

ESDNewsletter March 2021

This ESDNewsletter informs about the following topics and activities on sustainable development in Europe.

Announcements from the ESDN

2 ESDN Blog entries published in February and March 2021

Economic Growth: A “future thing of the past”?

Elisabeth Freytag-Rigler, ESDN Vice President, Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology, Austria, wrote her ESDN Blog entry on sustainable growth. In this Blog, she discusses the role all countries have in moving towards more sustainable growth. She also discusses our understanding of growth and that growth does not always need to mean more material consumption. Growth in other areas of human development, such as happiness and well-being, are arguably more important.

To read the full Blog, please visit the [ESDN website](#), or download it [here](#).

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Milestones we need for Post-pandemic Reconstruction

László Borbély, ESDN Advisory Board Member, State Counsellor at the Government of Romania, Coordinator of the Department of Sustainable Development, wrote his ESDN Blog entry on the 2030 Agenda and the Post-pandemic recovery. In this Blog, he discusses how the pandemic exposed not only how interconnected the world is, but also different sectors within countries. When one sector has a problem, its effects can be felt in other sectors. The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs can serve as a way for the world to become more resilient, while not leaving anyone behind.

To read the full Blog, please visit the [ESDN website](#), or download it [here](#).

5th ESDN Policy Brief: “Recommendations for Strengthening Sustainable Finance for the Green Transformation”

This Policy Brief, published at the beginning of March 2021, offers recommendations on the following topics:

- 1. National Finance Strategies**
- 2. Labelling Sustainable Financial Products**
- 3. Sustainable National Budgets**

The recommendations are based on the results of the 5th ESDN Peer Learning Platform that was held virtually in November 2020. This Peer Learning Platform focused on two topics. Firstly, the presentations revolved around developing strategies to make financial systems more sustainable and redirect financial flows towards sustainable activities. The second part focused on policy coherence in national budgets, but also with national policies in general.

This included a presentation on the sustainability check that is currently being developed in Luxembourg.

The 5th ESDN Policy Brief can be found on the [ESDN website](#).

19th ESDN Workshop: “Parliamentary Mechanisms in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda”

The 19th ESDN Workshop will be **taking place this year in Vienna, Austria on 14-15 June 2021**. The title of this Workshop is **“Parliamentary Mechanisms in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda”** and will look more closely at national level and stakeholder mechanisms in Europe that exist to aid in Parliamentary involvement in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The Workshop will feature a mixture of keynote presentations, interactive sessions, and many opportunities for discussion. **Due to COVID-19, the Workshop will be held as a hybrid event:** Day one (14 June) will take place at the Austrian Parliament for a small contingent of speakers, but will be open to all participants virtually. On Day 2 (15 June), the Workshop will be held virtually.

Leonore Gewessler, the Austrian Federal Minister of Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology, and Karoline Edtstadler, the Federal Minister for the EU and Constitution at the Austrian Federal Chancellery, are already confirmed as keynote speakers!

A Workshop registration link will be sent out to ESDN members in the next few weeks.

European Sustainable Development Week 2021

The ESDW is a European-wide initiative to stimulate and make visible activities, projects and events that promote sustainable development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). **It will take place this year from 18 September – 08 October, with the core of the Week taking place 20 September – 26 September.**

Registration will open at the beginning of May! To register an event, please visit the registration page on the [ESDW website](#).

News on Sustainable Development Governance from European Countries

Belgium:

Federal level

For the first time in over ten years, **a preliminary draft of the new Federal Plan for Sustainable Development (FPDO) was presented at the Council of Ministers**. The plan will now be submitted for consultation to a wide range of citizens, organizations, advisory councils and parliaments. “In doing so, I am correcting a historically skewed situation. For the first time in over 10 years, we are again working on the Federal Plan for Sustainable Development. Today, more than ever, sustainable development is one of the answers to tackling climate and social challenges,” stressed Minister Khattabi. The preliminary draft makes proposals on, among other things, promoting the circular economy, stepping

up the fight against illegal trade in timber, promoting fairer and greener taxation and facilitating access to social rights.

Furthermore, the preliminary draft also seeks to strengthen the exemplary role of the federal state in areas such as mobility, telecommuting and the management of its environmental impact. With this step, the government is on track to adopt, as required by law, a final Federal Plan for Sustainable Development one year after taking office. The preliminary draft does not only cover the classical three pillars of sustainable development (economic and social development and the protection of the environment), but also makes proposals and suggests ways of thinking around cross-cutting themes such as gender and the concept of "Leave no one behind", among others.

Flanders

On the 15th of December 2020, the Minister-President of the Flemish Government granted a project subsidy to CIFAL Flanders, a UNITAR affiliated International Training Centre for Authorities and Leaders, to promote and implement Focus 2030, Flanders' translation of the SDG's, at companies and other key-actors in Flanders, in cooperation with the department of Chancellery and Foreign Affairs. At the end of September 2021 the expected project outcome is a Focus 2030 signpost with FAQ, an update of the SDG-information sheet and the organization of five Focus 2030 webinars (for different key-actors/target groups in Flanders: companies, local authorities, higher education, youth and an international webinar in English).

