

# ESDN Newsletter

## (October 2023)

### News from the ESDN

#### ESDN's HLPF Side-Event on Peer Learning

The #ESDN #HLPF2023 Side-Event was a huge success! We had 50 people attend, which for an 8:00 meeting is quite the achievement and speaks to how important the topic of peer learning is for the implementation of the #2030Agenda and the #SDGs.

The purpose of this Side-Event was to create a space for the ESDN and other organizations to exchange on their experiences with peer learning. The ESDN wanted to share its success factors, as well as hear what made other peer learning experiences successful.

From the presentations by ESDN President Daniel Dubas, Arnau Queralt-Bassa from the EEAC, our #ESDNYouth Diandra Ni Bhuachalla and Fenna Timsi, Guillaume Lafortune from UNSDSN, and Matthew TenBruggencate from IISD, we learned there are quite a few success factors when it comes to effective peer learning.

1. Informality - Having an informal nature behind the setup of organizations practicing peer learning is key in building up trust between members so that honest conversations and discussions can take place. This helps in bridging silos.
2. Providing a platform for people to exchange - What all the organizations present today confirmed was that providing platforms and spaces to exchange are vitally important in bringing actors together. This is most prominently felt by Youth, who are oftentimes not provided such platforms for peer exchange.
3. Peer learning provides us with context-specific examples over many different topics that are relevant for the implementation of the SDGs. The ESDN has conducted 7 Peer Learning Platforms and many topics from VNRs to budgeting for the SDGs, to localizing the 2030 Agenda. This can also be seen in the IISD's Geneva 2030 Ecosystem, in which actors exchange on topics of interest.
4. Having a strong secretariat behind the organization - It was mentioned often in the discussions that peer learning activities can only happen if the organizations organizing them have strong secretariats working behind the scenes to bring actors together and provide them with the space to exchange. Each one of the presenting organizations has a strong secretariat standing behind them to make exchange as effective and rewarding as possible for participants.
5. Resist the urge to show off - failures, challenges and struggles are also important factors for successful peer learning exchange. Sharing what works well and not so well are both valuable and foster enhanced trust.

#### European Sustainable Development Week (ESDW)

The ESDN is happy to support the ESDW as it marks its 9th year to showcase Europe's massive efforts to make progress consistently and continuously towards reaching the #SDGs and the #2030Agenda!

The Week took place from 18 September – 08 October and this year we had a total of 5,133 events in 28 European countries! For 4,700 of these events, the SDGs were targeted over 14,000 times!

The ESDN and ESDW also thank all event organizers for registering their events for this year's edition of the ESDW. Many thanks also to all the ESDW National Focal Points for taking the time to read through all these events and supporting event organizers, and to our many European partners for acting as our multipliers in spreading the word around the SDGs and the ESDW.

We look forward to seeing everyone again in 2024!

## **ESDN Youth Workshop (25-28 October)**

The ESDN Youth Workshop will take place on 25-28 October 2023 in Berlin. Under the title “How can Europe shape a sustainable world?”, the event will deal with the topic of spillover effects, Europe's responsibility for them and policies to address such effects. Around 40 UN Youth Delegates and Representatives, as well as 10 young ESDN civil servants, from almost 20 European countries plan to attend the event. ESDN Executive Committee and Advisory Board members Daniel Dubas, Marguy Kohnen, László Borbély, and Peter Iwaniewicz will share their experience with the youth.

The Workshop will serve as a platform for European youth, ESDN members and experts on the topic of spillover effects to exchange ideas and experience, to learn how different European countries are dealing with the topic and to network. On 25<sup>th</sup> October, Youth Delegates will have a chance to learn more about spillovers effects and Europe's responsibility from experts, such as Sven Kaumanns from Federal Statistical Office of Germany, Marianne Beisheim from German Institute for International and Security Affairs, and the State Secretary of the German Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Christiane Rohleder. On the following days, the Youth Delegates will be joined by ESDN civil servants and experts, such as Marc-Oliver Pahl, German Council for Sustainable Development, and discuss how such effects are addressed and what further steps need to be taken.

## **8<sup>th</sup> ESDN Peer Learning Platform and Visit (09-10 November)**

The 8<sup>th</sup> ESDN Peer Learning Platform and Visit, which will be held this year in Bern, Switzerland on 09 – 10 November! The topic of this year's Peer Learning Platform and Visit is “Spillover Effects in the Context of SDG Implementation” and is being organized together with the Swiss Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE), the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, and with foraus – Swiss participatory Think Tank on Foreign Policy.

