

It takes Two to Tango - Whole of society to achieve SD transition



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Midsummer Eve, the great celebration of summer, started the Finnish holiday season last weekend. I had a pleasure to participate in festivities in the Finnish archipelago, on an island called Pensar. Late in the evening, everybody gathered to the centre of the village to raise a toast to a sun that still shone high above the horizon, and to dance in the rhythm of evergreen summer classics.

Tango is the all-time classic of Midsummer Eve. For some reason it is especially popular in Finland and in Argentina. For tango, you need a pair, and what could be a better time for finding one than a Midsummer Eve in the Finnish archipelago?

Whereas two is needed for tango, the whole of society is needed for a successful sustainability transition. This applies at the local level as well as at country level, and a whole of society approach is needed at the level of the EU, too.

In Finland, the whole of society approach has been at the heart of national sustainability work since the early 1990's. The National Commission on

Sustainable Development was established in 1993 and, led by the Prime Minister, has since then brought together different stakeholders of Finnish society.

The National Commission on Sustainable Development has prepared several national strategies over the years. It has also developed tools for the engagement of stakeholders (and individual citizens) in sustainability work. In Finland, anyone can participate in sustainability work by making a public sustainability commitment. These operational commitments for sustainable development increase the sustainability of organisations' existing practises and thus contribute to national sustainability aspirations. By now, 2,600 commitments have been made. You can browse existing commitments at www.sitoumus2050.fi/en.

At the moment, the Commission is preparing a national roadmap for the 2030 Agenda. Following the whole of society approach, this roadmap is prepared in a participatory process that has several phases and lasts the whole year of 2021. The roadmap will focus on six key transformations: 1) a food system that promotes well-being, 2) a sustainable energy system, 3) the use of land and forests to strengthen biodiversity and carbon neutrality, 4) knowledge, learning and sustainable lifestyles, 5) health, well-being and social inclusion, and 6) economy that promotes well-being, work and sustainable consumption.

The roadmap will play a key role in promoting Finland's implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The six areas of change represent the themes in which our activities should change significantly, in order to secure people's wellbeing within the planetary borders. Six areas of change, thus, concretise the content of sustainable development in Finland. At their best, they also increase the long-term and consistency of national policies.

In the coming years, the work of the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development will be structured around these areas of change. This makes the work of the committee more focused and concrete. Through

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these areas of change, the members of the Commission will also deepen their understanding and competence on sustainable development and attach themselves to the Commission's common objectives.

The whole of society approach is also needed at the level of EU. It is a pity that the Multi-Stakeholder Platform, which was used for engaging the whole of society in sustainability work at the EU level during the past Commission, was not renewed by the current Commission. Whereas there exist other mechanisms for engaging the European public, for example within the Conference on the Future of Europe, discontinuation of the Multi-Stakeholder Platform has been seen by many as a weakening to European-level public engagement.

The need to strengthen the whole of society approach at the European level was also noted by the EU Council in its recent [conclusions](#) on the 2030 Agenda implementation. The Council recalled the important role played by the Multi-Stakeholder Platform in enriching the debate on how to make progress toward the SDGs, and urged the Commission to establish "a platform that engages a wide range of stakeholders in the EU's work with the SDGs, both at EU and global levels, with inclusive and representative membership, to facilitate the whole of society approach to enhance action and delivery on the SDGs and seek good cooperation with initiatives, such as the European Climate Pact and the Conference on the Future of Europe".

Tango is for two, sustainability transformation for all. Just like summer. Enjoy it!

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