

ESDN Newsletter

(June 2023)

News from the ESDN

ESDN Conference 2023 (March)

The **ESDN Conference 2023** took place in March in Stockholm, Sweden on the topic of “**Halfway to 2030 – Where does Europe stand and how does it move forward?**” The Conference was organized together with [Nordregio](#) and [The Nordic Council of Ministers and The Nordic Council](#) and brought together over 100 sustainable development civil servants and experts from over 15 countries!

If you were unable to attend the Conference in March, you can find more information about it, including the Discussion Paper, agenda, and keynote presentations, on the [ESDN website](#).

4th ESDN and EEAC EU Council Presidency Exchange Event (May)

The ESDN and the [EEAC](#) once again co-organized another EU Council Presidency Exchange Event in early May between Sweden, Spain and Belgium. These Presidency Exchanges have been taking place since 2022, and seek to offer an informal space for current and upcoming EU Council Presidency countries to meet and exchange about their programs. The goal is to not only increase dialogue between colleagues, but to also keep the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs as a common thread throughout all EU Council Presidencies.

21st ESDN Workshop (May)

The **21st ESDN Workshop** took place in Vienna, Austria on 22-23 May 2023! The ESDN organized the Workshop in cooperation with the [Bundesministerium für Klimaschutz, Umwelt, Energie, Mobilität, Innovation & Technologie](#), Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, the Civil Service and Sport (BMKOES), as well as the [Austrian Federal Chancellery](#). There were over 80 participants from 14 European countries who took part over the two days! The two Workshop topics were “**Culture and Sustainable Development**” and “**SDG Implementation in Policymaking – Approaches in SDG Budgeting, Mainstreaming, and Performance Management**”.

If you were unable to attend the Workshop in May, you can find more information about it, including the Discussion Paper, agenda, and keynote presentations, on the [ESDN website](#).

ESDN Side-Event at the High-Level Political Forum in New York (July)

The ESDN will host a Side-Event at the HLPF in New York on **12 July 8:00 - 9:30** in **Conference Room C**! The topic of the Side-Event is “**Experiences in Peer Learning in Achieving the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs**” and will feature speakers from the [ESDN - European Sustainable Development Network](#), the [EEAC](#) (European Environment and Sustainable Development

Advisory Councils Network), the [SDSN](#) (Sustainable Development Solutions Network), and the [IISD](#) (International Institute for Sustainable Development).

This Side-Event was registered on behalf of the ESDN by the Government of Luxembourg through ESDN Vice President Marguy Kohnen, and through the Permanent Mission of Luxembourg to the United Nations.

European Sustainable Development Week 2023 (September - October)

The **European Sustainable Development Week 2023** [hashtag#ESDW2023](#) will take place from **18 September - 08 October**. The core of the Week will take place from 20-26 September. **Registration for activities for the ESDW 2023 is open** to all forms of government agencies, research centers, educational institutions, museums, foundations, associations, businesses, non-governmental organizations, individual citizens, etc. Take part and register your sustainable development related activity and become a part of this European-wide initiative! Events can be registered directly on the [ESDW website](#).

So far, the ESDW 2023 has 54 registered events that are taking place in 7 European countries. To find out which activities are happening in which country, visit the [ESDW Homepage](#) and click on the interactive map.

For those who are unfamiliar with the ESDW, the ESDW is an initiative to facilitate the organization of activities that promote sustainable development and make these efforts visible on a common platform. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) articulates key issues that call for urgent action at all levels and by all stakeholders. The ESDW contributes to this ambitious, universal and transformative agenda by promoting the organization of bottom-up activities that have a thematic link to and support the SDGs. As such, the ESDW aims to raise awareness for the 2030 Agenda in Europe and calls upon local stakeholders to actively engage with sustainable development, in general, and the SDGs, in particular.

ESDN Youth Workshop (October/November)

The ESDN Youth Workshop will be taking place once again this year and will mark the third such event since October 2020. The date and topic of the Youth Workshop will be made known over the next few weeks. More information will be provided via LinkedIn and the [ESDN Youth Section](#) on the website.

8th ESDN Peer Learning Platform (09-10 November)

The **8th Peer Learning Platform** is scheduled to take place on **09-10 November in Bern, Switzerland**. The topic of this year's Platform is "Spillover Effects".

More information will become available over the next few weeks. Check back on the [ESDN Homepage](#) for more updates.