More information will be available on [here](#) and [here](#).

Czech Republic:

The Czech Republic plans to update the Implementation Plan of the Strategic Framework Czech Republic 2030.

There is a public consultation planned for April 2021 on the occasion of the preparatory process of the Czech VNR, which will be presented at the HLPF 2021.

Regarding sustainable development indicators, the Czech Republic is currently developing a website that will include a large indicator scale annex of the Czech VNR. In order to create a short and comprehensive VNR, the Czech Republic decided to keep the indicators annex online-accessible. It is available in Czech and English.

France:

In February 2020, the French Government updated its existing sustainable development scheme "Administration exemplaire" to include sustainable development policies into the day-to-day operations of its state administrations, state owned public establishments and operators. Rebranded as Services publics écoresponsables (Eco-responsible public services) - SPE for short – with a broadened array of topics, the program aims to accelerate ecological transition by matching the functioning and missions of the French public administrations with the uptake of environmental awareness and policies. Divided into 20 comprehensive measures which address a diverse range of sustainable development topics, the SPE program is mandatory for State administrations, while local authorities and public hospitals are invited to participate on a voluntary basis. This environmentally friendly transformation of the French public authorities is also conceived as a tool for reaching the goals defined in the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development French roadmap. The first anniversary of the SPE program in February 2021, chaired by two Ministers, provided the opportunity to assess

current achievements and to prepare for targeted actions in order to accelerate the national implementation of the program.

The full report (only available in French) can be found [here](#). The short version can be found [here](#).

Germany:

Comprehensive Update of German Sustainable Development Strategy adopted

On 10 March 2021, the **Federal Cabinet has adopted a comprehensive update of the German National Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS)**. The process for the update had started in autumn 2019. The comprehensive update systematically shows which activities have been taken by the German Government to implement the strategy in the current legislative period - and which further measures are planned. All federal ministries were involved in elaborating the updated strategy within the framework of the State Secretaries' Committee for Sustainable Development, chaired by the Head of the Federal Chancellery. Comments submitted by members of the general public during a two-stage dialogue process since October 2019 were also incorporated.

The updated GSDS takes the consequences and measures taken to address the corona pandemic additionally into account. The GSDS stresses that the pandemic made it clear what impact the threat to one of the global sustainability goals - here the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 3 "Health and Wellbeing" - can have on all areas of life and thus on all other sustainability goals.

Compared to the GSDS from 2017, nine new indicators have been included in the comprehensive update. These include inter alia Germany's contribution to global pandemic prevention (SDG 3 "Health and Wellbeing").

A major change is the consideration of so-called transformation areas in the GSDS. The German Government adapted this in the Global Sustainable Development Report of the United Nations stressed concept. The inclusion of these areas was suggested in the dialogue process and the Federal Government considers progress in the transformation areas particularly relevant for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Each transformation area addresses several SDGs at the same time and emphasizes their interaction. The transformation areas are: (1) human well-being, skills and social justice, (2) energy transition and climate protection, (3) circular economy, (4) sustainable building and „traffic turnaround“, (5) sustainable agricultural and food systems and a (6) pollution-free environment.

The update to the German Sustainable Development Strategy can be found [here](#) (only available in German) and the summary can be found [here](#) (only available in German). The update to the strategy and its summary will be made available in English at a later time. The summary will also be translated into all official languages of the UN.

The next complete revision of the Strategy is scheduled end 2023/ beginning of 2024.

Greece:

After the July 2019 national elections, and regarding the overall governance scheme for coordinating national efforts to implement the SDGs, the task is currently allocated to the Presidency of the Government, and particularly to its Secretariat Special of the Integrated Information System for the Monitoring and Evaluation of the Government's Programme (SSMEGP).

The SSMEGP has initiated, and is implementing, two related projects at the moment, on:

(a) The **Development of a multi-stakeholder platform on the implementation of SDGs** in Greece: for this, an on-line Workshop with the participation of international experts has been organized on the 4th of February 2021 to gather international experiences and expertise on how to set up a related platform at the national level in Greece.

(b) The **Development of methodology and tools on how to monitor quantitative data on the SDGs** at the national level: for this, **an on-line Workshop is about to be organized in April 2021** with the participation of international experts from the various Custodian Agencies for the SDG indicators. **The Workshop that will be entitled “Building capacities for adapting and measuring international SDG indicators at the national level”**, shall focus on the exchange of experience and best practices on issues related to statistical analysis and methodology of monitoring quantitative data on the SDGs, in different EU/OECD countries, including the methodology for the development of SDGs-oriented national indicators, that are not as yet part of the Official Statistics of the Greek Statistical System, ways of improving the methodology and data production and collection processes and tools in cooperation, where appropriate and necessary, with the custodian agencies of each selected indicator, and building the projection model for the selected indicators for 2030 (scenario and impact analysis).

