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## Definitions

The following table represents the abbreviations used in this document.

<b>Term/Abbreviation</b>	<b>Definition</b>
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
EU	European Union
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UN	United Nations

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## Executive Summary

This document represents the deliverable for WP3: Research on the Social Fields Approach to Technologies and Innovations in Agenda 2030 for the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence “Technology and Innovations for Agenda 2030 – EU Global Leadership” (TIA2030). It is a meta-analysis of available research, information, knowledge, and data on the role of institutions, social networks, and cognitive frames in the adoption and implementation of grand strategies, namely the Lisbon strategy, Europe 2020, and, particularly, Agenda 2030, and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The review was conducted using the resources from Scopus, Clarivate, and Google Scholar databases.

The document focuses on the role of social forces, specifically institutions, social networks, and cognitive frames, in implementing the European grand strategies. In particular, it explores how these social forces can shape and impact the internal structural settings of social fields within the process of adopting and implementing Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals. The review also examines potential issues that could hinder the implementation process of the grand strategies (implementation deficit) as well as regards different interpretations of the notion of sustainable development and innovation, which are two of the main concepts in the Agenda 2030 and SDGs' internal structure.

The review is structured into four sections (chapters) that discuss different aspects of the research topic. The first chapter outlines the main principles of the social field theory, particularly the SOFIA conceptual framework, which serves as the project's main theoretical base. This framework proposes a comprehensive and integrative approach to understanding the role of institutions, social networks, and cognitive frames in shaping and impacting social fields. In addition to this, it provides insights into how these social forces interact and influence each other in complex and dynamic ways, especially regarding their impact while shaping the systems of technological innovations.

The second chapter presents the grand strategies, namely Lisbon strategy, Europe 2020 and Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It provides a detailed overview of these strategies, their objectives, and the challenges they face in the implementation process. The chapter also highlights the importance of adopting a comprehensive and collaborative approach to implementing these strategies involving different stakeholders and social actors to contribute to awareness of the European grand strategies and their implementation.

The third chapter discusses the role of the European Union and its public diplomacy towards third countries in the global implementation of Agenda 2030 and its SDGs. It also examines the challenges and opportunities the European Union faces in promoting sustainable development and innovation in third countries and highlights the importance of adopting a collaborative and cooperative approach to promoting sustainable development and innovation globally.

The fourth and final chapter examines the role of institutions, social networks, and cognitive frames (SOFIA conceptual framework) in the adoption and implementation of Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The section also discusses the potential benefits and

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limitations of adopting the SOFIA conceptual framework in promoting sustainable development and innovation.

Overall, the literature review provides an integrative analysis of the role of three main social forces (institutions, social networks, and cognitive frames) in the adoption and implementation of Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It aims to provide insights into how social actors can achieve stability and change within specific social settings and how different social forces are considered regarding their impact while shaping the systems of technological innovations. The document also highlights the importance of adopting a collaborative and comprehensive approach to promoting sustainable development and innovation, which involves different stakeholders and social actors who act together. What is more, the document outlines the prospect for further research (within the TIA2030 project as well) with possible recommendations for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners interested in promoting sustainable development and innovation in the context of Agenda 2030 and its SDGs.

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## 1. Introduction

This document represents the deliverable for the WP3: Research: Social Fields Approach to Technologies and Innovations in Agenda 2030. It is a meta-analysis of available research, information, knowledge and data on the role of institutions, social networks and cognitive frames in:

1. Adoption and implementation of grand strategies, namely the Lisbon strategy, Europe 2020 and Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals;
2. The role of the European Union and its public diplomacy towards the third countries in the global implementation of Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The literature review focuses on the role of institutions, social networks, and cognitive frames in implementing the European grand strategies. It also explores the potential issues of the implementation deficit, different interpretations of sustainable development and innovation notions, and how the social fields theory and SOFIA conceptual framework perceive and approach the implementation of the Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals. The literature for the review and meta-analysis was selected using Scopus, Clarivate, and Google Scholar databases.

The structure of the document is the following: Chapter 2.1 outlines the main principles of the social fields theory, in particular, SOFIA conceptual framework; Chapter 2.2 presents the grand strategies, namely Lisbon strategy, Europe 2020 and Agenda 2030 and its SDGs; Chapter 2.3 discusses the role of the EU and its public diplomacy towards the third countries in the global implementation of Agenda 2030 and its SDGs; Chapter 2.4 looks at the role of institutions, social networks and cognitive frames (SOFIA conceptual framework) in the adoption and implementation of Agenda 2030 and its SDGs. The main assumptions of the literature review are represented in the Conclusions chapter.

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## 2. Thematical literature review

### 2.1 Social fields theory

The notion of fields in the social sciences originates from the concept of a field used by natural sciences as an emergent and dynamic reality (Wilkinson, 1970) and has been generally understood as a concept explaining how social actors can achieve stability and changes within specific social settings (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011).

Every social field has unique internal structural settings, and every social field has legitimate methods for attributing meaning to these structures and actions within them. Jens Beckert, a German sociologist and author of the article “How do fields change? The Interrelations of Institutions, Networks, and Cognition in the Dynamics of Markets” (2010), states that these internal structural settings are influenced by three major social forces: institutions, social networks and cognitive frames (Beckert, 2010). Reviewed literature and research allow summarising essential understandings of these notions within the social sciences.

Starting with institutions, various definitions of this concept exist. Thus, more specific and narrower ones often encompass rules, (political-administrative) regulations and laws. For instance, E. Ostrom (1992) regards institutions as a set of rules that individuals use while routine activities that produce outcomes that affect these individuals. Meanwhile, Peters (1999) considers institutions as a set of values and repetitive actions devised to implement and enforce those values (Jakobsen & Aarset, 2010). In this context, it might be essential to regard the definition by the Nobel laureate Douglass North (1981), who defines the institutions not only as a set of rules but also as a set of “compliance procedures, and moral and ethical behavioural norms designed to constrain the behaviour of individuals in the interests of maximising the wealth or utility of principals” (North, 1981, p.201). On the other hand, broader definitions of institutions can also include organisations and public authorities, which can impact social actors as well as their behaviour and decision-making process (Jakobsen & Aarset, 2010). Different scholars also take into account the nature of the institutions, dividing them into formal (e.g. rules, laws, regulations) and informal ones (e.g. norms, conventions, self-governing codes, values), according to their field of functioning (Mahong, 2010).

