An engaging online course designed to equip participants with an understanding of why a focus on system interconnections is key for achieving sustainable development. The course explores concepts related to policy coherence and systems thinking, country examples, as well as specific tools and mechanisms.

Introduction

Conventional approaches to development often focus on sector-specific economic results, working under the assumption that markets function perfectly. Such approaches do not adequately consider externalities and their impact on society, equity or the environment. They also often ignore the transboundary and inter-generational effects which results in siloed, contradictory policies that can undermine one another.

This course explores ways to uncover system interconnections and foster integration across the Sustainable Development Goals, against a backdrop of political economy analysis. It explores the concept of systems thinking, as well as a cross-organizational and cross-sectoral policy coherence at the national, regional and international levels. It aims at equipping participants with an understanding of why a focus on system interconnections is key for achieving sustainable development, what coherent policymaking entails, and what are some specific tools, mechanisms and approaches that can be employed to foster both. This need for a systemic and coherence view is more evident than ever as the global COVID-19 pandemic has interrupted our journey towards transformative change and risks reversing decades of development gains.

This course was designed by the UN System Staff College, in coordination with the National University of Singapore acting through its Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy and the Hertie School – The University of Governance in Berlin, and in collaboration with the OECD Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development Unit in Paris.

Learn more and register at www.unssc.org
Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, participants will:

- Demonstrate a sound understanding of the vision and principles underlying the 2030 Agenda, the evolution of the concept of policy coherence for sustainable development and the importance of policy coherence for sustainable development;
- Demonstrate a sound understanding of systems thinking and systems mapping, as a framework of thought;
- Demonstrate a good understanding of the relevance of policy coherence as an approach and a tool to achieve sustainable development outcomes, and be able to recognize policies that are mutually reinforcing across governance levels;
- Be equipped with knowledge of the specific tools, mechanisms and approaches that can be employed to foster systems thinking and policy coherence, including partnerships and multi-stakeholder engagement.

Course methodology

UNSSC online courses are designed to deliver maximum learning outcomes through carefully chosen high-quality learning materials. Our facilitated online courses combine self-paced study modules with applied learning components, such as case studies, interactive exercises, and collaborative group work, specially tailored to the needs of the professional interested in deepening their knowledge on a particular subject matter.

Participants will benefit from live moderated webinars which feature valuable inputs from renowned subject matter experts and allow real-time dialogue with high-level speakers. Webinar recordings are made available to ensure that participants have a flexible and seamless learning experience.

An expert facilitator guides and assists participants throughout the course, and provides real-time feedback on activities and exercises. Our user-friendly social online learning platform provides participants with the opportunity to connect with peers from diverse organizational backgrounds, fostering peer-to-peer learning.

UNSSC online courses give learners the opportunity to complete activities when it best fits their schedule. Participants are largely free to determine their own weekly study plan. Lasting five weeks and demanding six hours of study per week, UNSSC online courses incorporate the same high academic rigour as any UNSSC face-to-face programme.

Course contents

Week 1 provides an introduction to the vision and principles of the 2030 Agenda, as well as the framework of systems thinking.

Week 2 discusses the political economy of sustainable development and introduces the concept and evolution of policy coherence for sustainable development, and elaborates upon vertical and horizontal coherence, as well as the different mechanisms that enhance policy coherence across the policy cycle.

Week 3 discusses the importance of Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) in the context of Sustainable Development Goal 17 of the 2030 Agenda. It focuses on the different approaches towards understanding the concept of PCSD and the importance of policy coherence at national, regional, and international levels.

Week 4 looks at the importance of partnerships and stakeholder engagement for PCSD, introducing tools and review mechanisms to assess integration of the 2030 Agenda at the national level. It examines the significance of tracking progress on policy coherence, through a systems thinking lens.

Week 5 focuses on the synergies, trade-offs and strategic interventions for the future when applying systems thinking in order to foster policy coherence for sustainable development.

Target audience

UN staff from headquarters, country teams or regional offices, government representatives, development practitioners as well as members of civil society, the private sector, academia and foundations.
Cost of participation

This online course is offered free-of-charge.

UNSSC adopts a concrete methodology in its selection process that considers the scope, objectives, and expected outcomes of the course as well as specific selection criteria for its course participants to increase course impact. The criteria include quality of motivation, professional experience and knowledge, organizational commitment, diversity, the potential for future work, and willingness to contribute to the course.

Interested individuals are encouraged to sign up for the course and provide a clear and well-crafted motivation statement in the online application form, with a short explanation of the benefit they can derive from the course as well as their possible contribution to enriching the course.

Participants will enjoy the following benefits from the free online course:

- 3-months access to course materials (including exclusive video material and key readings), recording of webinars and speakers’ presentations).
- Participation in live webinars with renowned subject matter experts.
- Exclusive access to the UNSSC online social learning environment with training and supporting background materials, and the opportunity to stay connected with colleagues.

Certificates from the United Nations System Staff College will be awarded to participants upon completion of the course.

UNSSC fosters collaborative peer-to-peer learning among its course participants. To achieve this, UNSSC adopts a rigorous methodology in its selection process that considers the course’s scope, objectives, and expected outcomes. UNSSC utilizes specific selection criteria for its course participants to promote cohort-based learning and increase course impact. Interested individuals are encouraged to sign up for the moderated online course and be ready to complete an additional comprehensive selection survey after the course registration closes.

Selection criteria:

The selection criteria include quality of motivation, professional experience and knowledge, commitment, diversity (gender, geographic region, sector, etc.), and willingness to contribute to the course.

Selection process:

1. Register for the course by clicking on the sign-up button. Please provide a clear motivation statement and a short explanation of the benefit you can derive from the course as well as your possible contribution to enriching it. Course registration opens on 2 July 2022 and closes on 2 September 2022.
2. After the deadline for registration, you will receive a link to a survey to confirm the necessary conditions for course completion (technical requirements and time availability), as well as to answer course-specific questions.

Testimonials

"SAIONARA KÖNIG-REIS
Head of NY Office and Representative to the UN, Dianova International

The course helped me understand the practicalities around implementing the SDGs and how that can be played out by putting in place good systems that facilitate horizontal and vertical policy coherence for sustainable development.

SAMSON MWANGI
Air Transport Officer, WFP South Sudan

I now understand and appreciate the work done to ensure policy coherence and the need to balance priorities based on resources. With my new knowledge, I will help my local community and my place of work explore the impact of the 5 pillars."