The Peer Learning Platform will kick off on 09 November with an opening event that is being organized by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and foraus – Swiss participatory

Think Tank on Foreign Policy in the morning. This Opening Event will discuss challenges and objectives in addressing spillover effects in the context of sustainable development in Switzerland. The opening event will offer a rare opportunity to receive in-depth knowledge about the Swiss experience in handling spillover effects, exchange best practices, and participate in the ongoing debate.

Day 1 of the Peer Learning Platform will begin in the afternoon on 09 November and will focus on "Understanding Spillover Effects and their Relation to SDG Implementation". There will be a mixture of presentations and interactive group work, which will focus on spillover effects in different policy areas. Day 1 will culminate in a Peer Learning Visit with the Swiss 2030 Agenda Advisory Group, which will share experiences on how experts and stakeholders can support policymaking.

Day 2 of the Peer Learning Platform will begin in the morning on 10 November. The focus of the day will be on "Strategic Governance Measures to Address Spillover Effects", where we will hear how countries are dealing with this issue. This will be followed by more interactive exchanges that will seek to discuss and address spillover effects in public policymaking.

This event is designed for European civil servants who are working on the topic of sustainable development or spillovers.

## **News from European Countries on Sustainable Development**

### **Austria**

#### **Unlocking Sustainable Futures: The 3rd Austrian SDG Dialogue Forum**

For anyone curious about Austria's progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 and interested in the strategies and solutions that can propel them forward - not just in Austria but globally - the SDG Dialogforum 3.0 provides answers and fosters dialogue! Taking place both in-person at Sofiensäle, Vienna, and online from October 3<sup>rd</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023, this event is a milestone for the implementation of the agenda 2030 in Austria.

#### **Deep Dive into Sustainable Development**

At the heart of this event are discussions, on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup>, that focus on four pivotal themes in stakeholder sessions known as "Innovations and Reflection Pools." These sessions will delve into concrete challenges and innovative approaches to SDG implementation. From "Skills for 2030 – Competencies for Sustainable Development" to "Protecting the Biosphere – Sustainable Development within Planetary Boundaries," these conversations promise to be both thought provoking and actionable.

#### **Shaping the Future Together**

The highlight of the SDG Dialogforum 3.0 unfolds on October 12<sup>th</sup> in a High-Level Segment. Here, not only the outcomes of previous discussions will be reported but also insights from the inaugural "Rebels of Change Youth Forum" on Sustainable Development will be

incorporated. Ministers and representatives from the Global South will join forces to delve into specific aspects and deliberate on effective solutions. Following the High-Level Segment, networking spaces will facilitate informal exchanges, ensuring a rich and collaborative experience for all participants.

## **Belgium**

### **Flanders – Development of a Voluntary Subnational Review (2023)**

Development of a Voluntary Subnational Review (2023), in cooperation with the Association of Flemish Provinces (VVP). The report gives an overview of the realization of the SDGs in Flemish provinces and municipalities based on good practices and a data-analysis of more than 200 indicators for the period 2010-2021. In annex VVSG and VVP have described their process and lessons learned in support of other associations embarking on the same trajectory.

Consult the [full report](#), or read through the [synthesis](#) and [infographic](#).

## **Estonia**

### **Preparation of first Climate Law**

Estonia has started preparing its first Climate Law. The law will underpin the country's most challenging decisions, helping it to meet targets around the oil shale phaseout as well as much-needed investments in housing and transport. The Climate Act will be a social agreement on which direction to move forward and how the goals will be achieved. Therefore, the involvement of interest groups and wider public is important. The concept of the law is currently on public consultation. Climate Law working groups will start in November. The draft law should be ready in autumn next year and enter into force on January 1, 2025.

Here is an [article](#) about Estonia's ambitions on climate and green transition.

## **Finland**

### **Åland Islands – ReGeneration Week 2023**

ReGeneration Week 2023 was held on 11.08.23 - 15.08.23, with a program filled with workshops, panel discussions, dialogues, climate march and cultural events in Mariehamn, Åland. The event was attended by 133 participants, including over 50 executive change-makers from businesses, government, and the non-governmental sector.

The theme of ReGeneration Week 2023 was Rising Tides, Rising Movements. We believe that the youth movements are extremely important actors in the advocacy for the just green transition. ReGeneration Week created the platform for youth social movements from our region to gather together and share strategies, knowledge, and experience in order to strengthen the overall climate action in the Nordic and Baltic Sea region.

