Implementing the 2030 Agenda poses new challenges to political institutions and processes. An integrated implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and their 169 targets will require innovative governance approaches at the national and local level in order to exploit synergies and mitigate trade-offs between the SDG. However, in many countries the implementation of policies pertaining to sustainable development continues to be characterized by sectoral approaches and clearly delineated ministerial responsibilities. Considering that deep institutional transformation will be necessary to coordinate the achievement of the SDG, it is necessary to gain an understanding about how national governments interpret the call for enhancing policy coherence for sustainable development.

To this purpose, the proposed paper analyses the Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) submitted by 54 countries to the UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2016 and 2017, in conjunction with these countries’ political context and institutional frameworks (regime type, form of state organization, cabinet structure etc.). In a first step analysis will focus on the different institutional and procedural approaches for SDG implementation brought forward by national governments, including:

• Proposed institutional set-up for planning, coordinating and monitoring SDG implementation
• The existence of specialized technical units, inter-ministerial units, or inter-unit agencies charged with supervising SDG implementation
• Commitments to guarantee bottom-up participation in SDG implementation

In a second step, the analysis will describe identified patterns of relationships between national political-institutional contexts and proposed approaches for SDG implementation and come forward with explanations of the causal relations underlying these patterns. Theoretically, it contributes to integrate macro-oriented research on patterns of institutional reforms (democratization, decentralization etc.) and sectoral governance approaches (policy research, climate governance etc).