P06 / Measuring and Framing Sustainable Development: Data and Indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals

Topic : ENVIRONMENT, SDGs, ENERGY

Chair : Gaby Umbach (European University Institute)

Second Chair : Igor Tkalec (University College London, University of London)

Third Chair : Mira Tiwari (European University Institute)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Ever since their inception, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have gone beyond a simple to-do list for action-oriented development policies. They have become a global frame for a desirable development trajectory that puts a human-centred perspective at the heart of policy interventions, acknowledges human dependence on nature and highlights the interrelation of economic activities, planetary boundaries and equity among people and peoples around the world.

For the delivery on the SDGs, data and indicators have become a global reference frame that defines development priorities. Their impact on policy design defines sustainable development as much as their use in progress assessment impacts on the concrete implementation of the SDGs. In data-driven policy-making for the SDGs, they are hence key tools to quantify, qualify and compare complex processes, structures and performances to define meaning and frame political action for the SDGs.

As every contemporary policy design for the SDGs starts and ends with data, the influence of data in SDG-related policy-making has substantially grown over the past decade. The overarching objective of the panel is therefore to understand the use and power of data and indicators for the SDGs. It will focus on how using and understanding statistics, working with data, analysing and arguing through data have become essential challenges for the SDGs. Moreover, the ecosystem of data sources within and beyond the UN as well as the ways of using them in SDG-related policy-making are of vital interest for the panel as both have grown significantly and became easily confusing for any non-statistician engaged in public policy.

Against this backdrop, the following research questions are at the centre of the panel's analytical interest and serve as guiding questions for the paper proposals:

· What role do data and indicators play in the delivery of the SDG?

· How do data and indicators impact on the delivery of the SDG?

· How can the quality of data for the SDG be assessed and operationalised?

· What lessons can be drawn for the production of data and indicators for the SDG?

· What is the role of data ethics and literacy in implementation of SDG?

The scientific relevance of the panel lies in its focus on the methods, politics, and ethics of measuring progress towards the SDG at the moment of the 2025 SDG Comprehensive Review, which offers a window of opportunity for science advice for policy-making to improve the delivery on the SDGs. The panel zooms into data and indicators as central instruments of SDG-related evidence-informed policy-making within the global development agenda. It focuses on the central role of data in policy-making and discusses pertinent questions of data ethics, literacy, and skills for measuring SDG progress. Finally, it offers a forum to discuss and understand the relevance, impact and presence of data and indicators for the delivery of the SDG.

The panel is informed by the forthcoming 'Elgar Companion on data and indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals' edited by G. Umbach and I. Tkalec with the assistance of M. Tiwari.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Data and indicators have become essential instruments that support collective action to achieve the sustainable development mission operationalised through Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Data are an integral part of the implementation of the SDG agenda and their influence in policy-making has substantially grown over the past decade. Nevertheless, data-related challenges in the context of

achievement of SDGs still persist. These *inter alia* include conceptual and empirical validity of indicators, missing data, national/regional data collection and provision capacities, measuring and evaluating progress toward SDGs, and underwhelming overall global performance towards SDG targets.

Against this backdrop, the chairs encourage conceptual, methodological, theoretical and empirical contributions to the topic of measuring and framing sustainable development and SDGs in particular through data. We welcome analyses that offer novel insights on the use and impact of data and indicators in the delivery of (and progress toward) the SDGs, especially in view of the

- description of the diagnostic functions and power of data and indicators for/in the delivery of the SDG;
- assessment of the descriptive, normative and political functions and power of data and indicators for/in the delivery of the SDG;
- discussion of ethical questions related to of data and indicators for/in the delivery of the SDG;
- presentation of examples of the use of data and indicators for/in the delivery of the SDG.

Papers focused on individual SDGs and/or country/regional case studies including comparative policy and data analysis are particularly welcome.

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Session 1

Wednesday, July 2nd 16:00 to 18:00 (D5)

Discussants

Igor Tkalec (University College London, University of London)

Current and future challenges of measuring progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals

Gaby Umbach (European University Institute)

Igor Tkalec (University College London, University of London)

Mira Tiwari (European University Institute)

(Virtual) The political economy and geopolitics of defining, funding, and producing measures of sustainable development

Mira Tiwari (European University Institute)

Gaby Umbach (European University Institute)

20 years on: How PEFA assessments support delivery of Sustainable Development Goal 16.6 in building effective, accountable and transparent institutions

Kylie Coulson (Murdoch University)

Navigating Climate Uncertainties in Mumbai: A Hierarchical Fuzzy Logic Analysis

Piyush Kumar (Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay)

Krishnan Narayanan

An island of opportunities: the case of SDG 12.3 in Sri Lanka

Camelia Adriana Bucatariu (University of Bucharest)