

# A Systemic Approach to Implementing the 2030 Agenda: The six areas of transformation of the German Sustainable Development Strategy



*Dr. Stefan Bauernfeind, ESDN Advisory Board Member, Federal Chancellery, Germany*

The 2030 Agenda, with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted on September 25<sup>th</sup> 2015, contains a comprehensive target system for the transformation of our world. However, the heads of state and government stated at the SDG summit in September 2019 that we would not achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda if current trends prevail. The most recent United Nation's progress report on the sustainability goals of this summer shows that the challenges have become even greater due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Therefore, in the remaining 9 years of the Decade of Action proclaimed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, there is still much to be done at all levels. One of the central questions here is the following: How can progress be made in the most pressing, complex areas of activity that require action in a large number of different policy areas?

In the update of the German Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS) adopted on March 10<sup>th</sup> this year, a systemic approach to solving the above-mentioned question can be found in the six transformation areas which were defined for the first time (see graph at the end of the Blog). Thereby, the GSDS picked up a suggestion from societal actors from 2019 with reference to the United Nations Global Sustainable Development Report. In addition, in a dialogue process conducted in 2020, the Federal Government was recommended to link the transformation areas of the GSDS to references to those indicators where, according to the current status, the goals will not be achieved, as well as concrete to measures how to get back on track. Both suggestions have also been taken up in the new strategy.

As a result, each transformation area of the GSDS now links those SDGs that pose the greatest challenges in Germany, and emphasizes the interaction of various Goals. It is therefore a matter of focusing on a few areas, without, however, losing sight of the 2030 Agenda in its entirety. The concept of the transformation areas thus paves the way beyond an isolated consideration of individual problems and, at the same time, accentuates the necessary integrated and integrative approach.

The transformation area "circular economy", for example, combines SDGs 8, 9 and 12 and thus brings together the topics of economic growth, private consumption and environmental protection. This systemic consideration takes into account the need for the paradigm shift to decouple growth from use of resources. Private consumption, as well as the production of goods and services, must take place within the planetary boundaries. A circular economy in which the products used and the raw materials and materials they contain are again the starting point for new products and processes at the end of a cycle can create new sustainable jobs, reduce resource

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consumption and reduce dependency on raw materials.

In order to make decisive progress in the areas of transformation, the sphere of politics must also be coherently thought through, analogous to the systemic consideration of the SDGs. Sustainability, as the goal and measure of government action, must be consistently applied at national, European and international level in all fields of politics.

In Germany, the location of the topic of sustainability in the Federal Chancellery contributes to this. Nevertheless, in order to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda in Germany, not only the central coordination and control function, but also the strong commitment of the ministries with their specialist knowledge, is required.

It is important that there are institutions at all levels that continuously dedicate resources to the topic of sustainability. In Germany, there is a State Secretaries' Committee on Sustainable Development that meets regularly and is headed by the Head of the Federal Chancellery with the participation of all ministries. In addition, there is an independent Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) appointed by the Federal Government with 15 public persons from civil society, business and science. On the parliamentary side, the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Sustainable Development has been an advocate for the topic of sustainability since 2004.

In the end, one thing is clear: sustainability can only be achieved together - whether in the areas of transformation or in all other subject areas of the 2030 Agenda. This not only holds true for politics, but also for society as a whole. Progress on the way to sustainable development can only be achieved through respectful cooperation, if everyone contributes according to their interests, possibilities, talents and abilities.

The Federal Government commissioned the RNE to implement a Joint Effort for Sustainability, in which the social engagement of the actors in Germany is to be made visible and strengthened. The Joint Effort for Sustainability is to start in 2022 and will hopefully make an important contribution to strengthening social dynamism for sustainable development.

There is not much time left and there are still many challenges to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda. This requires a consistent focus on the guiding principle of sustainability everywhere, not only in the six transformation areas.

Links:

[German Sustainable Development Strategy: \(e.g. English short and long version, Spanish short version\)](#)

[La stratégie allemande de développement durable \(French short version\)](#)



Dr. Stefan Bauernfeind

ESDN Advisory Board Member,  
 Head of Division Sustainable Development  
 Federal Chancellery, Germany