### **Åland Islands and Iceland Sign a Memorandum of Understanding**

Iceland and the Åland Islands have many things in common as small Nordic Islands and members of the Nordic Council of Ministers. This background is reflected in their approach to sustainable development, including:

1. Both Island nations have created formal platforms to coordinate work on sustainable development, i.e. Sustainable Iceland and [Bärkraft.ax](#).
2. These platforms aim for a broad cooperation within the government as well as with the various stakeholders.
3. Public participation in the development of a wide strategy is encouraged.
4. Being small islands, both the Åland Islands and Iceland are faced with specific challenges, in particular in relation to climate change, such as ocean acidification and ecosystem changes.

To build on this shared background, we, the Ministers for Nordic cooperation in Iceland and the Åland Islands, today sign this Memorandum of Understanding to express our will of further cooperation in the field of sustainable development.

According to this Memorandum of Understanding, Iceland and the Åland Islands will seek to deepen our cooperation within the Nordic framework. This cooperation will focus on sharing experiences and learnings from the work on sustainable development, inspired by Sustainable Iceland, the Everyone can flourish Idea and the Åland Framework for sustainable governance.

## **Ireland**

### **Second VNR Presented at the HLPF**

Ireland presented its second [Voluntary National Review \(VNR\)](#) of the Sustainable Development Goals to the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July 2023. The theme of the report was Building Back Better while Leaving No One Behind. This progress report reviewed Ireland's progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, including the commitment to Leave No One Behind.

The 2023 VNR was presented by Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications Mr Eamon Ryan, at the UN High-level Political Forum in July. For the presentation, the Minister was joined by Mavis Ramazani from the Irish Refugee Council, who spoke about her lived experience as a refugee in Ireland. The presentation also included a video demonstrating how civil society had been involved in the process over the last year, through a public consultation, the National Stakeholder Fora and stakeholder engagement. There was a dedicated Youth Chapter written by Ireland's UN Youth Delegates within the VNR, which was a first of its kind for Ireland. Thematic reviews of specific areas of national importance and key goals under the overall theme of Ireland's 2023 highlighted the contribution made across Government on the areas of Education, Employment and Social Protection, Health, Community Engagement and Inclusion, Housing, Climate Action, and the Circular Economy. Stakeholder contribution chapters came from academia, disability groups, libraries, all-party parliamentary group, private sector, and Ireland's SDSN.

The VNR reflects Ireland's strong economic recovery following the pandemic and Ireland's efforts to build back better while leaving no-one behind guided by the SDGs and Agenda 2030 and demonstrates the wide range of national policies which support and address the SDGs and their targets. These policies also ensure delivery across areas of national importance and provide strategic frameworks for progress and success.

## Italy

### Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development and Italian Ministry of Education sign Memorandum of Understanding

In July, ASviS and the Italian Ministry of Education renewed for three years a Memorandum of Understanding aimed at working together to spread a culture of sustainable development in the education system.

Furthermore, the article "[The territorialization of the 2030 Agenda: a multilevel approach](#)", written by the ASviS research area, has been published in an academic journal "[As a 2022 Data-Driven decision making](#)", published in July by Firenze University Press.

The second SDG Summit will take place on 18-19 September. Enrico Giovannini, ASviS Scientific Director, will be attending the Summit in New York, to bring the contribution of Italian civil society to this crucial appointment, in particular with an online event on the Alliance channels, on the 19<sup>th</sup>. ASviS, with its stakeholders, is planning many activities to mark the '[Global Week](#)', the worldwide mobilization organized by the UN from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> of September to inspire and connect change-makers.

The presentation of the [ASviS 2023 Sustainable Development Report](#) will take place in Rome and online on 19 October. The document, which will also be available in English in the coming months, includes analyses and proposals on Italy's progress towards the 17 SDGs.

## Netherlands

### Measuring Well-being and the SDGs

In the Netherlands '[The Monitor of Well-being and the Sustainable Development Goals 2023](#)' measures the well-being and SDG-progress today ('[here and now](#)'), and the impact of their present level of well-being on future generations in the Netherlands ('[later](#)') and on people in other countries ('[elsewhere](#)'). The monitor includes an EU ranking showing the Netherland's position in the EU for each of the measured indicators.