News from European Countries on Sustainable Development

Austria - Governmental Updates on SDG Implementation

- **April 2023:** The Austrian Council of Ministers adopted the "Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in and by Austria 2020-2022". It is publicly available here ([German only](#)).
- **April 2023:** Statistics Austria has published an up-to-date SDG indicators report for Austria available for download here ([German only](#)).
- **March 2023:** the Austrian parliament voted by a majority in favor of a motion for a resolution tabled by Petra Bayr (Social Democrats) to make the implementation of the SDGs an integral part of draft legislation. The motion also provides for annual reports to communicate the extent to which the Goals set have been achieved. Download here ([German only](#)).
- **October 2022:** The Austrian Council of Ministers agreed on initiating the process for preparing and delivering a second Austrian Voluntary National Review – download here ([German only](#)).

Belgium (Flanders) - First Voluntary Subnational Review (VSR)

Last week, the VVSG (Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities) and the VVP (Association of Flemish Provinces) published their **first VSR**. The process started in April 2022 to ensure proper data collection and analysis, involvement of colleagues and members, and to be able to weigh on the Belgian VNR of 2023. This approach paid off, with amongst others the inclusion of an extensive chapter on localizing the SDGs in the VNR, fully written by the Belgian associations of local governments and provinces themselves. To inspire other associations and regions wanting to develop a VSR, the VVSG and the VVP have thoroughly documented their approach and communication plan, included as annexes in the VSR.

The VSR discusses how Flemish provinces, cities and municipalities deploy the 2030 Agenda as a strategic and moral framework for their policies and gives an understanding of the achievement of the 17 SDGs through an extensive data analysis of **more than 200 indicators** and via **good practices**. The VSR observes clear progress towards the achievement of the SDGs in general. Based on the data analysis, SDGs 1, 8, 9 and 10 show the strongest improvement. One SDG has consistently deteriorated since 2010, and that is SDG 15 (Life on land). This is mainly due to a constant reduction in open space (paving) and a reduction in green space in 87% of municipalities. The analysis also registers big differences between cities and municipalities, amongst others due to median income and age structure of inhabitant, and size and location of the municipality.

[Consult the full report](#) to learn more, or read through the [synthesis](#) and [infographic](#). All documents are also [available in Dutch](#).

VVSG's president Wim Dries will be present at the HLPF in July to share data, trends and lessons learned from the VSR with local governments and other actors from around the world.

Belgium (Flanders) - Sustainable Municipality Week

Do you want to establish a broad communication campaign about the SDGs? No need to re-invent the wheel! The Sustainable Municipality Week has been organized by the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG) since 2018. It's an annual public campaign aimed firstly at raising awareness of the SDGs among the general public in Flanders, and secondly at providing Flemish local governments with concrete tools for long-term sustainable and co-creative local policies. During the campaign week, participating municipalities will hang out an SDG flag at the town hall and highlight their 'sustainable heroes'. These heroes are local citizens, schools, businesses and associations who contribute to one or more SDG(s) in their work or daily life and therefore become the local faces of the 17 global goals.

VVSG wrote a paper on the approach and strategies used in organizing the campaign, and the lessons learned after 5 editions. VVSG wants to inspire local government associations and other organizations worldwide to set up similar campaigns, in which both local governments and SDG ambassadors are involved to get things moving on the local implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The publication is available in [Dutch](#), [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#). Contact internationaal@vvsbg.be for more information.

Belgium (Flanders) - 3 Videos from 3 Flemish Municipalities on the SDGs

Flemish cities and municipalities are pioneers in translating the SDGs locally. In doing so, they not only focus on the 17 thematic domains, but also take the SDGs on board as a steppingstone for coherent sustainable local policies and use the 2030 Agenda as a structural framework for policy planning. The Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG) made 3 practical videos explaining the SDG trajectory of some inspiring local governments. Mayors, policy officers and thematic experts from the municipalities involved tell why and how they got started with the SDG framework, and what impact this had on the municipal organization and policy.

[Watch the videos](#) on the SDG trajectory of the city of Deinze, municipality of Edegem and city of Harelbeke in Dutch, English or French.

More videos will be released in 2023.

Belgium (Wallonia)- Third Walloon sustainable development strategy was adopted by the Walloon Government on 22 September 2022

This strategy consists of:

- A commitment by the Walloon Government to amplify the implementation of the Agenda 2030 and its 17 SDGs;
- A willingness to strengthen policy coherence for sustainable development and to adopt a 2030 roadmap;

- A multi-scale and multi-stakeholder systemic approach to translate this commitment to the different levels of action in Wallonia;
- A participative method of development and implementation through the multi-stakeholder organization « Walloon partnership for sustainable development ».