Luxembourg:

New Document on Sustainable Development: “Péparer & Préserber l’Avenir”

Luxembourg has released a version of the National Plan for Sustainable Development (only available in French) for the general public, which was adopted by the Government in December 2019. The document can be found [here](#).

Luxembourg has a legal obligation to ensure that the national plan for sustainable development is known by the greatest number of people.

The publication consists of three chapters:

- **How can I be part of the solution?**
- **Sustainable development: what are we talking about?**
- **Sustainable development: a priority for the government**

The ambition of the publication was to emphasize that acting in favor of sustainable development belongs to each and every person, while explaining in an easy way the challenges and the objectives of Luxembourg to implement the Agenda 2030.

The 10 priorities of Luxembourg retained in the framework of the National Plan for Sustainable Development are always represented according to the same structure - challenges - objectives - flagship measures. The data is presented in the form of infographics, in order to allow easy presentation.

Romania:

The General Secretariat of the Romanian Government, through the Department of Sustainable Development, launched in March the national occupational standard for experts in sustainable

development. Now, the Romanian universities are able to open new programs for training experts in this challenging field. The standard was developed through the Project “România Durabilă / Sustainable Romania” funded by Operational Programme for Administrative Capacity (European Social Fund) through the program for the development of administrative capacity 2014-2020.

On March 16, 2021, Romania and the OECD, presented a [side-event](#) at the UNECE Regional Forum for Sustainable Development called “Aligning the European Recovery and Resilience Plans with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: The role of policy coherence and public service leaders”. The agenda can be found [here](#).

In this context, it was underlined that there should be a push to build further better, which necessitates working together better. Strong regional cooperation is a must. The Romanian Department for Sustainable Development, in striving to make National Recovery Plan a real opportunity for sustainability, has been able to embed the SDGs into project proposals. By taking this measure the hope is to encourage projects that contribute to sustainable development transition.

Spain: Catalonia

In September 2020, the Statistical Institute of Catalonia published the first results of the EU Sustainable Development Goals indicators for Catalonia (Catalan, Spanish and English). **In January 2021, the Statistical Institute published 12 new EU indicators to measure Catalonia’s progress towards the SDGs. The update means that 74% indicators in the official series calculated by Eurostat have now been calculated and incorporated into official Catalan statistics.**

One of the most relevant developments of the 2021 Annual Statistical Action Programme is Catalonia's incorporation of the UN's SDG indicators. As with Eurostat's SDG indicator system, a framework of annual indicators will be constructed based on the series of United Nations indicators. The new framework will complement Eurostat's SDG indicators system, and Catalonia will be equipped with a comprehensive list of indicators to measure its progress towards the goals of the 2030 Agenda.

In 2019, the government initiated a participatory process to devise a *National Agreement* for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, culminating with its adoption in 2020. This Agreement ([Catalan](#) and [English](#)) defines a shared vision on how Catalonia can contribute to meeting the SDGs. It outlines the roles and commitments from different parts of society (public sector, business, trade unions, professional sector, universities, research centers, civil society organizations and citizens) and is open to everyone. In addition, all public and private actors that adhere to it with concrete commitments on SDGs will be able to join the *Catalonia 2030 Alliance*, a broad, country-based coalition aimed at sharing information, resources and best practices as well as promoting joint initiatives to meet SDGs (more information [here](#)). **The Alliance was launched in February 2020 with 36 signatories and many other institutions are expected to sign in 2021.**

The Netherlands:

As 2020 marked the five-year anniversary of the SDGs and the start of the Decade of Action, the Netherlands took a moment to reflect on its domestic SDG implementation so far. The SDG ministerial working group headed by the national SDG coordinator (Sandra Pellegrom), commissioned two reports. The first report “Five years SDG-implementation in the Netherlands” by the Dutch Statistical Bureau (CBS), presents The Netherlands’ (relative) scores on target-level together with a mapping of the corresponding policies. It shows that for most targets, there are relevant policies in place (although most are not explicitly linked to the SDGs), but policy coherence remains a challenge.

The report on governance of SDG implementation (by Transition International) critically reflects on the current 'light approach' with limited capacity and budget and MFA/Minister for Development Cooperation in a coordinating role. In response to these reports, in a letter to Parliament, Cabinet acknowledges the need for a more substantial approach with a national SDG strategy with SMART (specific, measurable, attainable realistic and time-bound) policy goals that fit the Dutch context. Next to this, it supports the recommendation to explore transferring the SDG coordination unit from the MFA to a nationally oriented Ministry.

The reports and the parliamentary letters can be found [here](#) (only available in Dutch).