

# ESDNewsletter December 2020

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

## Announcements from the ESDN

### **European Sustainable Development Week 2020**

The European Sustainable Development Week (ESDW) 2020 was held from 18 September – 8 October. **A total of 4,075 events were registered in 25 European countries** and it is estimated that **over 6.5 million people participated in these events!**

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the ESDW 2020 was shifted from its normal dates (30 May – 05 June) to take place in the fall. Due to the many great events registered this year and the enhanced cooperation with the United Nations SDG Action Campaign, the ESDW 2021 will be taking place during the same time period as ESDW 2020 (18 September – 8 October)!

### **ESDN Conference 2020: “The European Green Deal: Our pact for the Future”**

The ESDN Conference 2020 took place on 12 – 13 October 2020 virtually. It was organized by the ESDN Association in cooperation with the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety. The Conference was a 1.5-day event and was an official event of the German Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The Conference brought together over 300 sustainable development policymakers and experts from different stakeholder groups from all over Europe.

The Conference documentation, including the [Discussion Paper](#), [Conference Report](#) and [speaker presentations](#) can be found on the [ESDN website](#).

### **5<sup>th</sup> ESDN Peer Learning Platform: "Sustainable Finance and Sustainability Check: Practical application and experiences in Europe"**

The 5<sup>th</sup> ESDN Peer Learning Platform, which took place virtually on 27 November 2020, brought together policymakers from the national and regional level to share, exchange, discuss, and learn from one another about the progress being made in European countries on sustainable finance. The Platform was organized by the ESDN in cooperation with the Luxembourg Ministry for the Environment, Climate and Sustainable Development. Representatives from Luxembourg also shared in-depth how they pursue sustainable finance and how they developed a sustainability check.

As with all ESDN Peer Learning Platforms, this Platform also operated under the Chatham House rule and no names were used in the documentation of the Platform, which include a [Discussion Paper](#) and [Platform Report](#), which can be found on the [ESDN website](#).

### **ESDN Report: "The European Green Deal"**

A year after the presentation of the European Green Deal (EGD) by the European Commission, the urgency of acting on the climate crisis has not decreased. While the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic may

have dominated the news since March 2020, the year 2020 is likely to be one of the three hottest years on record. While the economic shutdowns around the world may have contributed to a record reduction of 7% in carbon emissions, this is likely to be only temporary as economies around the world recover. This underlines the need for systemic long-term changes of the economic system.

The EGD is the Flagship Initiative of the current European Commission and was presented by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on 11 December 2019. It comprises a number of initiatives, strategies and legislative acts that, together, are intended to enable a just, sustainable and inclusive transformation of European society and economy.

While Europe is still facing notable challenges regarding the Covid-19 pandemic, it is important that the climate crisis and other ecological crises not be pushed to the side. In fact, it can be argued that the recovery from the Covid-19 crisis presents an opportunity to accelerate a sustainable transformation. In line with this, the European Union's recovery programme, "Next Generation EU", adopted in July 2020, reinforces many of the initiatives proposed in the EGD.

This Report aims to serve as a comprehensive overview of the EGD, the initiatives it comprises and other European strategies related to achieving a green transition and the 2030 Agenda. Chapter 1 will provide an introduction into the make-up of the EGD and the different aspects that accompany it. Chapter 2 covers some of the more technical aspects of the implementation of the EGD, especially how it is financed and the Just Transition Mechanism, that aims to ensure that no one is left behind. It will also go into the more practical issues of implementing an economic transition of unprecedented scale. Issues covered include the challenge of generating and maintaining public support and the growth dilemma. These are not a direct part of the EGD, but are crucial to achieving the aims the Commission has set out to achieve. Chapter 3 will provide a brief insight into each of the eight key areas of action that are outlined in the EGD. The fourth, and final chapter, will provide a summary and some key insights for policymakers.

This Report can be found on the new [ESDN website](#).

## **4<sup>th</sup> ESDN Policy Brief: "Recommendations for Utilizing the European Green Deal as a Vehicle to Transform Europe to a Sustainable Society"**

The European Green Deal (EGD) was presented by the European Commission in December 2019. It is the European Union's growth strategy and the primary vehicle to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Climate goals. Its main goals are a climate neutral EU by 2050 and to decouple economic growth from resource use and greenhouse gas emissions. The EGD consists of a collection of strategies, policies and directives, which will be implemented during the coming years. Topics range from renewable energy, circular economy to biodiversity and sustainable agriculture.

