

Specification and measurability of the UN sustainable development goals (SDG)

- Development of a simple tool to be used for sustainability activities by companies and institutions

Background

The UN SDGs were adopted in 2015 and have truly become goals that countries, companies and institutions adopt and want to work with.

But even though many companies and institutions support the goals, many do not work actively with them yet. One of the reasons being that it is a complex task to work with 17 SDGs and 169 targets. Therefore, working with SDGs must become more tangible, measurable and action-oriented.

At the same time, it is important to maintain a holistic perspective to ensure that the impacts that are improved by one element are not worsened by another, e.g. in a company's value chain or through a product's lifecycle. This will ensure that the work leads to actual improvements from an overall perspective.

Development of screening tool

The purpose of this project is to develop a simple and research-based tool that can deliver measurable and understandable results for how companies and institutions affect the SDGs. This will make working with SDGs manageable and tangible, and contribute to more incorporating SDGs in their strategies and daily activities.

As basis for the tool, measurement methods will be applied that can quantify results, while focusing on the entire lifecycle of the system, project or product being assessed. As for the SDG areas that already feature recognised methods, these will be used in the tool, whereas methods are expected to be developed and adapted in other areas.

The tool will be designed for the Danish scenario. Therefore, priority will be given to the SDGs and targets that are most challenging to Denmark, and to the SDGs and targets where Danish companies and institutions – including municipalities and utility companies – have the largest potential for contributing solutions. Therefore, this project and the tool developed are expected to be able to create value for both public and private organisations and to contribute to sustainable development on a societal level.

The project will be carried out in cooperation between COWI and DTU Management, Division for Quantitative Sustainability Assessment. The project starts at the beginning of 2019 and will run for two years.

Usability

Part of the project involves establishing dialogue with Danish companies and institutions on their wishes and needs regarding measurement and reporting of SDGs. This dialogue will, along with test application on selected projects, ensure the tool's usability and value. Furthermore, the goal is to be able to use the tool as a starting point for offering consultancy services in the SDG fields.