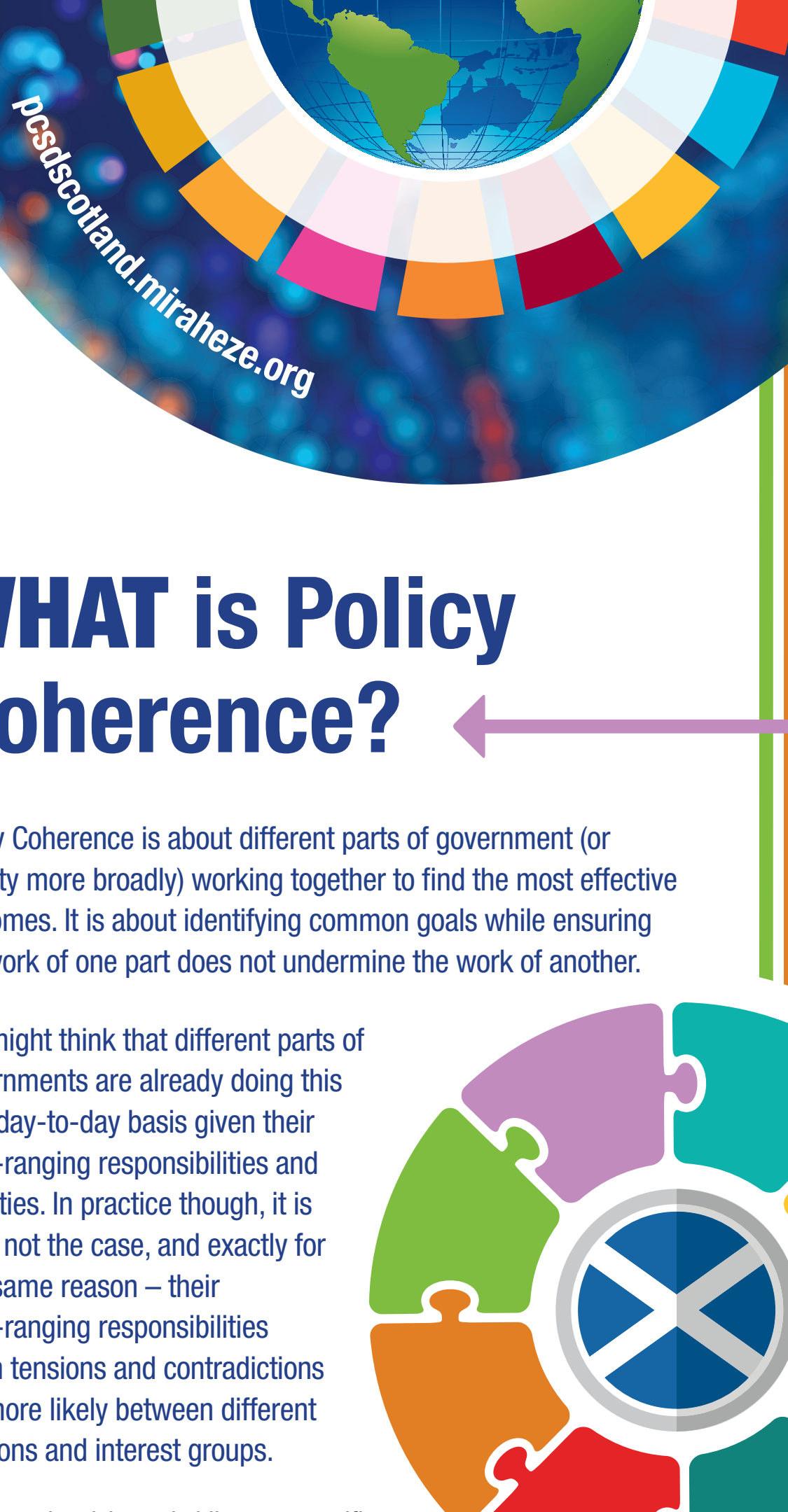




Improving Policy Coherence in Scotland

Scotland's International Development Alliance

Delivering a safer, fairer and more sustainable world for all



WHAT is Policy Coherence?

Policy Coherence is about different parts of government (or society more broadly) working together to find the most effective outcomes. It is about identifying common goals while ensuring the work of one part does not undermine the work of another.