The document is structured in 4 main chapters:

- A map of the most structuring Walloon strategies and plans, showing their respective contribution to SDGs;
- 89 quantified targets related to SDGs;
- 91 monitoring indicators to assess Wallonia's progress towards SDGs;
- 16 actions to strengthen Wallonia's capacity to implement SDGs.

More information can be found [here](#).

Finland - 30 years of the National Commission on Sustainable Development

For the 30th anniversary of the National Commission on Sustainable Development, Finland is having different kinds of events and activities that involve the implementation of Agenda 2030 and the National Sustainable Development Strategy.

Finland - A new young people's climate change and nature group in connection with the Agenda 2030 Youth group

Finland established a [new young people's climate change and nature group](#) under the Prime Minister's Office, in connection with the Agenda 2030 Youth group, which has been working since 2017. The new group supports ministries in the planning, implementation and impact assessment of youth participation. The aim is to ensure the fairness of different policy measures from the perspective of future generations. The task of the climate and nature group is to bring new and emerging perspectives and solution models to the knowledge base of decision-making. The group that serves as a sub-group of the Agenda 2030 Youth Group and will organize a youth climate and nature summit every two years.

Finland - Sustainable Development Document Updates

The New Finnish Sustainable Development Strategy is now available in [English](#): "Strategy of the National Commission on Sustainable Development 2022–2030: A prosperous and globally responsible Finland that protects the carrying capacity of nature".

New [Policy Brief](#) on "Assessing the implementation of the Agenda 2030 in Finland".

Finland's [Sustainable Development Roadmap](#) "The 2030 Agenda Roadmap of the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development" is also available.

Finland (Åland Islands) - Status Report 5

Find out how the Åland Islands are doing regarding the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs by reading the 5th Status Report.

The Report can be found and downloaded [here](#).

Finland (Åland Islands) - ReGeneration Week 2023 (August)

ReGeneration Week is an annual 4-day sustainability gathering on Åland, Finland for youth, social movements and sustainability actors in the Nordic and Baltic Sea region.

This **12-15th of August** we will gather to learn, strategize, and build, the movement for a just sustainable transition that can win in the vital years ahead.

To find out more about the ReGeneration Week, please visit the [ReGeneration website](#).

Iceland - 2nd Voluntary National Review

This summer Iceland will present its second Voluntary National Review (VNR), a status report on how integration of the SDGs is progressing, at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. It builds on more extensive stakeholder involvement than before, more data and new institutional mechanisms. This year not only did specialists from ministries assess Iceland's progress towards the SDGs, but multiple civil society organizations as well, allowing for more transparency in the review process. Additionally, local governments are preparing their own review on the localization of the SDGs.

Iceland - New Cooperation Platform "Sustainable Iceland"

This year, Iceland is piloting (has established) a new cooperation platform for sustainable development called Sustainable Iceland. Its purpose is to formulate a new national strategy for sustainable development by the end of 2023 and to coordinate the government's work with various stakeholders, using the SDGs as guiding principles. Its backbone is the National Sustainability Council, with representatives from across society.

Latvia - Sustainable Development Updates from the Government

The July 2022 HLPF

Latvia's Minister of Education and Science presented the country's [VNR](#). At the HLPF in July 2022. Accounting for results of Latvia's National Development Plan (NDP) 2014-2020 and outlining major commitments of the *new* NDP 2021-2027 that was created in an inclusive, multi-stakeholder process, the VNR emphasizes that the transition to an innovative and eco-efficient economy must reduce inequalities, leaving no one behind. It also highlights three accelerators of change trending in Latvia - sustainable finance, space for inquiry and well-informed dialogue online and offline, and the mission approach to managing urgent and complicated challenges.

The NGO LAPAS. LV presented [Latvia's NGO Report on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Latvia – 2022](#).

Latvia's Online Side Event, [Libraries and museums as safe space for dialogue and information literacy](#), spotlights the role of these culture institutions in fostering sustainability through peace and understanding. See [key points](#) by experts from Latvia, Ecuador's Galapagos Islands, Ukraine, the UAE, and more.

Following Latvia's elections on October 1, 2022

The MEPs (*Saeima*) in the Sustainable Development Commission have been focusing on key sustainability indicators.

A Ministry of Climate and Energy Ministry was launched in January 2023, taking over energy policy from the Ministry of Economics and climate policy from the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development.

