

ESDNewsletter July 2020

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18th ESDN Workshop, “Achieving the SDGs through a Sustainable and Just Transition: Challenges and responses to COVID-19”, 24 June 2020 – first ever virtual ESDN workshop

The 18th ESDN Workshop took place virtually on 24 June 2020 – it was the first time that the ESDN organized an online event. The topic of this year’s Workshop was “**Achieving the SDGs through a Sustainable and Just Transition: Challenges and responses to Covid-19**”. The objectives of the Workshop were to provide insights beyond the current ramifications of the Covid-19 crisis and focused on the impacts that Covid-19 will have on sustainable development and the European Green Deal and how European policymakers can strengthen sustainable development policy-making and prevent sustainable development from becoming marginalized. Another aspect of the Workshop was focused on the how the Covid-19 recovery will affect the European countries at the national level in the implementation of the SDGs. The

Workshop was organized by the ESDN in cooperation with Romanian Government – Department of Sustainable Development. The Workshop had over 90 participants from 22 different countries. In addition, the ESDN Workshop was livestreamed via the Facebook page of the Romanian Department of Sustainable Development with more than 2,900 views.

A full documentation of the Workshop is available on the [ESDN website](#), which includes the video recording of the entire Workshop, the Workshop Agenda, the Workshop Proceedings, the Workshop Report, the Workshop Discussion Paper, and the PowerPoint presentations of the keynote speakers.

ESDN Conference 2020, “The European Green Deal: Our pact for the Future”, 12-13 October 2020 in Berlin, Germany

The ESDN Conference 2020 will take place in Berlin, Germany on 12-13 October! The title of this year’s Conference is **“The European Green Deal: Our pact for the Future”**. The Conference will be held in conjunction with the German EU Presidency and is being organized in cooperation with the German Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety. The Conference will focus on keynote speakers and interactive sessions that will address topics relating to the EU Green Deal, such as sustainable growth, sustainable food systems (farm-to-fork), sustainable finance, and sustainability and democracy. This Conference will also seek to be explicitly future-oriented and look at the ways in which sustainability could be used in politics to be more fit-for-purpose in planning for the future.

As COVID-19 is still a concern for Europe at this time, future thinking is highly relevant and new ways of approaching crises are needed. It is the hope of the ESDN that the situation with COVID-19 is under control by the time of the Conference. Should this not be the case, the ESDN Office and the German hosts will think of new formats to make sure the Conference can take place.

To provide a true ‘input by the future’, a group of 30 European young people will gather prior to the conference at the BMU European Youth Camp on October 10 and 11th to formulate inspiring and challenging ideas for a sustainable European Green Deal as roadmap towards a sustainable European future.

Ending on a more positive note, Chancellor Angela Merkel is already confirmed to give a keynote speech at the Conference on 13 October! In addition to Chancellor Merkel confirming, the German Minister for the Environment, Svenja Schulze, has also confirmed her participation and will also deliver a keynote speech on 12 October!

The ESDN encourages you to save-the-date 12 – 13 October 2020!

ESDN Peer Learning Webinar, September/October 2020 (TBA)

The first ESDN Peer Learning Webinar is scheduled to be held in September 2020. The Webinar will last for about 90 minutes. The first Webinar will focus on Finland’s Voluntary National Review and their Peer Review process and the experiences they have made.

More information and the exact date of the first ESDN Peer Learning Webinar will be made available over the next weeks. Please stay tuned!

ESDN Blog

Each month, the ESDN will feature a Blog entry from one ESDN Advisory Board member on topics related to sustainable development, the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, and thereby offer a glimpse into the experiences, concerns, practical implementation activities, etc. of policymakers working in the field of sustainable development. We invite all readers to become more familiar with the ESDN, sustainable development, the 2030 Agenda, the SDGs, and those supporting the ESDN's work in fostering a more sustainable future.