## Romania

### Presentation of Second Voluntary National Report at the HLPF

At the mid-point of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Romania presented the second Voluntary National Review, drafted under the coordination of Department of Sustainable Development, with significant progress in the implementation of

the 2030 Agenda. The review describes the robust multi-level governance structure, the efforts of strengthen mechanisms to ensure policy coherence for sustainable development, national and regional partnerships, and the current state of play for all 17 SDGs.

The Voluntary National Review is the result of a broad consultation process with all social segments. The goal of the process was to capture what the Romanian society managed to do well, but also to highlight the challenges. Specifically, according to statistical data, 62.1% of the national targets for 2030 were achieved.

The Romanian government was the only one, along with that of East Timor, among the 193 UN member states, which organized in collaboration with UN DESA, on July 17, an event in which the Romanian delegation shared the experience of the National Report drafting process Voluntary of Romania, the Subnational Voluntary Report on locating sustainable development objectives at the level of municipalities and communes in Romania, the Youth Declaration and the Children's Report from Romania presenting the voice of children in the process of implementing sustainable development objectives.

Romania's 2023 Voluntary National Review and the complementary reports are available [here](#). The presentation video clip can be watched [here](#).

In parallel with the Voluntary National Review development, other important documents were produced:

- [Statistical Annex](#)
- [Children Voice](#)
- [Youth Statement](#)
- [Subnational Report](#)

## **State Councilor László Borbély, ESDN Vice President, received the Green Diplomacy award in New York at Cornell University**

A delegation of the Romanian Department of Sustainable Development, participated in the 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the Green Schools Conference, organized in New York, at the prestigious Cornell University, on September 15, 2023. in the context of the SDG Summit, by the international organization Green Mentors. The event brought together opinion leaders, policymakers, innovators, diplomats, solution providers, and experts from around the world.

On this occasion, the State Councilor was awarded the Green Diplomacy award by the organizers of the Conference, in recognition of his efforts to achieve the sustainable development goals of the 2030 Agenda on an international scale. He also had the honor of handing the International Green University award to higher education institutions that promote green values and curricula. Details of the Green Schools Conference, including the agenda, are available [here](#).

State Councilor László Borbély was also invited by UN DESA and UNDP, to be a speaker in the FutureGov panel. He reaffirmed Romania's commitment to confirming the capacities of the public sector to be ready for the future and to bring sustainable development and shared

Romania's trajectory regarding the transformation of the sector through a system of governance, innovation, development of effective skills, and a change of mentality.

"FutureGov: Building public sector capacity for the future." one of the 12 UN's high-impact initiatives designed to generate renewed momentum, strengthen the political leadership, and coordinate tangible, integrated support for sustainable national priorities. The launch session of this initiative took place on Sunday, September 17, 2023, during the SDG Action Weekend, an event organized on the sidelines of the SDG Summit in New York.

## **Bucharest hosted the 31<sup>st</sup> Conference of the Network of European Advisory Councils for the Environment and Sustainable Development**

The Department for Sustainable Development and the Advisory Council for Sustainable Development organized the 31st Conference of the Network of European Advisory Councils for the Environment and Sustainable Development (EEAC) in Bucharest, Romania, on October 4-5, 2023. This prestigious event occurred at the Parliament Palace, with the theme "Sustainability, Solidarity and Resilience: Common Values in the European Union." In line with recent global events, including the HLPF and the SDG Summit, this meeting focused primarily on SDG 16, emphasizing peace, justice, and the importance of strong institutions.

The president of ESDN, Daniel Dubas, and the Vice President, László Borbély, were both speakers at this great event, making statements about the importance of strong cooperation between different stakeholders in order to enhance the transition to sustainability. The conference brought together scientists, political leaders, civil society, and business representatives.

Throughout the conference, over 170 delegates explored two key questions: the future of sustainable politics in a changing world and strategies for building peace, justice, and strong institutions. Participants studied governance structures for sustainable development, evaluating the role of advisory councils in shaping institutions appropriate to this role. They also participated in interactive sessions, reliving the challenges, and discerning the trends of recent years. These sessions also included financial strategies and reflections on the SDG Summit. Cross-border partnerships, such as the Danube Cooperation, have shed light on building transnational institutions. In addition, influential voices from Brussels NGOs emphasized the role of civil society in promoting sustainable development. Benefiting from the support of the Chamber of Deputies, the event offered participants perspectives for action in the face of rapid global changes.