Speaking forward – social networks. They place individuals and groups within the social landscape, social space and context, either constraining connections to specific points or, on the contrary, promoting and encouraging them (Rončević & Modic, 2011; Rončević & Cepoi, 2022). Concerning the impact of social networks on the internal setting of the social field, it is worth mentioning that the interaction among its actors is almost unavoidable. Therefore, they must collaborate to achieve specific results, exchanging resources and knowledge as well as forming long-term alliances (Jakobsen & Aarset, 2010). Moreover, according to particular research, norms, ideas, and innovations are also implemented, particularly and specifically with the help of social networks (Cepoi, 2016).

The third outlined social force is cognitive frames. They are usually associated with perceptions (Beckert, 2010), however, it is also essential to consider here that they can act as mental toolkits, enabling the interpretation of relevant strategies, suggesting social actions for the involved actors of

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the social field, helping them to provide a common understanding of the purpose, relationships and rules in a particular field (Rončević & Cepoi, 2022).

It is essential to mention that each of the outlined social forces can, directly and indirectly, affect the other two through their circular relationship. Institutions, for instance, can shape the social network structure and make specific values socially relevant. In their turn, social networks can establish the collective power to shape institutions and cognitive frames (or even diffuse them), whereas cognitive frames legitimise and form perceptions of institutions and social network structures (Beckert, 2010; Rončević et al., 2023).

### **2.1.1 SOFIA conceptual framework**

The social fields approach was initially used to analyse markets as social fields (Beckert, 2010); however, the latest research has shown that it could be applied to analyse other social fields as well (Rončević & Cepoi, 2022). Thus, the TIA2030 project, being the focal point for competence and knowledge on the European Union implementation of the United Nations global Agenda 2030, is particularly based on the SOFIA (Social-Fields-Approach) conceptual framework, where three outlined social forces (institutions, social networks, and cognitive frames) are considered regarding their impact while shaping the systems of technological innovations. Within the implementation of the project, TIA2030 engages a variety of target groups (academia, students, professionals, policymakers, civil servants, businesses, civil society and the general public at large), setting up infrastructure, methodologies, protocols, and tools to systematically collect, evaluate and make publicly available both already existing documentary resources and new primary empirical data as well as to advance interdisciplinary EU studies and deal with the phenomenon of EU implementation deficit, with a view to offer research and educational tools that could be utilised throughout Europe and beyond in order to contribute to awareness of Agenda 2030 and its SDGs and its implementation.

SOFIA approach (the acronym corresponds to the Greek word “Σοφία”, which means “wisdom”) was first applied within the secondary analysis of technological innovation in seven regions on four continents by Borut Rončević and Dolores Modic, where the systems of innovation were analysed as special types of social fields under the influence of the three social forces (institutions, cognitive frames and networks) (Rončević & Modic, 2011; Rončević & Cepoi, 2022). Then, the approach was further developed and explored in other publications (e.g. Rončević, 2012; Rončević & Modic, 2012; Rončević, Makarovič, Tomšič & Cepoi, 2018) so that the empirical base was increased, as well as new sources of secondary data were introduced (Rončević & Cepoi, 2022).

In addition to this, the SOFIA approach was used to research regional innovation systems and other spatial levels of ones. Thus, it was included in the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence “Technologies and Innovations in Regional Development for Europe 2020” (TIR 2020) (Co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union, Project Reference: 587540-EPP-1-2017-1-SI-EPPJMO-CoE), as its main theoretical and conceptual framework in order to develop operationalisation to collect primary data in empirical research for the first time (Rončević & Cepoi, 2022). Moreover, the SOFIA approach has also been applied in research on the implementation of Europe 2020 as the theoretical base of

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the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence “Strategic Observatory for Europe 2030” (SOE2030) (Co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union, Project Reference: 611564-EPP-1-2019-1-SI-EPPJMO-CoE) (Rončević et al., 2023).

Therefore, it is possible to assume that nowadays, the SOFIA approach provides possibilities for both primary and secondary research, helping to analyse various concepts and phenomena, and could be particularly applied while examining technological innovations and their role in implementing the grand strategies, especially Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## 2.2 EU grand strategies and their implementation

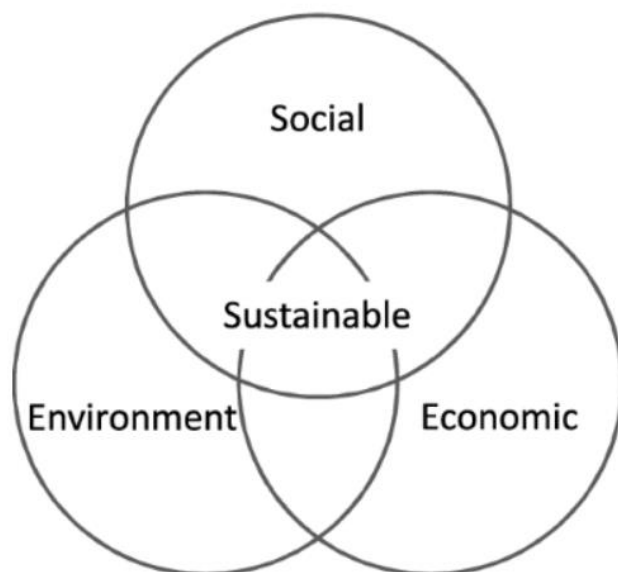
The implementation of the European Union's grand strategies has been a subject of significant interest for both researchers and policymakers (Rončević et al., 2023). One of the most researched strategies for now is the Lisbon strategy (or Lisbon Agenda), which was established by the European Council in Lisbon in March 2000 and concluded in 2010. The strategic goal of the Lisbon Strategy was to make the European Union "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion" by 2010 (European Council, 2000). However, some researchers have identified an implementation deficit of the Lisbon Strategy, and the interesting point here is that they attribute it not to the changed economic circumstances after 2008 (moreover, it was impossible to foresee it when the Strategy was initially adopted) but to the failure to recognise and employ the role of its institutional, social and cognitive underpinnings (Rončević & Cepoi, 2022). Additionally, many publications have also examined the impact of Europe 2020 (for instance, Stec & Grzebyk (2018), Makarovič, Šušteršič, & Rončević (2014)), a European strategy for innovative, sustainable and inclusive growth that was approved by the European Council in 2010 (European Commission, 2010; Rončević & Cepoi, 2022).

