

ESDNewsletter July 2019

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- **Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL):** Report “Outline of the Circular Economy” published

New ESDN Quarterly Report on “Addressing European Populism from a Sustainability Policy Perspective”

This European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN) Quarterly Report (QR) seeks to address European populism from a sustainability policy perspective. This QR provides an in-depth exploration and lines of explanation to the rise of populism in Europe over the past few years and the role it plays in the policy-making process with respect to sustainable development and sustainability policy. A special focus will be put on how this could have an impact on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Please find the new ESDN Quarterly Report [here](#).

ESDN Conference 2019, 30-31 October 2019, Helsinki, Finland – “Towards a Sustainable Europe 2030 – From Reflection to Action”

The ESDN Conference 2019 will take place in Helsinki, Finland from 30-31 October, 2019. It is being organized by the ESDN in cooperation with the Finnish Prime Minister’s Office. The conference will be a 1.5-day event (30 October is a full day and 31 October is half-day that runs until 13:00) and will be organized as an official event of the Finnish EU Presidency. The conference will bring together sustainable development policymakers and experts from different stakeholder groups from all over Europe.

The title of this year’s Conference is “Towards a Sustainable Europe 2030 – From Reflection to Action”. The Conference will focus on many topics relating to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in Europe and take stock of where Europe stands after four years of implementation, which will feature the experiences that European countries have had in that regard. Other Conference topics will include the linking of the 2030 Agenda to economic reality and looking at meta-governance for sustainability. In addition, the Conference will focus on various challenges for Europe in reaching the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs and will delve deeper into 5 key themes: Circular Economy; Citizens’ Europe; Economy of Well-Being; Sustainable Finance; and Global Responsibility. Please find a Conference Draft Agenda on the [ESDN Website](#).

The Conference will be comprised of three sessions:

- Session 1: Taking stock on the implementation at the global, European and national level: 4 years after adoption of the 2030 Agenda (incl. global implementation of the 2030 Agenda; focus on the EU level with the new European Commission; European national level experiences in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the assessment of progress by looking at key successes and challenges; how other stakeholder groups are addressing implementation)
- Session 2: Transformative rather than incremental changes for sustainable development – What does it mean in terms of economics and governance for SD? (incl. linking the 2030 Agenda to economic realities; Meta-governance for Sustainability: The full toolbox in implementing the SDGs)
- Session 3: Key challenges for Europe in reaching the SDGs and 2030 Agenda (incl. key themes for Europe in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda/SDGs; parallel discussion streams on the key themes)

More information about the conference will be made available on the ESDN homepage. If you are interested in the conference or want more information, please send an email to the ESDN Office at esdn-office@sd-network.eu.

17th ESDN Workshop, 23-24 May 2019, Berlin Germany – “Transformation towards Sustainability in Times of Rising Populism” – full documentation now online!

The 17th ESDN Workshop took place in Berlin, Germany from 23-24 May 2019. The topic of this year's Workshop was “Transformation towards Sustainability in Times of Rising Populism”. The Workshop was organized by the ESDN in cooperation with the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety. The objectives of the 17th ESDN Workshop were to provide an in-depth exploration and lines of explanation of the rise of populism in Europe over the past few years and the role it plays in the policy-making process with respect to sustainable development and sustainability policy, especially with regard to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. The Workshop sought to impart knowledge to participants on the general outlook of populism in Europe and to define common concepts of populism and also focus on how populism impacts sustainability policy in practice.

You can find the documentation of the Workshop at the [ESDN homepage](#), including the discussion paper, PPT slides of the presentations, and the workshop report.

European Sustainable Development Week (ESDW) 2019: With 6,704 events in 28 countries the highest turnout in the ESDW's history

The ESDW was organized for the fifth time this year! The ESDW 2019 took place from May 30th to June 5th 2019. During the ESDW 2019, a total number of 6,704 events in 28 countries were organized, all of them directly linked to one or more of the 17 SDGs. This marks the highest turnout so far in the ESDW's history in terms of registered events. A special thanks goes out to all the ones who supported the ESDW on the national and sub-national level, and, of course,

to all the event organizers who not only organized fantastic and inspiring events, but also shared them with others on the ESDW website or on the various national SD week website!

