slovak NGDO Platform performed a key role in preparing the Proposal for Internal Implementation of Agenda 2030. Partially, in the name of participative character of SDGs and partially due to understaffed Agenda 2030 Coordination Department, the Platform cooperated with the UPPII and worked out the part of the document that deals with the engagement of civil society. Thus, even in an initial step of implementation process, an NGO was involved which underscores the need and significance of cooperative approach to the Agenda 2030. While The Slovak NDGO Platform has always hold a position of a middleman between ministries, civil society and NGOs and thus maintain close relations with the state administration bodies, the representatives of state administration recognise the vital function of other NGOs as well. As agents working with civil society and public, NGOs have built their networks through which they are able to reach wider parts of society than state bodies. Using these networks is very effective in raising the awareness on SDGs in the public, since as all interviewees agreed, the general awareness of sustainable development in Slovakia is on low level. Recently, some NGOs have been very active within the education system promoting the global education. The need to educate young generations about sustainable development in order to raise new generation aware of global and sustainable issues has been widely recognised. The concept of global education is supposed to meet this need. The concept is anchored in The National Strategy For The Global Education 2012-2016 prepared by The Ministry of Education, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and The Slovak NDGO Platform. Global education is herein defined as ‘education that emphasizes global context in learning’. The aim is to develop critical thinking, raise the awareness of global topics and deepen understanding of problems that relate to the whole world not just Slovakia. While ministries are responsible for implementing the concept into official education system, NGOs such as People in Need SR, or Milan Šimeček Foundation create teaching material. Clearly, students are not the only target group, but wide public has to be educated about sustainable development as well. For this purpose, People in Need SR annually organizes an international festival of documentary movies dedicated to global problems

called One World. Another global education initiative is a web portal www.monda.eu that offers various online courses and materials covering global topics. Several NGOs from Slovakia, Germany and Austria create and run the project. NGOs can also leverage the sustainable development and stimulate sustainable lifestyle on the micro level through their own projects such as community gardening or promoting using bicycles instead of cars and public transport. NGOs as such operate at various levels, on the one hand they are able to realize SDGs on the macro scale through participation in policy development but on the other hand they are able to bring sustainable development closer to public. Apart from macro and micro national level, development NGOs importantly contribute to the external implementation of the Agenda 2030. Currently, the work of the development NGOs does not have to necessarily reflect the SDGs, but it is foreseen to change once the new strategy of official development assistance comes into the force in 2019 (Wursterova 2018).

Apart from this, NGOs can also stimulate the sustainability in private sector, through promoting socially and environmentally responsible practices. Foundation Pontis annually organizes awards Via Bona and gives prizes to outstanding projects and companies' responsible approaches. Its criteria consider corporate social responsibility and corporate philanthropy. Foundation Pontis fully supports any effort to meet the SDGs. Already in 2017 Pontis partnered with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family of the Slovak Republic and presented a special award to Family-, Gender Equality-, and Equal Opportunities-Friendly Employer 2017. As the representatives of UPPII argued, they have to make the SDGs attractive for the companies and frame the goals in such a way that they provide private sector with added value. Having recognized that marketing is a powerful tool and positive reputation attracts customers UPPII decided to use the Pontis's experience and established a partnership. Resulting from their cooperation, a special Award for a Contribution to Meeting Sustainable Development Goals 2017 is going to be launched this year. Companies or group of partners that have made some of the SDGs part of their corporate values and programmes and whose projects and solutions contribute to meeting these and have both present and long-term effects will be awarded (<http://www.nadaciapontis.sk/about-via-bona-en>). Consumers' awareness of socially and environmentally conscious and ethical consumption is also steadily raising; therefore, being awarded for complying with sustainability might positively influence the public's perception of the company or project. Consequently, such award stimulates the companies to strive towards sustainable principles.

Nevertheless, the primary goal of businesses is a profit generation which does not have to necessarily fit the principles of the sustainable development. Also, the economic power of companies allows them to disregard any other than economic matters, thus there is a limited space to force them to adapt their operation to sustainable principles. However, private sector can largely influence the results of the

Agenda 2030. On the international level, the UN launched UN Global Compact, a voluntary initiative for private sector, based on CEOs commitments to implement universal sustainability principles and to take steps to support the SDGs (<https://www.unglobalcompact.org/about/governance>). In order to join the UN Global Compact, companies have to pledge to adapt their strategies to universal principles on human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption. Although, the initiative was launched in 2000 only 4 companies from Slovakia participate. Two of them belong to bank sector, one works with industrial engineering and the last one is active in IT business. Considering this very small number we can assume that generally the companies in Slovakia do not tend to overwhelmingly engage with sustainability. Therefore, the award organized by UPPII and Pontis foundation is a promising step to encourage the private sector to increasingly embrace sustainable practices but there will be probably needed additional efforts to fully realize the potential of private sector in meeting the SDGs.

