

Overview on international and European transformative processes

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- 1. Understanding sustainability transitions**
- 2. International initiatives**
- 3. National examples: 6 EU countries**
- 4. Reflections**

Understanding sustainability transitions

- ‘Transition’ and ‘transformation’ are terms often used interchangeably, some understand ‘transformations’ as phases within a ‘transition’
- ‘Transitions’ are *“transformation processes in which society changes in a fundamental way over a generation or more”*
- Sustainability transitions are about **incremental but radical and fundamental transformative changes** of processes and systems
 - **Variety of levels** (multi-dimension)
 - **In different systems** (i.e. energy, mobility)
 - **To overcome lock-in situations**

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International initiatives

Analysis of 4 selected international initiatives:

- the OECD's Green Growth;
- the UNEP's Green Economy;
- the WBCSD's Vision 2050; and
- the UN Post2015 Agenda and SDGs process

Desk research based on:

- Our theoretical framework (*first chapter of the discussion paper*)
- Introductory/conclusive chapters and summaries
- Keywords search criteria (*see box 2.1 of the discussion paper*)

International initiatives

Based on our criteria, we developed 6 analytical sections:

1. Understanding of sustainability transitions
2. Motivation and drivers behind the development of the initiative
3. Involvement of public institutions and stakeholder
4. Monitoring and evaluation phases within international initiatives
5. The process of implementing the SD transition activities: actions and timeframes
6. The triad Politics-Polity-Policy within the international initiatives selected

1. Understanding of sustainability transitions

- All selected international initiatives *refer to the sustainable development discourse* and have *long-term timeframes (2050)*, apart from the UN Post2015 Agenda that refer to 2030
- The closest report to sustainability transitions seems **UNEP's Green Economy**:
 - *the only report to reference sustainability transition literature*
 - mentions the *necessity for radical changes not only from a technological point of view but also from the social point of view*

2. Motivation and drivers

- The *financial and economic crisis* triggered international efforts towards more sustainable ways
- Three of the four documents clearly address *transitions from an economic perspective* in order to move towards sustainable development.
 - For instance, the **OECD and UNEP** both emphasize the *need for a green economy*.
 - However, the **SDGs** put their motivational focus on *ending poverty*

3. Involvement of institutions and stakeholders

- In preparation of the international initiatives, *large consultations and collaborative efforts* took place with the involvement of a *variety of stakeholders*
 - But *largely unspecific* on their involvement in implementation processes
- *All selected initiatives involved national governments*
- OECD and UNEP used *internal expert teams* (i.e. Green Growth team)
- Only the OECD Green Growth initiative clearly states the *need to mainstream these strategies into national government policies*

4. Monitoring and evaluation phases

- Apart from the WBCSD's initiative, *all other documents explicitly refer to and recommend monitoring and evaluation phases*
- Through 'improved transparency and accountability', UNEP's initiative specifically suggests that *monitoring and evaluation are seen as a component of policies*

5. Implementation Process: actions and timeframes

- Apart from the post-2015 Agenda that proposes goals and targets through the SDGs process, the other *initiatives lack concrete implementation processes and references to clear guidelines*
- *All four selected initiatives suggest reforms in the economic and financial infrastructures* through i.e. fiscal interventions

6. The triad Politics-Polity-Policy

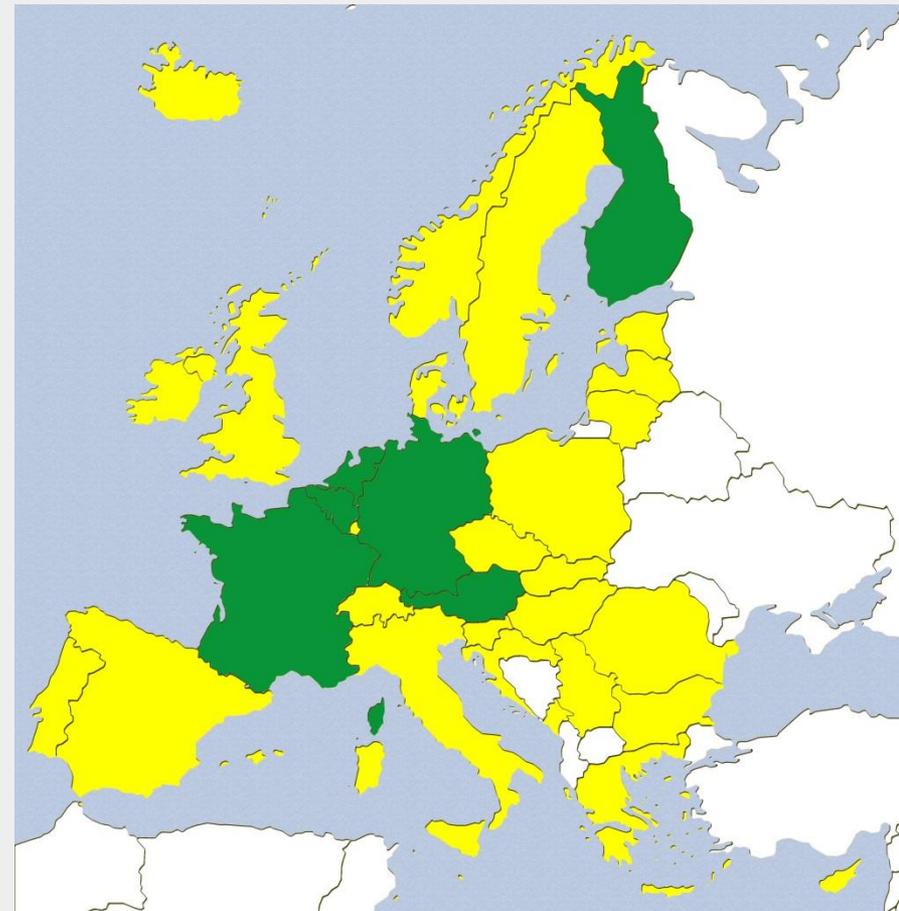
- The **Policy** (i.e. policy instruments) dimension is the **most considered**, especially with reference of market-based instruments (i.e. taxes, subsidies, etc.)
- The **Polity** (i.e. institutional set-up) dimension is considered by **UNEP and the High Level Panel** that refers extensively to Polity issues (2 transformative shifts):
 - Build peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all
 - Forge a new global partnership
- The **Politics** (i.e. actors and power) dimension is not clearly reflected