The European Union's next grand strategy is the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which aims to separate economic growth from environmental and social degradation. The UN General Assembly adopted this comprehensive international agreement in September 2015 and addresses significantly vital issues. Agenda 2030 consists of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that focus on major thematic areas, including: No poverty (SDG 1), Zero hunger (SDG 2), Good health and well-being (SDG 3), Quality education (SDG 4), Gender equality (SDG 5), Clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), Affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), Decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), Industry, innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9), Reduced inequalities (SDG 10), Sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), Responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), Climate Action (SDG 13), Life below water (SDG 14), Life on land (SDG 15), Peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG 16), and Partnerships for the goals (SDG 17). Each goal has 8-12 action prescriptive targets (169 targets), representing together a significant step toward global sustainability (Josephsen, 2017; United Nations, 2023). The SDG's targets take different forms, with some being quantifiable and expressed numerically, while others are described in words, such as quality improvement or changes in conditions for specific groups.

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Another crucial point to be mentioned about the Agenda 2030 is the concept of sustainability outlined through all 17 SDGs. The Goals themselves are regarded as the principal elements and basis for countries to settle a common course to achieve sustainable development at both national and global levels. Therefore, the interpretation of the notion of sustainability and sustainable development plays a vital role in considering the accumulation of general values at the intersection of economic, social, and environmental aspects of societal change.

The concept of sustainability can be traced back to the second half of the 20th century when the discussion on societal changes in developing and developed countries included economic and social progress. Since the 1980s, environmental quality has also begun to be recognised as a critical factor in development processes, both locally and globally. The term "sustainable development" replaced "development", emphasising today's well-known three pillars of sustainable development – economic, social, and environmental – and the need for their integration into professional and everyday language (Josephsen, 2017). The three-circles diagram was first presented by an environmental and resource economist, Edward B. Barbier, in 1987, who recognised sustainability as an "...interaction among three systems: the biological (and another resource) system (BS), the economic system (ES), and the social system (SS)" (Barbier, 1987, p. 104). Later, this representation took different forms within the academic literature, policy documentation, and further. An example of its representation can be found below in Picture 1 (Purvis, Mao & Robinson, 2019):



Picture 1: Representation of the notion of sustainability (Purvis, Mao & Robinson, 2019)

As far as Agenda 2030 is concerned while speaking of the notion of sustainability, it is also essential to take into account its Preamble, which states that "the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the 169 targets ... are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental" (United Nations, 2023). Consequently, Agenda 2030 reinforces the aspects of sustainable development from the 1980s, setting out a vision

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for a more equitable world based on principles such as human rights, equality, and environmental stewardship (Le Blanc, 2015; Josephsen, 2017), and carrying out two main functions (as most of the other international agreements) – a political and an analytical or instrumental one (Josephsen, 2017). Considering the implementation of the principles of sustainability, it is crucial to point out also the view of Gro Harlem Brundtland, chairperson of the Brundtland Commission (the former World Commission on Environment and Development, that focused on bringing countries together in the endeavour of fostering sustainable development), that “the integration of environment and development is required in all countries, rich and poor” (Brundtland, 1987, p.33). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), succeeding the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as global goals for the period 2015-2030, are at the same time more ambitious and challenging, covering much broader ranges of issues than MDGs and aiming to be universal, so that, applying to all countries, guiding to the transition to the sustainable development. Therefore, regarding the instrumental function of the Agenda 2030, it is possible to concern that the SDGs structure represents a basis for cooperation and accountability among nations to accomplish a shared vision, enable cross-sector dialogue, greater policy coherence, and integration across various sectors, particularly in the context of international development agencies (Le Blanc, 2015), representing crucial steps for their implementation and inclusion, encouraging diverse groups of stakeholders to collaborate and join their forces. These goals also serve as a shared benchmark for institutions responsible for monitoring and reviewing the international development agenda and the global community they serve. In addition, concerning its political function, Agenda 2030 can foster concerted action among countries and diverse actors such as governments, businesses, civil society organisations, local communities, and individuals towards a sustainable development direction for humanity. It is essential to make informed political decisions to address the challenges of extreme poverty and unsustainable development. Thus, the Agenda's function also lies in its potential to provide practical guidance for implementing the SDG's vision, supported by the Indicator Framework for monitoring progress. A unified framework is necessary for successful global and local implementation of the many targets through concrete action, and the SDGs, together with their targets and indicators, form the paradigm for implementation, providing relatively practical guidance (Le Blanc, 2015; Josephsen, 2017).

Therefore, it is possible to consider the main features of the Agenda 2030 as follows:

- All countries are regarded as “developing” ones (universality of the Agenda);
- Sustainable Development Goals are presumed to be a common reference for countries, although their current state and current situation might differ depending on relevant knowledge, backup support from institutions and level of technological and innovation progress. Numerous countries have either created or are currently developing action plans to achieve their share of the SDG implementation. Typically, this process involves the adoption of suitable indicators for each target to enable national and international institutions to assess the progress made, and the United Nations supports countries in establishing their preparedness to provide and use indicators in their SDG action plans;
- Engagement of all stakeholders and actors at all levels – local authorities, policymakers, professionals, businesses, civil society, and the general public at large should work together to contribute to implementing Agenda 2030 and its SDGs (Josephsen, 2017).