The first-ever ESDN Blog entry was written in May 2020 by ESDN Association President, Annika Lindblom. In her Blog entry, *The 2030 Agenda paves the way to the "new normal"*, Annika discusses how the Covid-19 crisis has affected Finland, the ESDN and sustainable development, including the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Below is an expert from the Blog:

"We are in the middle of a peculiar period. The Covid-19 pandemic has questioned business-as-usual approaches and caused upheavals all around the world, including Europe.

Finland has been one of the few countries that has overcome the situation relatively well, for now. There are casualties in the country, but the health care system has been able to treat all in need. Business life has suffered big time, but society has not been closed-down completely. However, the medium- and longer-term implications for people in Finland, the economy and the environment remain to be seen."

The full Blog entry can be found on the [ESDN website](#).

The **next ESDN Blog entry will be published during the summer**. Keep checking back in on the ESDN website and follow the ESDN on Twitter to remain updated on when the next Blog is posted.

Spotlight – An ESDN Interview Series about the SDGs and Sustainable Development

Spotlight – an ESDN Interview Series – addresses current topics in the debate surrounding sustainable development and the SDGs, such as the "Global Sustainable Development Report 2019", the role of businesses in achieving the SDGs, the Circular Economy, the 6 transformations, and the role of the local level, to name only a few. The series started in February 2020. The interviews that have been published since April 2020 are briefly described below:

Interview with James Gomme – World Business Council for Sustainable Development

April's ESDN *Spotlight* interview features **James Gomme**, director of SDGs at the World Business Council for Sustainable Development. The WBCSD is a network of over 200 leading businesses around the world, cooperating to accelerate the transition to a more sustainable future. The objective is to leverage the innovation and leadership capacity of businesses to achieve a vision for a good life within planetary boundaries by 2050. The WBCSD has always oriented its work by the principles of SD, and the SDGs have provided a stress test for previous efforts.

In his *Spotlight* interview, ***The SDGs as the Blueprint for Sustainable Business***, James Gomme talks about how companies can make use of the SDGs by incorporating them into their business strategies and into their monitoring. According to James Gomme, there are huge opportunities for businesses when they embrace the 2030 Agenda. In fact, he predicts that those businesses who adopt the 2030 Agenda early on will be more successful in the long run. For this, however, there needs to be clear government policy on the SDGs, and governments need to communicate the expectations they have of businesses. Overall, James Gomme notices a strong desire of governments to work together with businesses in order to tackle systemic challenges.

To watch the full *Spotlight* interview with James Gomme, visit the [ESDN website](#) or the [ESDN's YouTube Channel](#).

Interview with Jasmin Miah – ICLEI Europe

May's ESDN *Spotlight* interview features **Jasmin Miah**, Officer for Governance and Social Innovation at ICLEI Europe. ICLEI is an international network of municipalities and local and regional governments that are committed to sustainable urban development. In her interview, ***Implementing Sustainable Development at the Local and Urban Level***, Jasmin Miah talks about the five pathways that ICLEI has developed to guide all actions and strategies. She explains why cities and local level change are crucial aspects in achieving the SDGs. Therefore, the EU must increase its efforts to include the subnational level in its sustainability strategies and policies.

Equitable and people-centered sustainable development is key to leaving no one behind. According to Jasmin Miah, it can help to counteract populism and frustration of voters at the subnational, national and European level. She explains how the Green Deal could achieve just that.

To watch the full *Spotlight* interview with Jasmin Miah, visit the [ESDN Website](#) or the [ESDN's YouTube Channel](#).

Both of these *Spotlight* interviews were conducted at the ESDN Conference 2019 in Helsinki in October. The interviews were conducted by Prof. André Martinuzzi, Coordinator of the ESDN Office and Head of the Institute for Managing Sustainability at the Vienna University of Economics and Business.

Next Interview in July with Arnau Queralt Bassa – European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils

The next ESDN Spotlight interview will be available on the ESDN website in July. This interview will feature Arnau Queralt Bassa from the European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC). Arnau's interview, *The Role of National Sustainable Development Councils in Policy Implementation*, goes into more detail on the important role that councils for sustainable development play in helping to implement sustainability policy and how they advise governments and parliaments.

