

Europe's Position as Leading Change Agent against the Triple Planetary Crisis

Science is clear that we are putting extreme pressures on our planet. The Triple Planetary Crisis – Climate Change, Pollution and Biodiversity loss – refers to the three main interlinked issues that humanity currently faces. The cascading effect of this crisis is causing negative effects on individuals, communities, and economies and is putting life on the planet in danger. Although the rapid degradation of planetary resources is evident, and ecological overload is manifesting, the international community is still not doing enough to mitigate these impacts (UNFCC 2022, UNDP 2022).

The European Sustainable Development Network's (ESDN) Annual Conference 2022 was dedicated to this topic and was entitled "Europe's Position as Leading Change Agent against the Triple Planetary Crisis – Climate Change, Biodiversity Loss and Pollution". It took place in Bucharest, Romania on 4-5 October 2022 and was organised by the ESDN in cooperation with the Romanian Prime Minister's Office – Department of Sustainable Development. The conference brought together policymakers and experts from different stakeholder groups from all over Europe to learn, exchange, and share their experiences.

The Conference saw keynote presentations from the European level and national level, as well as inputs from Youth Representatives, who presented what they had previously discussed at the ESDN Youth Workshop. This policy brief contains the main messages and recommendation, which came out of the [conference work](#).

Key messages and recommendations

- 1) Put forward European knowledge and experience in managing the Triple Planetary Crisis
- 2) Make the Just Transition as fair and inclusive as possible, leaving no one behind
- 3) Keep the interlinkage of the Triple Planetary Crises high on the Agenda
- 4) Climate Change – make Fit for 55 tailored for every region
- 5) Biodiversity Loss – we need excellent implementation, good legislation, and necessary finance
- 6) Pollution – proceed with implementation of the integrated approach on air, water and soil pollution
- 7) Make Policies inclusive and participatory, also including Youth

The European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN) is a non-profit, pan-European peer-learning, networking, knowledge, and advocacy platform for sustainability professionals in the public sector working in collaboration with other organisations and institutions dealing with sustainable development issues. It is based on the transparent and trustful cooperation of these actors. It collects, compiles and shares information on sustainability policies, strategies and practises, and provides expertise to political decision-makers at European, national and sub-national levels. The ESDN also fosters sustainable development through active communication and continued cooperation with other stakeholders and civil society.

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1) Put forward European knowledge and experience in managing the Triple Planetary Crisis

The European Union has a solid potential to be a leading change agent in addressing the Triple Planetary Crises. There is a huge opportunity for European leaders to put forward European knowledge and experience in combating Climate Change, managing Biodiversity Loss and reducing Pollution on an international level. The European Union can be a change agent, which shows the way forward in each of these issues, on which the planet's future depends.

2) Make the Just Transition as fair and inclusive as possible, leaving no one behind

The Just Transition is a fundamental way forward to ensure that the transition towards a climate-neutral economy happens in a fair way, leaving no one behind. In Europe, it is crucial to provide assistance to the most affected regions, such as coal mining regions, to make sure the Green Deal gets everyone's full support and has a chance to become a reality. Example from the Romania: Green and Digital transition are supported by Romania, making sure that it will be a just transition, where the benefits of a green economy transition are shared widely. The Department of Sustainable development of Romania coordinates the implementation of SDGs through a coherent framework, setting necessary indicators and implementing action plans for progress.

3) Keep the interlinkage of the Triple Planetary Crises high on the Agenda

Acknowledging the problem of the Triple crises is crucial. Each issue has its causes and effects, and each needs to be resolved. Scientists confirm that they are interlinked and need to be addressed accordingly. There is enormous pressure on resources, the effects of Climate Change on water and soil are immense, and pollution is the leading cause of premature deaths. The measures to address the crises require synergy. We need resilient ecosystems, and by adopting timely measures, we can reduce the risks for ecosystems.

4) Climate Change – make Fit for 55 tailored for every region

Fit for 55 is one of the leading programs to address Climate change in the EU. However, to implement it, it is essential to map each region, and this mapping should be specific. To ensure the successful implementation of the Green Deal the Social Deal should be included. The slogans we have, such as „no one left behind“, should be translated into real concrete policies. The Green Deal will succeed only if all three pillars of sustainable development, i.e. social, economic and environmental, are addressed. Only this way the energy-green transition will become a just transition.

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5) Biodiversity Loss – we need excellent implementation, good legislation, and necessary finance

Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss are interlinked. On the one hand, Climate Change is one of the main drivers of Biodiversity Loss. On the other hand, the destruction of ecosystems undermines nature's ability to regulate emissions and protect against extreme weather, thus accelerating climate change and increasing vulnerability. Nature is declining, with almost 80% of habitats being in poor condition. Natura 2000 is an essential first step for species. This network supports the protection of rare and threatened species, and some rare natural habitat types, considering connectivity in these ecosystems and the species movement. For success in these, Europe needs excellent implementation, good legislation, and necessary finance. We also need to work on the social dimension because the role of people is significant in nature conservation. In addition, we need to encourage green businesses and show the opportunities and advantages of it.

6) Pollution - proceed with implementation of the integrated approach on air, water and soil pollution

The recent increase in greenhouse gas pollution is trapping excess heat and causing the climate to warm. The European approach is to integrate air, water and soil pollution. This coherent policy considers cross impacts and trade-offs, which can vary for different territories. The zero pollution vision for 2050 target is feasible with concrete KPIs,

planning, implementation and fundamental actions.

7) Make Policies inclusive and participatory

We need inclusive and participatory policy development and decision-making processes to deliver on environmental and climate commitments. For this we need: (1) embedding climate resilience in the institutional and legal framework (2) leveraging coordination mechanisms and instruments to deliver environmental and climate commitments (3) strategic planning for climate resilient development (4) climate resilient policy development.

Specifically, Youth should be involved in the decision-making process, since they will bear many of the consequences of decisions that policymakers make today. Regarding the climate crisis, Youth should be given the opportunity to participate in these decisions and voice their concerns about the impacts certain policies may have on their future quality of life regularly and at relevant political levels.

A detailed Conference report and other materials are available [here](#).

Ivanova, Svetlana; Kopp, Ursula (2022). "Europe's Position as Leading Change Agent against the Triple Planetary Crisis", ESDN Policy Brief, Dec 2022, ESDN Office, WU Vienna