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Sustainability transitions in 6 EU Member States

- 1) **Austria:** Growth in Transition dialogue
- 2) **Belgium:** Long-term vision for SD 2050
- 3) **Finland:** Society's Commitment to SD
- 4) **France:** National strategy for an ecological transformation towards SD
- 5) **Germany:** Grand Design 2050
- 6) **Netherland:** SD Agenda & Green Deals



Method

Desk research (strategy documents, background information, websites, etc)

Personal interviews with representatives of national ministries in May-June 2014



Interviews based on questionnaire (8 questions) and were answered in telephone interviews or by email.

Sustainability transitions in 6 EU Member States

From the questionnaire we created **6 analytical topics**.

1. Main drivers for sustainability transitions
2. Inspiration for transition activities
3. Process design for sustainability transition
4. Involvement of ministries & other stakeholders
5. Concrete objectives and targets
6. Process of implementing transition activities

(1) Main drivers for sustainability transitions

- a) Assessment of NSDS strategies (DE, FI, BE)
- b) Need for long-term vision for SD (BE, FR, DE)
- c) Addressing cross-sectoral challenges
- d) Achieving effective policy strategy process (FI, NL)
- e) Response to environmental, social and economic crises
- f) Response to international SD policy agenda (e.g. EU-led policy process; UN post-2015 and SDGs)

(2) Inspiration for transition activities

- **Academic work** on transition and transformation processes (e.g. Derk Loorbach, Tim Jackson)
- **International** studies and initiatives (Stockholm Memorandum, OECD Env Outlook), and **EU policy documents** (Europe 2020)
- German Advisory Council on Global Change (**WBGU**) report 'A World in Transition'

(3) Process design for sustainability transition

- Led by national government ministries, with high degree of stakeholder involvement ('network governance' or '*cooperative steering*')
- **Research** plays a key role in framing the transition approach
- Clearer and more wide-ranging processes in activities related to ***policy strategies***

(4) Involvement of ministries & other stakeholders

- Min of Environment take the *lead, involvement* of sectoral ministries varies (from FR to DE)
- All countries involve a *broad set of stakeholders* in the transition activities, incl. national SD/environmental councils
- *Interesting exchange events and mechanisms* (e.g. FR: expert seminar, citizens via internet; FI: campaigning for commitments)

(5) Concrete objectives and targets

Two ways in which countries defined objectives & targets:

- a) Expressing an ***overall aim*** for their sustainability transition activities (e.g. FI, DE, AT)

- b) Structured their objectives by ***referring to specific themes*** (e.g. BE, FR, NE)

(6) Process of implementing transition activities

- a) Milestones documented in *progress reports*
(FR: implementation report for parliament)

- b) or by *interactive implementation processes*
(BE: multi-stakeholder processes and working groups for plans and measures; AT: large scale international conferences)

- c) No clear *implementation timeframes*
outlined (reference 1-5 yrs) → activities are ongoing; reporting and meetings yearly.

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Reflections

- **Role of academic research** is prominent in the national activities but not so much in the international initiatives
- **Triggered by different kinds of crises**
(i.e. economic, social, environmental)
- **Broad stakeholders involvement** is crucial
- **Key role of national governments** (steering , implementation)
- **Need for monitoring** is acknowledge (i.e. milestones, mid-term)