### **The ESDN Conference and the Youth Camp**

The ESDN Conference was held virtually on 12-13 October 2020. It was hosted by the German Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety. On day two of the Conference, participants discussed different topics surrounding the implementation of the EGD. The outcomes of these discussions provide the basis for the recommendations in this Policy Brief. In addition, the German Federal Ministry for Environment organized a European Youth Camp in the run-up to the ESDN Conference. During the Youth Camp, Youth Representatives from many European countries prepared a "Manifesto" that directly

addressed the challenges of the EGD. This “Manifesto” has also led to some of the policy recommendations presented in this Policy Brief.

The following policy recommendations are structured around the breakout group topics at the ESDN Conference.

#### Policy Recommendations on:

1. **Sustainable Growth**
2. **Sustainable Food and the farm to fork strategy**
3. **A New Push for Democracy**
4. **Sustainable Finance**
5. **Resilience**
6. **Sustainable Mobility**
7. **Missing links**

The 4<sup>th</sup> ESDN Policy Brief can be found on the new [ESDN website](#).

## News on Sustainable Development Governance from European Countries

### **Belgium:**

#### **Federal level**

This fall, the third Belgian SDG Forum took place and was held for the first time in a digital format. As a multi-stakeholder forum, it offered a wide range of workshops, plenary sessions and panel debates. The SDG Forum was organized by 18 partner organizations from all corners of the sustainable development sector. The Forum attracted actors who had attended previous editions of the Forum, as well as new actors, such as the sports sector and provinces.

During these two days, policymakers, institutions, companies, NGOs and academics had the opportunity to exchange SDG ideas and solutions with each other. The SDG Forum once again attracted a great deal of interest: over 1,000 people registered for this 2020 edition!

The new SDG Barometer study was presented during the SDG Forum. It is a follow-up study of the 2018 SDG Barometer and the Belgian Corporate Responsibility (CSR) studies of 2011 and 2015. These earlier studies serve as a point of reference for comparison over time in order to gain insight into the roles, responsibilities and actions of Belgian organizations in the field of sustainability. It outlines the sustainability landscape at the national level with insights into the involvement of organizations in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

#### **Flanders**

#### **The Focus 2030 framework**

Recently, on the 2nd of October 2020, the Flemish Government updated its Focus 2030 framework. Focus 2030 is Flanders’ translation of the SDGs. The Focus 2030 framework did not yet include all SDGs, because some topics, such as climate, energy, mobility and urban planning, are set out in

separate long-term strategic sectoral plans. These sectoral plans, as a fact, also attempt to contribute to the achievement of the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs.

Now that some of these sectoral plans have been adopted (Air Policy Plan, Flemish Climate and Energy Plan, and Policy Plan Living), its 2030 goals are now incorporated in Flanders' Focus 2030 framework. A long-term vision on mobility is still expected, as well as a policy plan on urban planning. Once these policy plans are ready, their relevant 2030-goals will, at that point, be included in the Focus 2030 framework after approval of the Flemish Government.

Focus 2030 is accompanied by a set of indicators that has been updated, accordingly. Every year the progress towards the Focus 2030 goals will be monitored. Focus 2030 consists of 53 goals and 111 indicators.

## **Wallonia**

### **A new study for translating SDGs into regional quantified targets**

In Wallonia, a study will be launched in January 2021 in order to define quantified targets linked to SDGs at the regional level. These targets should be related to key-priorities for the Walloon Government and to indicators used to monitor the progress of SDG implementation in Wallonia. The overall objective is to build a comprehensive SDGs roadmap for Wallonia.

### **A call for sustainable organizations**

As various organizations were asking for guidance for the implementation of the SDGs at their level, Wallonia launched a call for organizations wishing to benefit from an SDG coaching for about one year. For this 2020 edition, over 30 organizations applied. A large range of public and private organizations were welcome to participate. Professional SDG coaches have been selected for the coaching. Before starting the job, they have committed to exchanging on their methodologies within the pool of coaches. These methodological sessions will also take place at other stages of the project in order to create a community of coaches willing to constantly improve their practice.