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In general, aspects of the implementation of the European Union's grand strategies are of great interest in achieving the Agenda 2030 and its SDGs. Having a thorough understanding of this issue is essential to reduce the implementation deficit, which has been widely recognised as a challenge for the past European Union's grand strategies, including the Lisbon Strategy, as mentioned above, and, to a lesser extent, Europe 2020. Thus, the implementation of Agenda 2030 has become a thought-provoking topic both as a research topic and as a policy issue. This is due to the significant challenges in implementing a joint strategy in a union of 27 diverse countries, especially within the context of existing discrepancies in implementation among Member States (for example, the differences between Northern and Western Member States compared to Eastern and Southern ones) (Kasprzyk & Wojnar, 2021; Wüst & Rogge, 2022; Rončević et al., 2023). Despite decades-long institutional development, key institutions still lack the power and budget equivalent to those of nation-states (Rončević et al., 2023).

It is interesting to note that while the Lisbon strategy and Europe 2020 are grand strategies explicitly developed for the European Union, Agenda 2030 is a document developed and accepted by the United Nations, which has a significant impact on the European Union as well. During the process of the implementation and adoption of the Agenda, the European Union has realised that many of the significant issues and challenges it might face are global and require a worldwide effort rather than just the EU's efforts. Some of these global issues, such as climate change, illegal migration, and, not least, the war in Ukraine, have a significant impact on the European Union itself, also affecting the European and global energy market and food supplies and possibly leading to the changes in global geopolitical alliances. As a result, some strategic priorities and decisions that have already been accepted are being re-examined (such as Germany's decision to close nuclear power plants and decrease coal-powered power plants) (Rončević et al., 2023).

Therefore, to balance the overcoming of crises, the European Union has reshaped how it understands and mitigates these challenges that occur (or will occur) on its territory. In this case, it is essential to focus on innovation activities, technology transfer, business support, and enterprise collaboration. The results will lead not only to the examination of the abovementioned crises' consequences but also to a better understanding of challenges to economic and socially sustainable transitions.

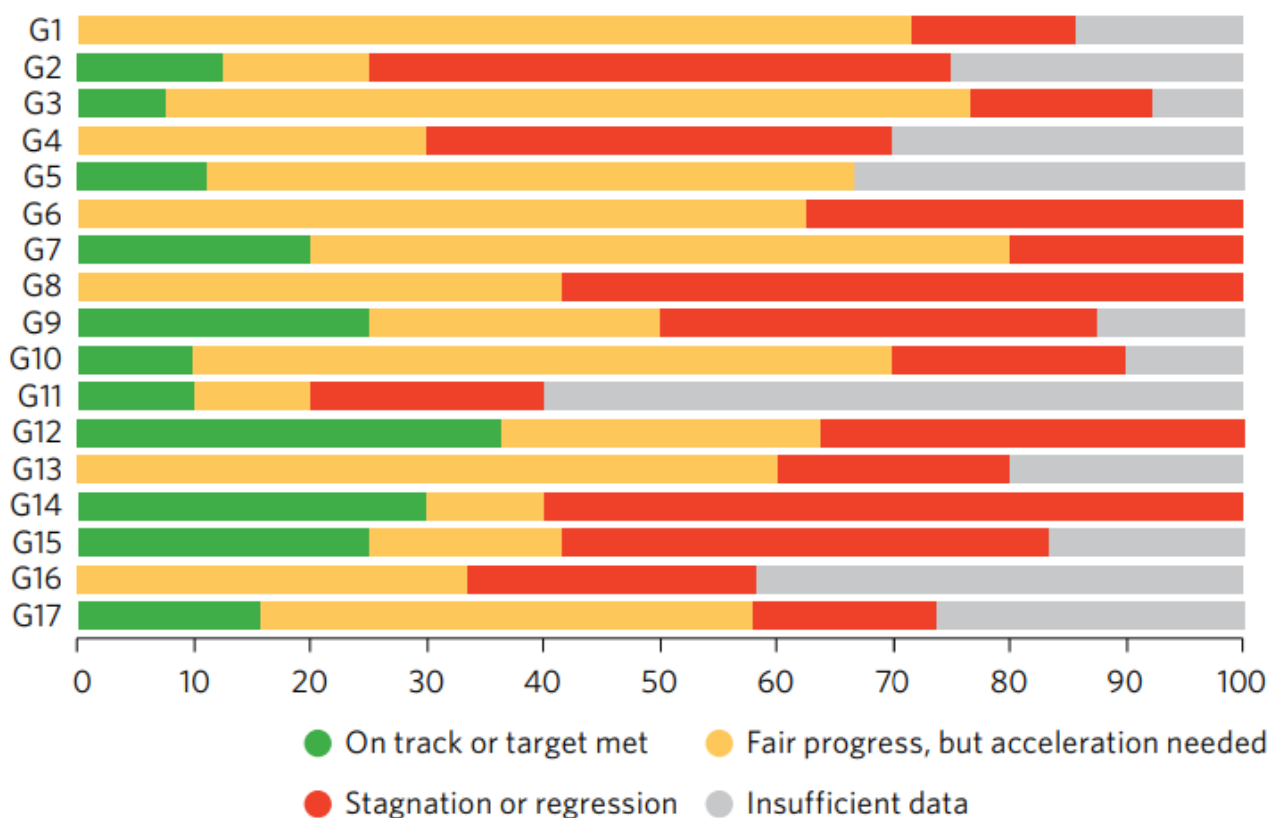
Continuing to talk about possible main reasons for the implementation deficit of the Agenda 2030, it is important to mention also that according to some researchers, one of the major drawbacks of previous sustainable development approaches has been a lack of coordination and integration between different sectors concerning their strategies, policies, and implementation. Due to inadequate comprehension and consideration of trade-offs and synergies between sectors, policies have been inconsistent, resulting in negative impacts on specific sectors and divergent outcomes. This has ultimately led to conflicting trends and objectives for sustainable development (Le Blanc, 2015). In his paper "Approaches to the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals: Some Considerations on the Theoretical Underpinnings of the 2030 Agenda" (2017), Lars Josephsen discusses some of the challenges that may arise during the implementation of Agenda 2030. According to him, these challenges might include the following:

- Internal tensions between two or more of the Sustainable Development Goals. All 17 SDGs, together with 169 targets, are complex and interconnected issues that require political decisions and
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practical actions at all levels to promote sustainable development;

- Unaddressed issues. The SDGs provide a vital framework for achieving sustainable development. Still, as stated in general terms, they do not address systemic significant problems (for example, the role of the financial sector and the structural changes in the world economy over the last decades) that could affect their effectiveness and do not have inherent operational capabilities (Josephsen, 2017).