6.8 Slovakia's role in The Agenda 2030 within the EU

As stated at the European Commission webpage, the EU made a positive and constructive contribution to the development of the Agenda 2030. The EU has played an important role in shaping the Agenda 2030 through public consultations, dialogue with the partners and in-depth research. The EU, together with its member states, aspire to further play a leading role and be the frontrunner in the implementation of what is described as ambitious, transformative and universal agenda that delivers poverty eradication and sustainable development for all (<https://ec.europa.eu>: The Agenda 2030 for SD). The EU's reaction to the Agenda 2030 consists of two work streams. The first stream is the full integration of the SDGs in the European policy framework and current EC priorities. The second track is devoted to the further development of long-term vision and development of the focus of sectoral policies after 2020 as a preparation for a long-term implementation of the SDGs (EC 2016: 3).

The EU has currently few strategies and documents that reflect the Agenda 2030 and aim to stimulate the transformation towards sustainable development:

- New European Consensus on Development - 'Our world, our dignity, our future'
- Commission Communication, 22 November 2016 – "Next steps for a sustainable European future"
- Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe
- A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy
- Europe 2020: Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth
- The EU Sustainable Development Strategy

Yet, if the EU aspires to be a leader in the implementation of the Agenda 2030, it has to necessary rely on its member states and their expertise and contribution in development of policies that stimulate sustainable development. Slovakia as a member state of the EU bears the responsibility to adopt and implement European policies. However, as a full member of the EU it also plays a role in the creation of policies. Therefore, this section, aims to look into Slovakia's activity within the development of the European policies and analyses in how far the country is able to contribute to the creation of the European policies in the context of the Agenda 2030. As elaborated in the 4th chapter, Slovakia was rather a passive actor during the acquis implementation and accession process. Slovakia earned titles such as good-European country, pro-integration country or obedient dog that faithfully follows its master's instructions. Such acting might had been reasoned by political will to join the EU and fear

of repeatedly rejected membership in that time, but Slovakia has had almost two decades time to shift its behaviour within the EU matters.

As opposed to the past tendencies, nowadays it is more common for Slovak political parties to express specific positions on the EU development and the EU policies. In general, Slovak government formed after the elections in 2016 is pro-European. The Euro-sceptic parties SNS and LSNS did not significantly influence the government manifesto with their attitudes against the EU. A permanent feature of Slovak positions is that very often the EU is mentioned as a reference framework for comparing the situation in Slovakia to other member states or to the targets set at the EU level. Also, most of the time, Slovak politicians pose the EU as a solution to the problems faced by Slovakia or the EU in general (Gabrižová 2016: 22). Despite the nature of the expressed statements and presented opinions on European policy, Slovakia has strengthened its voice and became more active within the EU, which differs from behaviour that was demonstrated during the accession process.

As Mr. Beriac (Ministry of Environment) stated in the interview, old member states often underestimate new member states' capabilities in EU working groups sessions and EU negotiations and blame them for not being active. Speaking of the Ministry of Environment, its representatives make an effort to improve the image of Slovakia in this regard. They actively participate in sessions and negotiations and enter coalitions, mostly with V4 countries and German speaking countries in order to strengthen their position and enforce its proposals and demands (Beriak 2018). In terms of environment Slovakia achieved the ratification of the Paris Agreement on the EU Level during its EU council presidency. We also have to bear in mind that environmental policy and environmental issues is one of the outstanding fields in Slovakia; therefore, this positive example does not have to apply to all policy field, and Slovakia might act less actively in negotiations dedicated to different topics.

Nevertheless, the performance of the Ministry of Environment might serve as a positive example for other resorts that have been performing passively. With a regard to the SDGs Slovakia could contribute with its expertise on the European level. Slovakia has been shaping a tradition in sharing its experience in security sector reform, water economy and innovation. Furthermore, Slovakia is considered to be a frontrunner in the area of integration experience transfer operated under the CETIR programme. There are currently 7 enlargement candidate countries, Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Serbia and Turkey that have candidate status, while Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo are potential candidates. Within CETIR programme, Slovakia was previously engaged in Serbia and currently cooperates with Albania, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Slovak intervention consists of 8 priorities: 1. Public finance reform and tax reform, 2. Security sector reform, 3. Energy industry with the focus on energy security and alternative sources, 4. Market economy establishment and support of middle- and small-sized entrepreneurship, 5. Water