## **Iceland:**

### **Vertical integration**

A task force at the national level is to be created to strengthen the vertical coordination of the SDGs. The task force will be comprised of representatives from the Ministry of Transport and Local Governments, the Icelandic Association of Local Authorities, Statistics Iceland, and the government's working group for the SDGs. One of its main tasks is to secure data for a specific set of indicators for the municipalities.

### **Planned activities**

The Government's Working Group for the SDGs is now preparing toolboxes to support municipalities, businesses, NGOs and government agencies in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in their operations. The Working Group is also working on a dashboard on their [website](#) that will showcase Iceland's status towards all 169 targets of the SDGs.

## **Slovakia:**

## **Agenda 2030 Monitoring:**

The [First National Monitoring Report](#) on the progress achieved in the national priorities of the 2030 Agenda implementation was approved by the Slovak Government in September 2020, and is now available in English.

The report covers the monitoring period from July 2018 to April 2020 and is in line with the approved biannual monitoring mechanism. The Second National Monitoring Report is due by 30 June 2022.

The Report states that Slovakia has achieved good results in the national priority Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion. The percentage of the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion is the third lowest in the EU, the Slovak Republic has exceeded the national goal of Europe 2020 strategy to lift at least 170,000 people out of the risk of poverty and exclusion by 2020. However, children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, people from marginalized Roma communities, single parents and people with disabilities, homeless people, as well as the elderly and women still face a higher risk of social exclusion.

## **National Sustainable Development Strategy until 2030**

Reflecting upon the new pandemic crisis and recent European Commission policies and strategies, the Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatisation (MIRRI SR) has redrafted its National Sustainable Development Strategy until 2030. The document has passed inter-ministerial consultation process and should be submitted for government approval by 31 December 2020.

## **Switzerland:**

### **Consultation on the Sustainable Development Strategy 2030**

With its 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy, the Federal Council is setting out how it intends to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development over the next ten years. At its meeting on 4 November 2020, the Federal Council approved the [strategy for consultation](#).

The strategy is scheduled to cover a period of ten years instead of four, as was previously the case. In so doing, the Federal Council is establishing sustainable development as an important requirement for all areas of federal government policy. The strategy draws on the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a frame of reference.

Once the consultation process has been completed, the Federal Council will also adopt an action plan to complement the strategy, specifying objectives and strategic guidelines for the period 2021-2023.

**The consultation runs until 18 February 2021. All interested organizations are invited to submit their comments within this timeframe.**

### **2020 Update of the National SD Indicator System “MONET 2030”**

The [2020 update of the MONET 2030 system](#) saw 68 out of the 103 indicators brought up-to-date. The majority of these indicators will be used to measure the SDGs in Switzerland. The update is available in [English](#), [French](#) and [German](#).

The MONET 2030 indicator system gives an overview of sustainable development in Switzerland, providing a picture of the progress made towards the 17 sustainable development goals (SDG) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda as well in relation to certain topics specific to Switzerland. Comprising

over 100 indicators relating to the three environmental, social and economic dimensions, the system is structured around the 17 SDGs.

## **Other News from the Sustainable Development Community**

### **German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE):**

#### **Two EU Policy Recommendations for Sustainable Development**

In the last few months, the German Council for Sustainable Development has published two EU policy recommendations for sustainable development. One of the recommendations deals with [“Laying the financial foundations for a sustainable recovery from the coronavirus crisis in the EU”](#) and offers recommendations concerning the EU’s Multiannual Financial Framework and the European coronavirus recovery fund. The other recommendations the RNE formulated were [“EU–AU partnership for peace: entering a joint future of sustainable development”](#), in which the recommendations centered on international partnerships for peace between the EU and the African Union (AU).

#### **Three Policy Recommendations for Germany**

In addition to providing policy recommendations on the EU level, the German Council for Sustainable Development has also provided recommendations on the German Federal Government’s Hydrogen Strategy, which seeks to [make hydrogen a sustainable decarbonization option](#). The Council has also provided recommendations on [systematically laying the foundations for a sustainable food system](#) and recommendations on how to [make Germany a leader in sustainable finance](#).