The aspects of the implementation process of Agenda 2030 and its SDGs are also thoroughly envisaged in the Sustainable Development Goals Reports, which aim to showcase the progress made regarding the abovementioned implementation and the potential for further advancement. According to the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023 (Special edition. Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet), prepared by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs in collaboration with the UN Statistical System, significant implementation challenges might be considered to wait ahead. Thus, approximately half of the targets set by the SDGs demonstrate substantial deviations from the expected trajectory. Additionally, over 30% of the targets have either shown no improvement or have fallen below the 2015 benchmark, particularly in such areas as poverty, hunger, and climate change (as depicted below in Picture 2). This underscores the urgency of increasing efforts to steer the SDGs in the right direction and ensure a sustainable future for all, particularly in light of recent crises (United Nations Statistics Division, 2023).



Picture 2: Progress assessment for the 17 SDGs based on assessed targets, 2023 or latest data (%) (United Nations Statistics Division, 2023)

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In addition to this, the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023 highlights that the COVID-19 pandemic has been one of the significant reasons for the shortfall in implementing the Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals: the pandemic has caused developing countries to fall short of investing in the SDGs, resulting in a significant financing gap. Meanwhile, developed nations have mainly been affected by adopting expansionary policies during the pandemic and have even returned to pre-pandemic growth paths. On the other hand, COVID-19 has also shown how science, technology, and innovation can tackle crises transformatively and deliver for the public good. There is still enormous potential for these tools to be applied to the SDGs, but institutional and other barriers that impede progress must be recognised and lowered. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that increasing funding for research, technology, and innovation related to the SDGs might be a crucial point, particularly in low-income countries. This will provide the data and tools necessary to better inform actions for the goals. Moreover, there is a need to improve access to knowledge, technology, and opportunities to contribute to science and innovation development, including strengthened technology transfer and scaling up creative solutions for sharing knowledge. Building trust in science and evidence, particularly in complex interlinked challenges such as COVID-19 vaccines and climate change, is essential through open and inclusive deliberations and cross-disciplinary collaboration (United Nations Statistics Division, 2023).

The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023 also recommends enhancing the connection between policymakers and the scientific community by strengthening the science-policy-society interface as a priority action for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); moreover, multilateral and multi-stakeholder cooperation on sustainable consumption has increased over the years, leading to science-based and transformative policies across various countries. Thus, in the past few years, 62 countries, along with the European Union, have reported 485 policy instruments supporting the shift to sustainable consumption and production, which are linked to global environmental commitments. Regulatory mechanisms and codes of conduct should be established to build trust in scientific knowledge and promote public information integrity. Additionally, technology transfer mechanisms, such as the Technology Facilitation Mechanism, should be made more efficient and effective while exploring new avenues for open science and open-source data. Furthermore, funding for research and innovation related to social issues underlying the goals should be increased, and capacity building should be promoted globally to ensure broader participation and benefits from such research (United Nations Statistics Division, 2023).

Therefore, it is crucial to maintain a systemic approach to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) so that this process is focused on the complexity, system of the SDGs, and targets in an integrated way. That is why it is vital to concentrate analytically on the entire network of interactions and interconnections among goals and their targets (for example, such a network analysis approach has been adopted by David Le Blanc in his article “Towards integration at last? The sustainable development goals as a network of targets” (2015) (Le Blanc, 2015)). Coopman et al. (2015) have developed an alternative approach to achieve this goal, which involves analysing the consequences of the indivisibility of the SDGs. Their methodology focuses on identifying connections between different goals and evaluating their significance, taking into account dynamic aspects of the interactions (Coopman, Osborn & Ulla, 2015). Thus, the goals and targets should balance the main elements of sustainability (economic, social and environmental) so that they are mutually supportive, Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

and the policy settings and implementation aspects in the main fields field will not undermine future outcomes but will enhance them (Jakobsen & Aarset, 2010).

Therefore, it is possible to assume the report and many researchers caution that although the lack of progress is widespread, the world's poorest and most vulnerable suffer the most from these unprecedented global challenges. The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023 also identifies critical areas that require immediate attention to support the SDGs and make significant progress towards achieving them by 2030.

### **2.3 Agenda 2030 and the European Union's Public Diplomacy**

As outlined above, the European Union has an essential role in the adoption and implementation of Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as in its transition beyond its borders and on the global level. The European Union also affects this through its public diplomacy efforts towards third countries.

Public diplomacy is considered to be the strategic communication process focused on reaching out to foreign publics to create a positive image of a country, or in a current case, the European Union. It is a way for governments to communicate with citizens of other countries to inform or influence their views. In October 2016, EU foreign ministers concluded that public diplomacy should be one of the strategic priorities in implementing the EU's global strategy, highlighting the need to combine efforts in this very field, including strategic communication, within and outside the EU (Council conclusions on the global strategy on the EU's foreign and security policy, 2016). Thus, the cornerstones of the EU's approach to public diplomacy were established (European External Action Service, 2022).

The European Union's efforts in public diplomacy are specifically focused on establishing long-term engagement with individuals and potential partners worldwide, with the aim of fostering trust, mutual understanding, and future collaboration to tackle common challenges. It also facilitates global discussions on issues that matter, promotes shared knowledge, builds a foundation for international cooperation, and creates robust communication channels between citizens and public authorities at national, European, and global levels. However, in today's era of disinformation and contentious information environment, implementing these initiatives may pose a significant challenge and result in an implementation deficit for the grand strategies (European External Action Service, 2022).

In line with the above, EU public diplomacy initiatives contribute to a broader range of communication and awareness-raising activities, including strategic communication, press and information work, and combatting disinformation. The linkage of these tools enables the EU to listen to the opinions and voices of its audience carefully and consistently but kindly speak about its values, such as multilateralism, rule-based global order, human rights, and gender equality, which are key elements of responsible global leadership (European External Action Service, 2022).