protection, water and waste management, 6. Food security, 7. Decentralization and public sphere reform, 8. Support of civil society and cooperation between government and non-government sector. According to the representative of The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, experience transfer under CETIR was perceived mostly positively in partner countries. Complicated history of Slovak democratic transition and EU accession is in this case an advantage. The core of the expertise does not only consist of positive experience but the mistakes that were made, enable Slovakia to warn the partner countries against potential obstacles (Wursterova 2018). For example, the know-how of Slovak experts in Montenegro significantly contributed to country's opening of chapters 23 and 24 related to fundamental rights, justice, freedom and security in the EU accession process. The similar scenarios apply to other nowadays candidate or potential candidate state, since their current status is partially achieved by the engagement of Slovakia and other V4 countries in the region (Hronešová 2015: 167-168).

Building sustainable societies based on democratic principles with the access to justice and effective and accountable institutions falls under the SDG 16. Enforcing non-discriminatory laws, protecting the fundamental rights, developing trustworthy institutions, reducing corruption, all of these are targets of the SDG 16 but also conditions for the EU accession. Considering Slovakia's experience with democratisation and state building processes, it can further provide valuable expertise and play a key role in fulfilment of the SDG 16 as well as the EU enlargement which subsequently strengthens the EU's aspiration to be a leader in the Agenda 2030 implementation.

What is remarkable about Slovakia in regard to democratisation and building of sustainable societies is its expertise and positive feedbacks (mostly from Western Balkans) and contradictory state of democracy in Slovakia itself. Weak civil society participation, distrust of institutions and lacking rule of law are alarming issues in Slovakia. Therefore, in accordance with the universal character of the Agenda 2030, Slovakia should necessarily conduct self-assessment and work on internal issues while spreading its know-how abroad. Only in such a manner can the SDG 16 be universally achieved. Also, Slovakia has to do its homework in the SDGs on national level, to be legitimately praised for its success abroad. If not, the status of an experienced country in a democratization and state building, while having severe issues with democracy on national level, might come through hypocritically within the international community.

6.9 Final Recommendations

If seriously implemented, transformational potential of the Agenda 2030 cannot be contradicted. According to the interviewees, the current activities contribute mostly to the raising awareness on the SDGs. The topic is gradually given more attention and thus makes its way to the consciousness of stakeholders on different levels and in different sectors in Slovakia. Also, they all agree that the Agenda 2030 has potential to transform the policies and overall public administration in a positive way. However, some obstacles must be overcome to enjoy the fruitful results. Therefore, the following few points suggest what needs to be done in order to improve identified weaknesses and guarantee effective results.

- Increase financial and human resources

Administrative and technical issues might hinder the success of the Agenda 2030 in Slovakia. The question of resources, whether financial or human matters a lot. Clearly, assigning three employees to Agenda 2030 Coordination Department is not sufficient to oversee the internal implementation. Being understaffed, the department necessarily relies on the cooperation with other institutions such as OECD, the Slovak NGDO Platform or other countries (Czech Republic and Finland are Slovakia's main partners). Such cooperation is surely beneficial, but dependency of the department on others might create unequal power relationships between all involved stakeholders.

The budget should be increased as well. Slovakia demonstrates deficits in some of its international commitments such as the pledge to contribute 0,33 % of GNI to ODA, as agreed on the EU level. In 2015 Slovakia provided 0,1% of GNI to ODA. This is a tremendously low number for the ODA, which is of great importance within the external implementation of SDGs (<http://www.oecd.org/dac/slovak-republic.htm>). Therefore, Slovakia should live up to its commitments and increase the amount of resources for the ODA. Additional resources would be definitely needed to train all public administration employees to enhance their ability to support implementation of the Agenda 2030. Clearly, the matter of financing is always serious, and states have to prioritize where to allocate resources from their limited budgets. In such case, long term budgeting planning might bring some clarity and guidance. Establishing timetable that foresees an annual increase of budgets for international commitments provides responsible stakeholders not only with financial boost for their activities but allows them to plan more efficiently. Moreover, demonstrating a will to achieve commitments, such as contribute 0,33 % of GNI to ODA, strengthen the reputation of Slovakia as a reliable global actor.

- Improve current state of democracy and trustworthiness of institutions

Another challenge for Slovakia is its current state of democracy. Having foreign expertise in state and democracy building, while facing increasing domestic dissatisfaction with democracy and distrust towards state institutions, Slovakia should definitely improve its internal situation, so it can act as trustworthy expert on the international level. Strengthened democratic principles and increased trustworthiness of institutions is of essential importance, especially in relation to the SDG 16. However, it is not so clear to whom this recommendation should be addressed, because the overall state of democracy is a result of political development that has taken place in the course of at least two decades. Therefore, the root causes might embrace deeper structural issues, mind-set of decision maker, or certain legacies from the communist era.