Be on the lookout for Arnau's interview later this month!

European Sustainable Development Week (ESDW) 2020 has been postponed and will now take place from 20 – 26 September 2020

This year, the ESDW 2020 will take place from 20 – 26 September 2020. However, in order to allow some flexibility of event organizers in the different European countries, we will accept registrations from 18 September - 8 October 2020. Event organizers can already register events that will take place during this timeframe! We encourage everyone to spread the word about the ESDW and consider registering an event.

The focus of this year's ESDW will be on events that will take place virtually. Events that will be taking place in a physical setting and meet health and safety guidelines can still be registered. For more information on this year's ESDW and the possibility to register your activities, please visit the ESDN website at <https://esdw.eu/>.

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

Finland:

Voluntary National Review 2020

The [VNR Report](#) and its statistical annex on the global and national indicators and national indicators was published in June. The main messages of the VNR can be found [here](#).

The Voluntary National Review included a new and improved participation model for various stakeholders. Firstly, different stakeholders like cities, business sector, Sámi people and Åland-region were invited to write their own assessment and CASE-studies into the VNR. Secondly, some 50 NGOs and trade organizations took part in assessing each SDG. In the VNR report's Chapter 6, each SDG has two pages of assessment. The first one being done by the administration based on the global indicators, and the second one by a group of civil society actors and trade organizations evaluated the progress of that SDG and also gave recommendations for Finland.

In the VNR, Finland performed a simple and light peer-review with Switzerland and Mozambique. Due to Covid-19, their two day thorough review was reduced to one day online meeting on top of their written remarks on the draft version of the report. The written

comments were included in the final report and some changes were made to the report based on the peer review.

Government is planning to prepare a national roadmap of the 2030 Agenda

The national renewed implementation plan for this government cycle will be going to the parliament fall of 2020. The Government is planning to prepare a national roadmap of the 2030 Agenda that would extend over electoral periods up until 2030. This roadmap will support long-term planning and coherent policy making. At the moment, different ways of producing the roadmap are under consideration.

Three Frontrunner Cities have prepared Voluntary Local Reviews

Three forerunner cities (Helsinki, Espoo, and Turku) have prepared a Voluntary Local Review (VLR) in 2019 and 2020, and many cities are planning to give their VLR in the future. Many cities and municipalities have ambitious measures for promoting SDGs and climate targets

Åland region has integrated the SDGs into their core strategies

Åland region has integrated the SDGs into their core strategies. Most of the regional administrations in Finland have not yet recognized the added value of the SDG framework.

Germany:

Revising the German Sustainable Development Strategy

The German government is currently updating and revising the German Sustainable Development Strategy. As in the past, a broad-based dialogue process with stakeholders will accompany the drafting of the Strategy. The kick-off of the dialogue process took place by the end of October 2019 in Berlin – with a one-day conference, opened by the Head of the Federal Chancellery, Helge Braun. In November, Germany started series of regional dialogue conferences, which have been attended by Ministers of the *Länder* (German Federal States) and Ministers of the Federal Government. Together with other representatives from politics, experts from science, business and society, current challenges and possible adjustments of the Strategy have been discussed. In autumn, the broader public will have the opportunity to comment on the draft as part of an online consultation. The results of the conferences and the consultation will feed into the draft of the Strategy. It is intended to adopt the new Strategy in the beginning of 2021. Effects of Covid-19 will be reflected in the Strategy.

Hungary:

Hungarian Parliament Passes Climate Protection Law

The Hungarian Parliament passed the law about climate protection in early June 2020. The law is compliant with the EU directives about climate neutrality until 2050. This law supports the Hungarian mid- and long-term strategies related to energy and climate policies.

Hungarian National Bank Issued Green Mortgages

The Hungarian National Bank issued green mortgage in order to help and support climate protection related investments. More information can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

Slovakia:

Renaming of key 2030 Agenda coordinating ministry

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic for Investments and Informatisation, which is the key coordinator of the 2030 Agenda national implementation, will be, as of 1 July 2020, renamed to the Ministry of Investments, Regional development and Informatisation of the Slovak Republic (MIRRI SR) and will continue to coordinate the 2030 Agenda implementation on the national level.