EU's global agenda outlines vital priorities such as human rights, the rule of law, and international standards. Public diplomacy initiatives are crucial to ensure sustainable and high-quality projects for

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local communities that align with these priorities. The European model of trustworthy connectivity involves smart, clean, and safe investments in quality infrastructure and aims to sustainably link people, goods, and services worldwide. Therefore, the European Union has developed various initiatives to promote mutual understanding, build trust and strengthen ties between EU citizens and citizens worldwide. These initiatives involve various target groups, including students, academics, youth groups, think tanks, media, business communities, civil society, and cultural experts. They facilitate future cooperation to tackle common challenges, create space for global discussions on issues of shared importance, and develop resilient communication channels between citizens and public authorities at national, European, and global levels (European External Action Service, 2022). However, in today's information environment marked by disinformation, implementing such initiatives presents an increasing challenge.

Considering the role and contribution of the EU's public diplomacy in the implementation of the EU grand strategies and Agenda 2030 and its SDGs in particular, it is possible to highlight the following aspects:

1. The European Union engages in public diplomacy activities to promote the importance of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on the global stage. Through various channels such as EU projects (for example, Erasmus+, Horizon Europe), publications, and social media campaigns, the EU raises awareness about the goals and encourages other countries to prioritise sustainable development. What is more, through diplomatic channels, the EU engages in discussions with partner countries on aligning national development strategies with the SDGs, sharing best practices, and exploring areas for collaboration;

2. The European Union provides development assistance and capacity-building support to third countries to help them achieve the SDGs. This might include financial aid, technical assistance, and training programs aimed at strengthening institutions, improving governance, and building sustainable infrastructure;

3. The European Union seeks to collaborate with various stakeholders, including governments, civil society organisations, academia, and the private sector, to provide collective efforts towards achieving the SDGs. Such public diplomacy activities facilitate the formation of networks aimed at addressing common challenges and advancing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);

4. The European Union promotes its values and practices related to sustainable development, including democracy, human rights, good governance, and environmental protection. By showcasing the EU's commitment to these principles, the European Union seeks to inspire other countries to adopt similar approaches in their development efforts.

Overall, the EU's public diplomacy efforts towards third countries are crucial in advancing the global implementation of Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by promoting awareness, fostering cooperation, providing assistance, building partnerships, and advocating for international leadership on sustainable development issues.

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## 2.4 Institutions, social networks, and cognitive frames in the implementation of Agenda 2030

Social fields theory underscores the cultural embeddedness of social phenomena, highlighting how historical, cultural, and institutional factors shape actors' behaviour and its outcomes. In the European Union, the implementation of Agenda 2030 and its SDGs is influenced by member states' diverse cultural and historical contexts, as well as broader global trends and impacts. Social fields theory suggests that these cultural factors can shape the strategies, priorities, and approaches actors adopt within the European Union social field. Furthermore, according to the social fields theory approach, actors within a social field are influenced by shared norms and values, institutional frameworks, which guide their actions and interactions as well as shape their behaviour within a societal context. Both Agenda 2030 and social fields theory emphasise the importance of these norms and values.

Regarding the impact of the three social forces (institutions, cognitive frames and social networks) on the adoption and implementation of grand strategies and Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in particular, it is essential to mention that social fields theory highlights the role of power dynamics in shaping social interactions and outcomes. Within the European Union, various actors, including member states, institutions, civil society organisations, and businesses, exert particular influence over the implementation of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. Power struggles may arise as these actors compete for resources, influence policy decisions, and shape the direction of EU initiatives related to sustainable development. In the EU context, institutions such as the European Commission, European Parliament, and Council of the European Union play key roles in driving forward the implementation of SDGs. Social fields theory suggests that these institutions act as arenas where actors negotiate and set the rules of the game, influencing the trajectory of EU policies and initiatives. Here, it is crucial to mention also the impact of the European projects that promote the importance of the SDG goals, which are essential to be used within the implementation or even at the stage of the application of European projects. In addition to this, social fields theory emphasises the role of networks and interactions between actors in shaping social outcomes. In the context of Agenda 2030, stakeholders across the EU, including governments, NGOs, businesses, and citizens, form networks and partnerships to advance sustainable development goals. These interactions may involve collaborations, alliances, or conflicts as actors seek to align their interests and achieve their objectives (Rončević & Modic, 2011).

As it has already been mentioned, the TIA2030 project is based on the SOFIA conceptual framework, where three outlined social forces, institutions, social networks, and cognitive frames continuously shape and structure systems of technological innovations. It is also generally accepted that technological innovations have a robust locational component, including physical-spatial aspects and social, institutional and cultural dimensions (Beckert, 2010; Rončević & Modic, 2011).

The notion of innovation is based on various conceptual foundations, primarily stemming from management and economics disciplines (Smith, 2006) and has made a path from a form of usage, a new tool by mankind, to the notion which had overgrown mere historical importance. Nowadays, it

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is seen as an essential issue among supranational institutions of the European Union, the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), and the United Nations (UN) concerned with social and economic progress. Their actions primarily focus on formulating public policy recommendations and continuous monitoring through the Community Innovation Surveys on the European Innovation Scoreboard (OECD/Eurostat, 2018).

Therefore, innovation remains an important Policy Area and an impactful tool for achieving the newest goals of Agenda 2030. Innovations generally derive from knowledge-based activities that practically apply existing or newly developed information (organised data) and knowledge (understanding of information and ability to use it for various purposes). Therefore, the evaluation of innovation theories identifies four dimensions: knowledge, novelty, implementation, and value creation, which guide measurement efforts. These dimensions help assess the impact and effectiveness of innovation strategies across different contexts. According to the Oslo Manual 2018 (the document by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), which provides guidelines for collecting and interpreting data on innovation), the concept of innovation includes the role of knowledge as a primary basis for innovation, novelty and utility and the main goal of innovation is considered to be value creation or preservation. This literature review follows the definition mentioned in the Oslo Manual 2018, which argues that an innovation is “a new or improved product or process (or combination thereof) that differs significantly from the unit’s previous products or processes and that has been made available to potential users (product) or brought into use by the unit (process)” (OECD/Eurostat, 2018, p.20).