- Promote the concept of whole of the government approach across all bodies in public administration and enforce the political commitment

Clearly, Slovakia takes its commitment to the SDGs into account and has already initiated actions to their implementation. The responsible stakeholders within the state administration comprehended the message of the Agenda 2030 and take into account that their task relates mainly to the state of matters in Slovakia, rather than to the external actions. Building the WGA is a promising initiative and within long-term period might weaken the silo mentality, reform the functioning of public administration and allow for integrated and cooperative approach to the implementation of the SDGs. Currently, some ministries deal with SDGs and try to make progress within those goals that fall under their responsibility such as the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs or the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport. Also, there is a certain level of cooperation between them, but it is not sufficient yet. Moreover, it is important, that the effort to build the WGA does not remain a good will of some representatives in the public administration but will be grasped and enforced by all bodies and institutions so they advance the synergies rather than protect their own interests. However, for such a shift the message of the SDGs has to be thoroughly spread across all participating parties. That is an essential prerequisite for the success of the Agenda 2030. UPPII is the main body responsible for the creation of the WGA. Its cooperation with OECD provides UPPII with the know-how and essential knowledge about the WGA, therefore, UPPII should play a vital role in the promotion of the WGA and training for other public administration bodies on effective implementation of the concept.

- High Level Political Commitment.

Thanks to its cooperation with OECD, UPPII has the know how to build the WGA and prepares

frameworks for the implementation of the SDGs. As elaborated in the previous point, the promotion of the WGA as well as the SDGs across public administration is indeed necessary, yet the efforts of single department within the state administration are not sufficient. High level political commitment is necessary to enforce the change that Slovakia strives for. State elites should push for the reform in public administration as well as for the implementation of the Agenda 2030. Top-down enforcing of the Agenda 2030 and sustainable principles across state administration strengthens the pressure on all stakeholders and considerably supports the attempts of UPPII to build the WGA and implement the SDGs.

- Strengthen the efforts to involve private sector in the Agenda 2030 implementation

Apart from the state administration, NGOs and private sector significantly contribute to meeting the SDGs. While NGOs seem to be already intensively engaged and carry out various activities related to sustainable development, private sector does not demonstrate sufficient involvement with sustainable development. Therefore, there is a remaining challenge to develop a positive pressure and stimulate private sector to raise its interest in sustainable practices. Such a pressure might come from various institutions, be it UPPII, NGOs that focus on private sector, or the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, which is currently developing plans for increased engagement of private sector with ODA.

- Accelerate the implementation process

Almost three years have passed since the New York summit in September 2015, which provided governments with enough time to prepare and launch the plans for meeting the SDGs in 2030. Looking into the current state of matters in Slovakia, we can observe that the progress came about rather slowly. Slovakia has elaborated several documents on the topic but currently there is only one official strategy, namely The Concept of Agenda 2030 Implementation in External Environment. The rest of the prepared documents are merely baselines for future strategies. Currently there is no other strategy that would reflect the Agenda 2030 in its content. Also, Slovakia made the decision to prioritise certain SDGs due to the lack of the resources and missing relevancy of certain goals in Slovakia. Although, the process to identify has been already initiated and it is to be highlighted, that the process is formed in a participative way, Slovakia still has not specified the priorities. Furthermore, choosing the priority is still an initial step before setting tangible and measurable goals. Specifying the priorities is also necessary for the final implementation strategy. Thus, the overall process of implementation consists of many interlinked sub-processes that might advance or slow down the achievement of final results. However, Slovakia is going to take part in the HLPF in July

2018 which puts the country under the pressure and eventually accelerates the pace of efforts towards meeting the SDGs. The task to accelerate the implementation process is relevant for all stakeholders, that are able to directly influence the developments in Slovakia. Clearly, when it comes to the strategies and policy papers, ministries shall enhance their actions. However, NGOs and private companies are also capable of speeding up the progress.

- Enforce the implementation of overall and other relevant strategies

A rising future threat in regard the Agenda 2030 is a previous tendency of Slovakia not to comply with its strategies, as was for example the case of the strategy for the Agenda 21. Therefore, once finished, the strategy has to be reflected and integrated into budget and strategic plans of all ministries as well as national strategies. Otherwise, all the time and resources deployed would be wasted and Slovakia would fail its commitment to the Agenda 2030. It is predominantly role of ministries to carry out the strategies. Especially, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and UPPII bear the responsibility of strategy implementation in the case of the Agenda 2030.