First 2030 Agenda national monitoring report has been drafted

The first 2030 Agenda national monitoring report, *Report on progress achieved in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda national priorities*, has been drafted and will be submitted to the government by end of June 2020. After the government's approval, it is envisaged to have the document available in English.

Bratislava City Prepares Pilot of Local Voluntary Report

Bratislava City takes the initiative to prepare a pilot Local Voluntary Report (LVR).

News on the governance of sustainable development from the EU:

EUROSTAT publishes *Sustainable development in the European Union – Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGS in an EU context – 2020 edition*

Overall, based on the indicators selected to monitor the SDGs in an EU context, the EU made progress towards almost all of them over the past five years. Progress for some goals has been faster than for others. In addition, in specific areas within goals, the EU moved away from the sustainable development objectives. These trends are described in the thematic chapters on the individual SDGs in the [monitoring report](#).

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) Published *Fundamental Rights Report 2020*

The [Report](#), published in June 2020, reviews the main developments and shortfalls of human rights protection in the EU in 2019 regarding: equality and non-discrimination; racism, xenophobia and related intolerance; Roma equality and inclusion; asylum, borders and migration; information society, privacy and data protection; child rights; access to justice; and implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

ESDN Country Profile information and updates:

Please regularly check the [Country Profiles](#) on the ESDN homepage for information on National Sustainable Development Strategies, policy activities and regular updates!

Other news:

Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG)

Awareness raising video: 'We the mayors for the SDGs'

Flemish mayors explain in clear language (and in their own dialect) what the SDGs are about (Available in [English](#) and [French](#)).

Update of the publication: 'Local support for global challenges'

For each SDG, VVSG gives some examples of local actions and added good local practices (Available in English).

Publication: [The SDGs in municipal international cooperation](#)

SDG 17, with a focus on international partnerships and solidarity, is a crucial element of the Agenda 2030. This publication gives examples and ideas on how to integrate the SDGs into international cooperation between local governments (The publication is available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) and soon also in French).

German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE): 9 Publications on Different SD Topics

The German Council for Sustainable Development published a number of recommendations and articles. Please see below for the recommendations and articles on a variety of sustainable development issues. The links can be found below.

1. [***Systematically laying the foundations for a sustainable food system is essential***](#)
Recommendation of the German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) for the State Secretaries' Committee for Sustainable Development on 8 June 2020
2. [***A sustainable recovery from the coronavirus crisis***](#) (Eight recommendations by RNE)
3. [***Sustainable supply chains***](#) - Recommendation of the German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) for effectively embedding sustainability and human rights in global supply chains
4. [***Making Germany a leader in sustainable finance***](#) - Recommendation regarding the interim report of the Sustainable Finance Committee dated 05.03.2020

5. [*Making hydrogen a sustainable decarbonisation option*](#) - Recommendation of the German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) re the Federal Government's National Hydrogen Strategy
6. [*Recommendations for the German Sustainable Development Strategy*](#) (only available in German)
7. [*Presidency of the Council of the EU: half a year to make a wholehearted commitment*](#)

Germany will soon commence its presidency of the Council of the European Union. Rarely have there been so many sustainability-related topics on the agenda – plus the opportunity to put the billions of euros earmarked for the coronavirus recovery to transformative use. Here is an overview of the most important decisions to be made and those which have been postponed.

8. [*Encounters that leave a smaller footprint*](#)

In the wake of the coronavirus crisis, digitalization has been given a significant push forward – in event management as well. How strongly emissions will fall as a result is, however, difficult to quantify.

9. [*How the post-coronavirus restart can become ecological*](#)

In the EU, uniform criteria have recently been defined regarding what allows business operations to be considered sustainable. Financial experts see this taxonomy as a key tool that can be leveraged to make rebuilding in the wake of the coronavirus crisis greener than before.