The Cross Sectoral Coordination Centre, the policy planning unit under the Prime Minister coordinating sustainable development planning, including Agenda 2030, was merged into the State Chancellery as of March 1st, 2023 as the State Chancellery Cross-Sectoral Coordination Department.

Netherlands - Integral Circular Economy Report 2023

Every two years, the Integral Circular Economy Report (ICER) provides an overview of the status of the desired transition towards a circular economy in the Netherlands. PBL is producing this report at the request of the Dutch Government and in cooperation with other Dutch knowledge institutions.

The Dutch Government intends to achieve a fully circular economy by 2050 and to halve the use of primary abiotic raw materials by 2030. It sees monitoring as an important way of tracking the progress of the transition. This report is intended as a knowledge base for the societal and political debate on the transition towards a circular economy. It covers both physical trends in Dutch resource use, its effects on the environment and security of supply, as well as the activities undertaken by companies, citizens and government authorities to accelerate the transition. Beside the current situation around the transition towards a circular economy in the Netherlands, the report also offers tools to accelerate that transition.

The Report can be downloaded [here](#).

Romania - Romania's Sustainability Code Online Platform

The interactive and user-friendly platform developed by the Romanian Government's Department for Sustainable Development is now available online to facilitate the mandatory non-financial reporting process for all private entities with an average of 500 or more employees. In addition, the Sustainability Code will be available for voluntary adoption by organizations of all sizes and industries, including those that are not bound by reporting

obligations. This platform is a key component of Romania's Sustainability Code, which is based on a tested German model and was established following a Memorandum of Understanding signed between the General Secretariat of the Romanian Government and the German Council for Sustainable Development in 2021.

The Romanian Code of Sustainability is a practical tool that provides clear guidance on the content requirements and the process of drawing up sustainability reports for interested entities. The use of the Romanian Sustainability Code for the elaboration of the (non-financial) sustainability statement by the entities that have this legal obligation, but also voluntarily by other entities, brings a series of benefits:

- It is a reporting tool that provides transparency to a company's activities in terms of impact on sustainable development;
- Simplify reporting. The report can be downloaded and submitted as a non-financial statement according to the regulations in force;
- Reporting entities receive the reporting mark that confirms the development and publication of a sustainability report. It can be used for promotion, given that sustainability is becoming an important theme for an increasing number of customers;
- All entity reports are available in one site;
- The platform is intuitive and can be used easily, including by entities that have never completed non-financial reports;
- Provides examples to guide users on how to comply with the (non-financial) sustainability reporting obligation and practical implementation of the EU taxonomy;
- It provides traceability and a way to monitor the progress of entities in the field of sustainable development, based on the periodic reports developed;
- The database of the Romanian Code of Sustainability generates visibility and is will be accessible to the interested public, supporting users who are looking for good practices in the field of sustainability, but also those who make commercial decisions based on how the principles of sustainability are respected.

You can learn more about Romanian Sustainability Code from [here](#) using the Google instrument for web-page translate.

Romania - Romania's Transition to a Circular Economy

Currently, significant progress is being made in adopting a circular economy in Romania, and the Government has recently adopted the National Circular Economy Strategy. This strategy covers 14 economic sectors in the country and aims to accelerate the transition from a linear to a circular economic model. The objective is to decouple economic development from the use of natural resources and environmental degradation.

The next step in the process of adopting a circular economy in Romania is the development of the Action Plan, which will contain concrete measures to maximize the potential for circularity in seven economic sectors and two horizontal sectors: water and waste. The action plan proposes:

- cross-sectoral actions: education and vocational training, research, development and innovation, public procurement, and digitalization, which are essential to facilitate circular transformation in the economy.
- specific sectoral actions for nine economic sectors identified as having the greatest potential for circularity in the context of the Romanian economy: agriculture and forestry; auto; constructions; food and beverages; packaging (glass, paper, plastics, wood, and metal materials); textiles; electrical and electronic equipment, batteries; waste, water, and wastewater.

In the current international context, the circular economy can reduce dependence on imports of raw materials, a significant issue in Romania and Europe. However, statistics show that Romania has low performance in terms of resource productivity, waste treatment, and the use of recycled materials in the economy. Nonetheless, there are favorable prospects for improving these aspects. It is important to continue to make progress in adopting the circular economy in Romania to ensure the country's sustainable development and protect the environment.

More information about Circular Economy in Romania are available [here](#).