As was the case for the ESDW 2016, ESDW 2017, and ESDW 2018, activities were also linked to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals for the ESDW 2019. The ESDW 2019's activities were linked most frequently to SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production (3,485 activities); SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities (3,072 activities), SDG 13: Climate Action (2,720 activities), and SDG 15: Life on Land (1,994 activities).

News on the governance of sustainable development from various European countries:

Belgium: Updates on activities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for SD and the SDGs

Preparedness review SDG's by the Belgian Court of Audit

The Belgian Court of Audit has decided to perform a review concerning the preparedness of all authorities in Belgium (national, federal and regional level) for the implementation, follow-up and reporting on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the UN. The first step is a standardized questionnaire which has to be filled out by all administrative levels by the 28 June 2019.

Preparation of the next Federal Plan for Sustainable Development

The Interdepartmental Commission for Sustainable Development (ICSD) decided in June 2018 to launch the [preparation process of the next federal plan for sustainable development \(2020-2024\)](#). To answer major societal challenges and to fill the gaps towards the achievement of the SDGs, the ICSD launched a broad dialogue with civil society organisations. The members of the main federal advisory bodies (46 organisations, including all members of the Federal Council of Sustainable Development) were asked to participate in a three step interactions with civil servants: after a written consultation on major challenges and opportunities, a synthesis of all inputs was send to every organisation and discussed during 4 separate meetings for each stakeholders group (i.e. private sector, trade unions, NGOs, specific actors dedicated to sustainable development). The results of this second step was translated in a broader synthesis aligning all proposals towards the SDG targets. To determine the main challenges and proposals, a third workshop was organized with all organisations in April 2019. The participants found a consensus on a list of 19 themes, grouped in 5 clusters: governance; social cohesion; consumption and production patterns; planetary boundaries; and international dimension. Members of the ICSD and experts from federal public services and developing actions to answer those challenges in view to draft a first proposal of plan towards December 2019.

Publication of the 2019 Federal Report on Sustainable Development

The 2019 *Federal Report on Sustainable Development* ([French](#) and [Dutch](#)) takes stock of 51 indicators monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): the extrapolation of current trends does not allow all the objectives to be reached. The Report assesses the current sustainable development policies. It concludes that the federal public services have achieved concrete results, despite the lack of political momentum to reach the SDGs. This report also analyses the impact on the SDGs of different modalities for applying a carbon tax and of alternative policies to company cars.

Focus 2030 and its corresponding Flemish set of indicators

The SDGs have been translated into Flemish objectives for 2030 in “**Focus 2030**” <https://do.vlaanderen.be/sdgs-eng> which is based on the SDGs and linked to “Vision 2050”, the long-term strategy for Flanders presented in March 2016 by the Government of Flanders. Focus 2030, together with the corresponding Flemish set of indicators, was formally approved by the Flemish Government on 5 April 2019. However Focus 2030 is dynamic and evolutive. The 2030 Agenda for SD calls on governments to set their own targets, but also states: “Each Government will also decide how these aspirational and global targets should be incorporated into national planning processes, policies and strategies. It is important to recognize the link between sustainable development and other relevant ongoing processes in the economic, social and environmental fields.” Many of the objectives from the 2030 Agenda for SD are set out in long-term sectoral policies that are being drawn up. For example, the Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030 will cover SDGs 7 and 13 in full and SDG 11 in part. The Spatial Policy Plan Flanders will include objectives relating to SDGs 9, 11 and 12, the Mobility Plan objectives relating to SDGs 3, 9 and 11, and the Air Plan objectives relating to SDGs 3, 11 and 12. We have chosen to let these plans follow their own development path. Following the adoption of these long-term policy plans, their 2030 objectives will form an integral part of this 2030 objectives framework and thus complete it. The 2030 objectives framework and the associated indicators are thus adjusted on the basis of these (new) long-term policy plans and after evaluation by the next Government of Flanders. Concerning activities for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs, a new framework agreement with a Sustainability Coach is being prepared to continue these efforts. An SDG-workshop in co-creation of the Flemish Department of Public Governance and the Chancellery with Sustenuto, ILVO and CIFAL Flanders is planned at the [SDG-forum](#) on 24 September 2019.