You might think that different parts of governments are already doing this on a day-to-day basis given their wide-ranging responsibilities and activities. In practice though, it is often not the case, and exactly for that same reason – their wide-ranging responsibilities mean tensions and contradictions are more likely between different divisions and interest groups.

For example, giving subsidies to a specific industry, such as farming or fishing, may help create jobs, but it may also negatively affect environmental conservation. Equally, a government may decide to invest in renewable energy to increase climate action, but in doing so could negatively affect employment without proper consideration of how and when it invests. At an international level, trade policy may assist industry in one country while impacting negatively on people's livelihoods and the environment elsewhere in the world.

So, while some trade-offs may be unavoidable, policy coherence is about making sure that intended and unintended outcomes of any decision are well thought through.

When we are required to consider multiple problems at once, these tensions and contradictions appear much more frequently, and working together for everyone's benefit becomes much more difficult.

Policy coherence is therefore about finding systemic approaches to working together.

It's about thinking outside our immediate realm of influence, to consider whether and how our actions might impact elsewhere and into the future.

It's about trying to find the optimum solutions to ensure our actions don't undermine one another.

It's about joined-up thinking.



WHAT is Sustainable Development?

The original concept of sustainable development sets out two essential principles or conditions that must be met for development to be sustainable: it must respect and protect the environment while also delivering fairness and justice for everyone. It also includes economics – specifically a **sustainable economy**, rather than a perpetually growing one. The concept of sustainable development also has two supporting principles or conditions: firstly, that decision-making is informed by evidence; and, secondly, that decisions are taken in a way that allows everyone to participate.

WHY is it important?

If we want to prosper into the future, policy coherence is the **only** approach we can take. It stops short-termism blinding us from future problems. It forces us to think globally, while acting locally. It helps us connect the dots between ourselves, the communities we live in, as well as people nationally and internationally, and the planet.

For us to ensure we don't destroy the planet, leave people behind or lose sight of what's important in terms of our own well-being, finding a way to make sure we work together better and in a systemic way (especially in government, but also in society more widely) is vital.

For the international development sector specifically, it's about making sure that we put equality and solidarity with the most marginalised and vulnerable people at the heart of everything we do, and not just in our external relations.

Through enhanced policy coherence, Scotland can demonstrate leadership on sustainable development and set an example as a good global citizen.

WHAT is Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development?

The concept of 'Policy Coherence for Development' first emerged in discussions among international aid donors in the early 1990s. The premise was simple: national domestic policy decisions can, and do, have an international impact. Thus, in order to fight poverty and address inequality overseas, policy makers must consider the transboundary effects of their decisions at home, and try to minimise any negative impact they might have, while also seeking to add value whenever possible.

In 2015, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) enshrined policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD) as part of the 17 Global Goals (Target 17.14). This gave policy coherence a whole new dimension, (given the complex interconnections between economic, social and environmental challenges that the SDGs aim to address – as well as their multiple global-domestic linkages related to the environment, biodiversity and climate).

WHAT can be done to help us work together better?

Progress is being made in Scotland, including through improvements to the **National Performance Framework (NPF)** – the tool used by the Scottish Government to measure progress against National Outcomes. However, we believe Scotland can do much more to fully embed and implement a policy coherent approach. In doing so, we can show global leadership on our commitment to delivering the SDGs.

What was once solely about how domestic policy affects outcomes in developing countries, now extends to how any policy, domestic or otherwise, affects sustainable development outcomes everywhere, both now and into the future.

That means there is much that can be achieved to enhance policy coherence through devolved government structures in Scotland and the UK. This requires government politicians and civil society to work together and think systematically about how policy areas interact with one another. To do this we require new and existing tools to be used when developing, scrutinising and evaluating legislation and policy.

In order to enhance policy coherence in Scotland, the Scottish Government should:

1 Work collaboratively with civil society to develop systematic ways of enhancing coherence, including using and developing this [open source Wiki on policy coherence](#) in Scotland. We know already that enhanced coherence is possible across [a range of policy areas](#) that the Scottish Government leads on and influences.

2 Ensure responsibility for achieving the SDGs is embedded and aligned vertically (from national policy and practice, through to local policy and practice) and horizontally (across sectors & across-ministerial portfolios) at all levels of government to ensure a joined-up approach to SDG implementation.