Therefore, it is possible to assume that the notion of innovation itself might be regarded as both an activity and the outcome of the activity and is claimed to be quite subjective; however, its implementation and usage tend to be relatively objective due to the application of common reference points for novelty and utility, which require significant differences to be appreciated. Thus, considering innovation activities, it is essential to mention that they might include all developmental, financial and commercial activities by an actor responsible for the innovation. Moreover, the novelty of innovations is related to their potential users, as determined by the characteristics of a product/process compared to others, as well as by the previous experiences of its provider and intended users. Nowadays, innovations are available to every economic agent due to the possibility of benefit from a multi-interaction environment or network, where technology and knowledge transfer are more or less freely available (e.g., Fagerberg, Srholec & Verspagen, 2010; Ernst & Kim, 2002; Pietrobelli & Rabellotti, 2010; etc.). Through cooperation, an agent can enlarge technological perspectives and create new ideas, new interactions, and new perspectives (OECD/Eurostat, 2018). In their turn, innovation systems themselves involve multiple actors from different sectors and can be delineated by industry, technology, or geography, often interconnected at local, national, and global levels, and developing innovation policies requires systemic transformations to achieve broader societal objectives (OECD/Eurostat, 2018). Researchers also claim that interaction among actors within innovation systems is unavoidable as technological innovation happens specifically in collaborative arrangements – networks – and the innovation is accepted when it is supported by interconnected actors (Cepoi, 2016). Furthermore, in functioning systems of innovation, there are high levels of university-industry cooperation, inter- and intra-regional cooperation between producers and customers, as well as mutual trust. In this case, social networks are ‘lubricating’

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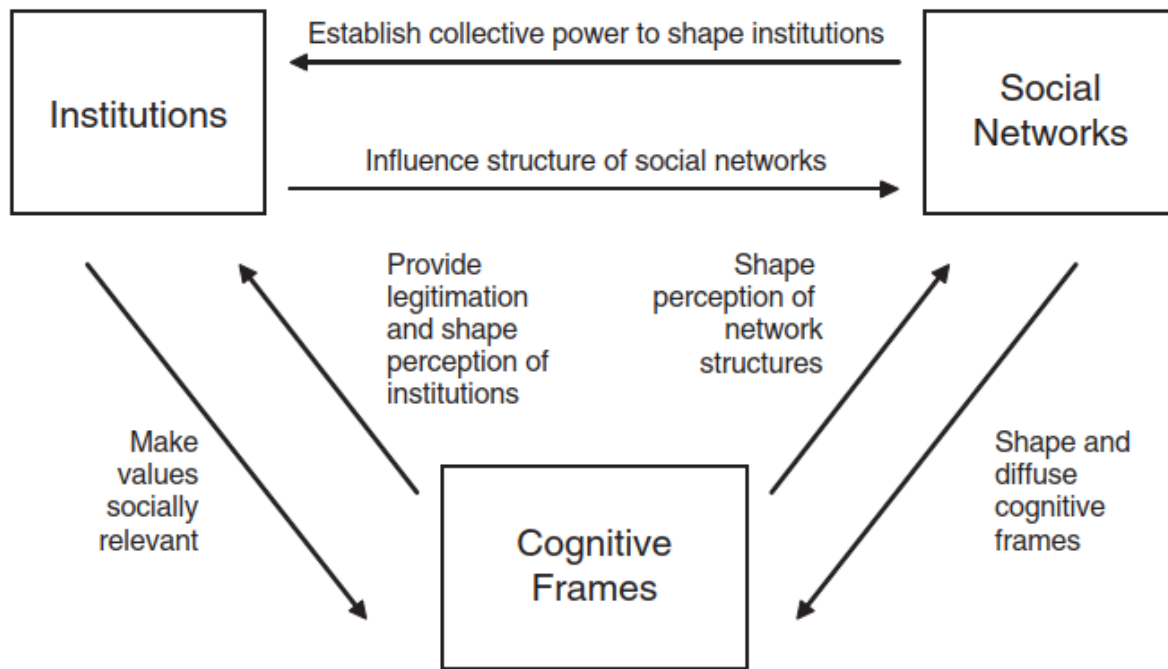
project-based organisations, thus resulting in higher innovative performances (Rončević & Modic, 2021). Therefore, specific stakeholders must collaborate to achieve innovation, exchanging resources and knowledge and forming long-term alliances – a vital feature of the innovation process (Jakobsen & Aarset, 2010), so that social networks have the role of fostering change and promoting the diffusion of innovation processes (Cepoi, 2016).

In addition to this, these are cognitive frames, which provide the necessary mental toolkit for interpreting various strategies, including establishing and fostering firm-based innovation systems, assimilating new knowledge, and investing in research and technological development. These interpretations hold significant importance as, in intricate environments, it's unfeasible to anticipate and formalise all potential combinations into rules. Furthermore, these scripts contribute to the desired structuring of social fields by suggesting social action despite the uncertainty of outcome (Beckert, 2010; Rončević & Modic, 2011).

In their turn, institutions have the power to influence by controlling the range of actions, promoting some and discouraging others. To illustrate, government involvement in backing innovation support services, technology parks and transfer entities, or high-quality universities generally facilitates adjustment to global trends and generates superior innovation performance (Rončević & Modic, 2011). Moreover, public authorities, acting as institutions, can impact economic actors and their conduct through the framework of political-administrative regulations (provisions and laws) (Jakobsen & Aarset, 2010). These regulations can either facilitate or obstruct innovation and other related processes (Rončević & Cepoi, 2022), including the implementation of the grand strategies and Sustainable Development Goals.