Finland: Agreement reached on the Government Programme- Inclusive and competent Finland – a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable society

The aim of the first Government of the new decade is a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable Finland by 2030. The Nordic welfare state and its key pillars, income security, well-functioning health and social services and solid education as well as high expertise create a robust and just platform for the work on reforms.

In the socially, economically and ecologically sustainable Finland the economy is managed for the people, not the other way round. Sustainable economic growth is built on a high rate of employment and strong public finances.

The world of the 2020s needs trailblazers. An ecologically sustainable Finland shows the way in mitigating climate change and protecting biodiversity. The Government is drawing a roadmap for an emissions-free Finland. The Nordic welfare model, combined with responsible and decreasing use of natural resources, is a model that will guarantee the future competitiveness of our country.

Germany: Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development – new position papers and opinions on sustainable development

The establishment of the Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development in Germany brought sustainability to the level of parliament. In the Germany Parliament, the Advisory Council assumes the role of a “watchdog”. It “barks” as soon as an initiative fails to bear in mind the National Sustainability Strategy. Hearings and position papers allow debates to be initiated, making the advisory council an important as well as living part of parliament.

The recent position papers and opinions (in English) can be accessed and downloaded at the Advisory Council’s website at <https://www.bundestag.de/en/committees/bodies/sustainability#>, including a position paper on “Sustainability policy at European and global level” from May 2019, and an opinion on the 2018 Peer Review of the German Sustainable Development Strategy from January 2019.

Germany: News and updates on sustainable development from North-Rhine Westphalia

Regional level:

Financial support for the structural transition in the brown coal districts in Germany is bound to contribute to sustainable development. The German Federal Government appointed the Commission for Growth, Structural Change and Employment - often simply called “the coal commission” - in June 2018 and charged them with finding a socially balanced compromise for a phase out of coal based power generation. The commission consists of representatives from industry, civil society, environmental NGOs, and policy makers. In its final report in January 2019, the coal commission agreed on the year 2038 for a complete phase out and suggested a substantial financial package to accompany the structural transition in the affected regions. The Rhineland brown coal district is one of the biggest regions. It encompasses four active lignite open pit mining areas and five old ones that have been partially re-cultivated. Coal mining is today the biggest employer of the region giving work and identity to about 9,000 employees and inducing indirectly additional 18,000 jobs. The Federal Government financially supports the transition process until 2038 with a total sum of about € 40 billion for all 3 regions in Germany in which open pit brown coal mining is still ongoing.

Federal States and private investors will contribute additional money. The money is thought to finance a package of targeted measures creating new future oriented job opportunities and develop a prosper region with a high quality of living. Among other funding criteria, the Federal Government binds their financial support on the condition that the financed measures will take account of and help contribute to achieve the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) as was suggested by the coal commission. The discussion on the most promising and meaningful measures in the affected regions has just begun. In the Rhineland brown coal district it will be a stakeholder driven process organized in four thematic district knots. First strategic action plans for each thematic knot are expected by end of 2019. The exact approach to incorporate the SDGs in this process has yet to be figured out.