3 Develop accountable and transparent structures that promote joined-up thinking and broad stakeholder engagement on SDG implementation on issues that affect different sectors. The new Inter-Ministerial Group on Policy Coherence announced by the Minister for Europe, Migration and International Development in September 2019 could be a powerful vehicle for this, but only if it ensures regular and systematic involvement of stakeholders from different interest groups and is open to regular public scrutiny. See our recommendations for this group on the [PCSD Wiki](#).

4 Measure Scotland's global footprint holistically. As indicators are developed and honed that aim to measure progress towards the 11 National Performance Framework (NPF) Outcomes, particularly our 'positive contribution internationally', we must ensure they go some way to measuring coherence in relation to our global footprint across a full range of sectors, such as trade & investment, supply chains in procurement and waste management.

The Scottish Parliament also has an important role to play enhancing policy coherence in Scotland. It should:

1 Ensure systematic scrutiny of government legislation and activity using a policy coherence approach. All new bills and legislation should be assessed through a sustainable development lens. Existing tools can be used for this, such as the Parliament's own [Sustainable Development Impact Assessment Tool](#) developed by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe).

This tool has been found to highlight cross-cutting issues and unintended consequences, and could help to mitigate against individual Scottish Parliament committees working in silos, thus supporting the delivery of policy coherence across devolved policy and practice. It is not currently being routinely used in committee scrutiny, as there is no staff resource in place to support its use.

2 Ensure Parliamentary Committees align their remits to both the SDGs (and Targets) and the National Performance Framework (NPF) Outcomes to improve understanding of where responsibility to achieve the SDGs lies.

3 Commit to holding regular debates on SDG and NPF progress and implementation, to hold government account on their commitment to the achieving the SDGs.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



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Get involved!

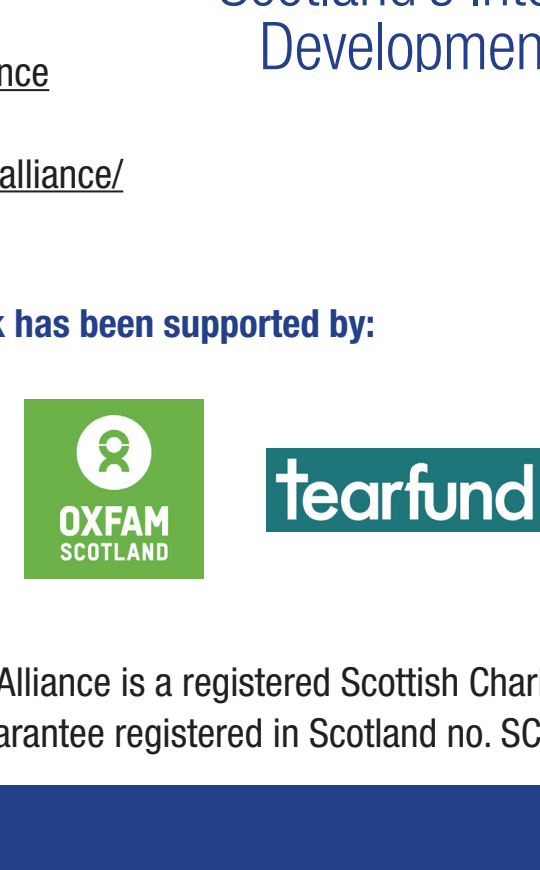
Visit the Improving Policy Coherence in Scotland Wiki

Scotland's International Development Alliance has created a Wiki website on Policy Coherence in Scotland that is designed to be open, editable (like Wikipedia) and evolve over time.

It is a shared and open space for developing understanding on policy coherence issues, suggesting solutions, tracking progress and stimulating debate.

For it to be useful, it needs to be shaped and developed by both government officials and civil society from a range of domestic and international sectors.

Improving Policy Coherence in Scotland Wiki
pcsdscotland.miraheze.org



Policy coherence as a concept underpins the **UN 2030 Agenda** and has a stated aim of balancing the different dimensions of sustainable development and transforming the world for the better.

The Rubik's Cube has been used as a simple analogy for visualising the challenge and complexity of addressing all dimensions of sustainable development in an integrated manner.

If we try to solve only one side of the cube we are unlikely to ever succeed, but by considering all sides simultaneously we can get closer to the solution.

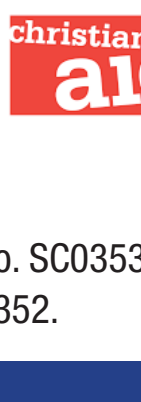


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