Therefore, perspectives on the role of institutions, social networks and cognitive frames and their reciprocal influence within the implementation of the Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the European Union might be represented with the help of the J. Beckert scheme of the reciprocal impact of the three social forces. According to the SOFIA theoretical framework, such a perspective might be used not only for the analysis of the market fields but also for analysing other social aspects (see Picture 3 below):

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Picture 3: Institutions, social networks, and cognitive frames reciprocal influence (Beckert, 2010)

Therefore, it is essential to assume that the adoption and implementation of the Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) relies heavily on the active participation and collaboration of various actors who form cognitive frames and social networks. These actors, including society, NGOs, and the university-industry-government-public-society nexus, play pivotal roles in selecting and implementing specific goals. Key actors emerge as leaders in this process, steering the selection and implementation of particular SDGs, and their involvement shapes the strategies and mechanisms utilised to achieve these goals. Motivated by cognitive frames, these actors are driven by a shared understanding of the importance and urgency of sustainable development.

In addition to this, technological advancements also influence the implementation of Agenda 2030 and its SDGs. Innovations often facilitate realising these goals, impacting the methods and effectiveness of implementation strategies. Additionally, Agenda 2030's influence extends to project funding, as resources are directed towards initiatives aligned with the SDGs. Through their contributions, these actors foster the development of civil society, with the outcomes of their efforts being embraced by communities and organisations alike. As the world progresses towards the 2030 deadline, the collaboration and commitment of these diverse actors remain essential in achieving sustainable development on a global scale.

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### 3. Conclusion

The literature review was performed by analysing the existing academic landscape and supporting publications (reports, legal documentation and data) on the implementation of the Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A particular emphasis was put on the social fields theory as an analytical framework to underline the role of the European Union and its public diplomacy in its application (namely through the grand strategies: Lisbon Strategy, Europe 2020 and Agenda 2030).

According to the analysis, it is safe to assume that the implementation of the SDGs can be achieved through the application of technological innovation, especially the ones contributing to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Moreover, given the emerging economic, geopolitical and other global challenges (some of the most pressing being climate change, Russia's aggression in Ukraine, and refugee struggles), the European Union has continuously reassessed its global position. The Agenda 2030 and its SDGs offer a set of guidelines for tackling these global obstacles, with a particular emphasis on achieving successful, innovative, and inclusive growth. The fundamental implementation mechanism here should be a collaborative approach, empowering technological innovations by allocating sufficient resources to the most pressing matters.

The document also offers insights and recommendations for promoting sustainable development and innovation in the context of Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals. It underscores the crucial role of a collaborative and comprehensive approach to implementing them and the need for continued research and analysis in this area. This ongoing research is also essential for refining and improving our understanding of the role of institutions, social networks, and cognitive frames in shaping and impacting social fields.

Based on the outlined research results, as well as the report's data (Oslo Manual 2018; Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023), it is advisable to have as many countries and institutions align their operational objectives to Agenda 2030 and its SDGs. By setting sustainable goals in strategic priorities within their current functioning, these actors should strive to allocate available funding and appropriate institutional infrastructure to achieve sustainable development. Furthermore, many of the goals require novel solutions, thus being solvable with the help of technological innovations. In this context, it is essential to outline development institutions that can structure their work to provide a framework for policy and action to improve human well-being (Le Blanc, 2015).

The SOFIA conceptual framework provides a valuable tool for identifying potential challenges and opportunities in the grand strategies implementation process. Its main strength is the focus on the complex interplay between institutions, social networks, and cognitive frames. This framework can help develop more effective strategies for promoting sustainable development and innovation (e.g. in Rončević & Cepoi, 2022). It has been proven to consolidate a systemic view on innovation issues and act as a theoretical proxy in understanding the innovation concepts (e.g., innovation systems, Rončević & Modic, 2011; Rončević & Modic, 2018)

There are also specific reasons mentioned in the literature that could affect the European Union's

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implementation of the Agenda 2030. Namely, these refer to the lack of coordination and integration between different sectors concerning SDG strategies, policies, and implementation (Le Blanc, 2015); internal tensions between the Sustainable Development Goals; unaddressed systemic significant problems (Josephsen, 2017); financial consequences after the COVID-19 pandemic in certain countries (OECD/Eurostat, 2018); lack of cooperation between different actors; difficulties during the implementation of a joint strategy within the whole European Union (Kasprzyk & Wojnar, 2021; Wüst & Rogge, 2022; Rončević et al., 2023).

Within the document, the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence TIA2030 also highlighted the challenges and opportunities that policymakers, researchers, and practitioners face in promoting sustainable development and innovation in the context of Agenda 2030 and its SDGs. The most important challenges include the implementation deficit, different interpretations of sustainable development, and mismatched definitions of innovation and related concepts. Nevertheless, such challenges can also be interpreted as opportunities that must be addressed to achieve the SGD-related objectives. The importance of a collaborative and comprehensive approach should be emphasised both at the national and global levels. In providing solutions for these hampering issues, one should not underestimate the relevance of cooperation for policy alignment and joint innovative solutions. As a common goal to settle these issues, there is a need and constant urgency to favour initiatives for stakeholders and agents to join forces, share knowledge, and engage (and share the risks) in technological, social, economic, circular, and sustainable innovations. This approach involves different stakeholders and social actors, including governments with their public diplomacy actions, civil society organisations, academia, and the private sector.

The results of the literature review urge and offer directions for further research. The topic of the EU implementation deficit and the slow progress towards the Agenda 2030 goals afford significant space for academics in the field. The document underlines multiple challenges to be addressed and comprehended, both in their manifestation and impact and solutions to be found in their mediation. Also, the application of the SOFIA approach can benefit the field of EU studies. It was proven to be an operational tool for data collection on innovation research (e.g., Rončević & Modic, 2011; Gangaliuc, 2022; Rončević et al. 2023; previously implemented TIR2020 project (Co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union, Project Reference: 587540-EPP-1-2017-1-SI-EPPJMO-CoE)). Therefore, with relevant changes, it can become the basis for the methodological framework, protocols, and tools aimed at designing further research questions, collecting primary data (at European, national, and regional levels), and setting up explanatory models. Data collection protocol can convey a systemic overview of relevant issues by focusing primarily (but not exclusively) on the role of institutions, social networks, and cognitive frames in the development and implementation of the European grand strategies, the Agenda 2030, and its SDGs in particular.

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