Local level:

The successful project “Global Sustainable Municipality in North-Rhine Westphalia” was renewed for a second term. From 2019 to 2021, another 15 municipalities from all over the federal state will develop municipal sustainability strategies. Amongst them are the European Green Capital of 2017, Essen, and the city of Münster, which ranks as one of the most bike-friendly cities in Germany. In a participatory process, the municipalities transfer the SDGs to the local level by designing integrated sustainability strategies with specific local targets. These strategies highlight the international effects of local action and underline the importance of global responsibility at the local level. Moreover, the 15 municipalities from the successful first term will be supported in implementing their sustainability actions deduced from their sustainability strategies. Furthermore, there will be different events for communication and networking. The project is conducted by the Service Agency Communities in One World (SKEW) of Engagement Global and the Sustainability Network North Rhine-Westphalia (LAG 21 NRW). The project is mainly funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The Ministry for Environment, Agriculture, Conservation and Consumer Protection of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia will fund networking-events as part of the project. Further information at <https://www.lag21.de/projekte/details/global-nachhaltige-kommune/> (available only in German).

Greece: Country update on our current and planned activities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for SD and the SDGs

In July 2018, Greece presented its first Voluntary National Review (VNR) at the 2018 UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable development (HLPF). This VNR report covers all 17 SDGs (https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/19378Greece_VNR_Greece_2018_pdf_FINAL_140618.pdf) through eight National Priorities for adapting the SDGs to national needs and circumstances, also in line with the National Growth Strategy adopted in May 2018 (<http://www.mindev.gov.gr/greece-a-growth-strategy-for-the-future/>). These eight overarching National Priorities have been defined, through an open dialogue within all government units and with a wide array of stakeholders, and by an in-depth mapping exercise carried out in 2017.

Following the first VNR presentation of Greece, a big challenge has been the setting up of a monitoring mechanism for tracking progress at the national level. Greece, under the coordination of the General Secretariat of the Government and through the Inter-ministerial Coordination Network for the SDGs set up already in 2016, has just finalized a list of around 160 indicators (90 selected from the global SDGs indicator framework and 70 from EUROSTAT but adjusted to national priorities and circumstances and aligned with what could be regularly measured) for the quantitative monitoring of progress. These indicators are endorsed by all Ministries and by the National Statistical Authority.

At the same time, and capitalizing on the VNR experience, a process leading to the elaboration of a 4-year National Implementation Plan for the SDGs, in 2019, is underway. This National Implementation Plan is expected to be aligned with the provisions of the National Growth Strategy and will aim to promote cross-sectoral approaches and actions among line Ministries.

Finally, emphasis is also given to strengthening the involvement of the Hellenic Parliament in terms of follow up of the implementation of the SDGs in Greece, by providing reviews and political guidance with the overall aim to enhance policy coherence for sustainable development and integrate the SDGs further in legislative work. The Hellenic Parliament will play an instrumental role in the review process, as the progress reports on the execution of the National Implementation Plan for the SDGs will be submitted, at regular intervals, for discussion and alignment.

Hungary: Action Plan Proposal on the protection of natural heritage and the sustainable use of natural resource

In May 2019, the National Council for Sustainable Development of Hungary (NFFT) released an Action Plan Proposal on the protection of natural heritage and the sustainable use of natural resource. As the Parliament's advisory and interest reconciliation body, the NFFT urges to promote social agreement in order to protect natural resources and their services essential for human existence and to maintain social prosperity thus serving the public good. This proposal exclusively focuses on the natural, environmental aspects of the sustainability shift, but the NFFT would like to stress that the centre point of the National Framework Strategy on Sustainable Development is people and that it has always emphasized the crucial importance of the human and social dimension of sustainable development, including the significance of common values and communities based on solidarity, in the transition to sustainability. Reaching the end of the first half of the National Framework Strategy on Sustainable Development, the NFFT discussed the condition of and the trends in the natural resources and their ecosystem services in three plenary sessions. The agenda of these sessions was the land use in October 2018, climate change in March 2019, and social metabolism in May 2019. The relevance of these thematic discussions is further increased by the publication on May 6th 2019 by the UN's Intergovernmental Science - Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) of a comprehensive report on the state of the Earth's natural resources, habitats, and animal and plant species finding a dramatic rate of deterioration and calling for urgent action. The summary of the experiences from these discussions and the NFFT proposals

to address current issues can be downloaded here:
<https://www.parlament.hu/web/ncsd/commitments>

ESDN Country Profile information and updates

Please regularly check the [Country Profiles](#) on the ESDN homepage for information on national SD strategy and policy activities and regular updates!