7. Conclusion

Almost three years have passed since the document Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted. The Agenda should guide the globe on the path towards sustainability and force every signatory country to reassess its policies and principles. It enhances endeavors of signatory countries to balance economic, environmental and social aspects within the state, while taking the wellbeing of future generations into account.

This master's thesis deals with the implementation of the Agenda 2030 in Slovakia. It examined the efforts made in Slovakia in relation to the SDGs and attempted to answer the main research question: In how far Slovakia has managed to create a political framework that provides necessary conditions for further implementation of the Agenda 2030. While answering this question the master's thesis intended to map and assess actions related to the Agenda 2030. More specifically, the goal was to identify accomplishments, weaknesses and potential obstacles emerging in the course of the implementation of Agenda 2030.

Slovakia has gone through numerous changes and political constellations in last two decades such as transformation to democracy and market economy, the EU accession and the EU integration. This paradigm in state development constructs specific set of circumstances in the country. The SDGs in their scope are tremendously complex and require many adjustments not only in the content of policies but in the overall approach to the public administration. Considering the recent changes and developments in Slovakia, such agenda is clearly an enormous challenge, but in a positive case it might stimulate a progressive transformation.

Even if the Agenda 2030 is voluntarily and the commitment to the document does not stipulate any legal obligations, Slovakia took the Agenda 2030 into account and initiated first steps to its implementation. Slovakia established institutional framework and assigned the responsibility for the implementation to UPPH and the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs respectively. Additionally, The Government Board for SD was founded to ensure that sustainable development principles become integral part of all politics, while the integration principles are maintained. Both offices as well as the board prepared initial documents that will guide the implementation process and sparked off some other processes such as specifying of national priorities. However, no tangible results in form of concrete goals have been witnessed yet.

Sustainable development is not a new topic. In 2015, Slovakia already achieved 13 out of the 169 SDGs targets and several others were almost fully achieved. Slovakia performs particularly well in the planet category and environmental targets in general. On the other hand, it demonstrates weaknesses in other categories such as gender equality. Being aware of current distance from SDGs

targets, makes it easier to determine which fields require more attention and increased financing. Slovakia's understanding of the Agenda 2030 goes beyond the achievement of the individual SDGs. The representatives responsible for the implementation understood complex and interrelated nature of the Agenda 2030 and recognized the need to reform the functioning of public administration as well as the necessity to strengthen cooperation among various departments in policy making. Having acknowledged these needs, UPPII cooperates with OECD in their efforts to build the WGA and create conditions for further implementation of policies and strategies leading to the SDGs achievement. The Agenda 2030 foresees participation of civil society and private sector in overall process of implementation. While some NGOs are already involved with SDGs in various forms, either promotion or support for specific goals or participation in national strategy preparation, the private sector involvement is relatively weak. Another challenge for Slovakia is to specify its expertise on the EU level and international level. Slovakia has been shaping a tradition in sharing its experience in innovation, security sector reform and water economy. Besides those, Slovakia is a frontrunner in sharing transformation and integration experience, which significantly contributes to the SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies.

The overall process is largely in a planning phase in which the intentions are being defined and steps to their fulfillment are being worked upon. There is a number of obstacles, Slovakia has to face and problems to be solved in order to create the conditions for the implementation and meeting the SDGs. Slovakia should improve current functioning of the state administration alongside with the state current state of democracy. Also, there is a need and raise the awareness of public administration staff as well civil society about the topic and to increasingly engage private sector to fully realize the potential of SDGs. The lack of resources significantly hinders and slows down the overall process, therefore; increased budgets and human resources are necessary to cover all costs and needs in the implementation process. Apart from such administrative issues, strong political commitment and thorough implementation of the strategies are prerequisite for the successful achievement of the SDGs. Considering, that the Agenda 2030 was adopted more than 2 years ago, we can claim that the first steps leading to the creation of the framework for further implementation process have progressed rather slowly. On the other hand, there are ongoing efforts that prove Slovakia's commitment to the SDGs. The attempt to build the WGA implies the shift in approach to the public administration and prepared documents build the way to further implementation of future sustainable policies and projects. Also, the participatory approach to priority setting is unique. However, these practices are new in Slovakia; therefore, the country goes through the learning process.

To conclude, even if the overall process is in its initial phase and the speed is slow, Slovakia has acknowledged its commitment to the Agenda 2030 and is on the track to lay the foundations for

subsequent implementation of the SDGs.

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