News on the governance of sustainable development from the EU:

European Commission/Eurostat: 2019 communication package on EU SDG monitoring

On 28 June 2019, Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, issued the 2019 edition of the publication "[Sustainable development in the European Union – Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context](#)". It is the third statistical overview of progress towards the SDGs in the EU since 2017, published in time to inform the 2019 UN High Level Political Forum. Apart from the monitoring report, Eurostat has also released updates for a range of complementary materials:

- for a quick overview: the short [brochure](#) providing a visual summary of the of the monitoring report's main findings;
- to play with: the interactive digital publication "[SDGs & me](#)" for some of the EU SDG indicators which helps the users focus on issues that are of interest to them and compare their country with others;
- to focus on individual goals: the [interactive presentation of indicators](#) and the series of [Statistics Explained articles](#).

The whole communication package 2019 is available under one roof: [Eurostat website section](#) on Sustainable Development Goals.

Other news:

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights: Report “Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals in the EU: a matter of human and fundamental rights” published

The report explores the interrelationship between the human and fundamental rights framework and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the global Agenda 2030 in the context of Member States’ and the EU’s internal policies. It takes a closer look at the SDGs related to reducing inequality (SDG 10) and promoting peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16). The focus highlights the importance of collecting disaggregated data on hard-to-reach population groups to develop evidence-based, targeted and rights-compliant policies that help empower everyone, particularly those most at risk of being left behind. The focus also examines how the EU and its Member States are following up on their commitment to embed a rights-based approach to sustainable development; looks at policy coordination tools and financial instruments that can help to promote SDG implementation in full respect of fundamental rights; and emphasises the importance of national human rights institutions, equality bodies and Ombuds institutions, as well as local authorities, business communities and civil society, in mainstreaming the human rights dimension of SDGs. Find more information and a link to download the report here: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2019/frr-2019-focus-sdgs-eu>

German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE): Second meeting of the Open SDGclub.Berlin on 7-9 May 2019 in Berlin

The German Council for Sustainable Development started the Open SDGclub.Berlin in 2016 as a transnational peer learning platform of sustainability practitioners at which participants can share their experience with implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at their respective areas of responsibility. The Open SDGclub.Berlin 2019 meeting took place on 7-9 May 2019 in Berlin with nearly 60 participants from over 30 countries, representing multi-stakeholder bodies, civil society organisations and platforms, business, academia, the municipal level, and parliaments. Based on the exchange of practical experiences the participants launched a call to global leaders. Please find the call and additional information here: <https://www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de/en/projects/open-sdgclub-berlin/>

Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL): Report “Outline of the Circular Economy” published

The report is available online, at <https://www.pbl.nl/en/publications/outline-of-the-circular-economy>. The full report is available in Dutch only, but the English summary report provides an outline of the current state of the circular economy. This inventory describes the current situation for the Netherlands, but provides also information that is of interest for other countries, too. It shows opportunities and suggestions for subsequent steps towards achieving

a circular economy. The inventory shows that many companies and organisations are already contributing to the circular economy, amounting to around 85,000 activities and involving around 420,000 jobs (4% of all jobs within the Dutch economy). Circularity is already common practice, at least in certain markets. Activities, such as car mechanics and shoe repair shops, are part of a circular economy. Some circular activities are coupled with other objectives, such as targets related to climate change mitigation or adaptation, new housing developments, and various societal objectives. For example, there are small, moveable modular homes that represent an efficient use of resources while also decreasing CO₂ emissions and reducing housing shortages.