

June 2015

12th ESDN Workshop

“Monitoring and reviewing sustainable development goals (SDGs) in Europe: current debates in EU Member States and on the European level”

16 June 2015, Brussels, Belgium

Workshop Report



ESDN

European Sustainable Development Network

Author:

Lisa Lange

Contact:

*ESDN Office at the
Institute for Managing Sustainability
Vienna University of Economics and Business
Welthandelsplatz 1, A-1020 Vienna, Austria
E: esdn-office@sd-network.eu
T: +43-1-31336-4807*

© 2015 European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN)

Visit www.sd-network.eu for

- Basic information on SD
- Country profiles
- Quarterly reports
- Policy briefs
- Case studies
- Conference papers
- Workshop papers
- Getting in touch with us

The **European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN)** is an informal network of public administrators and other experts who deal with sustainable development strategies and policies. The network covers all 28 EU Member States, plus other European countries. The ESDN is active in promoting sustainable development and facilitating the exchange of good practices in Europe and gives advice to policy-makers at the European and national level.

Table of contents

Introduction	4
Opening and orientation	6
Session 1: Monitoring and review processes for SDGs	10
Session 2: National experiences with SD monitoring and review: links to SDGs implementation	14
Session 3: Linking SDGs monitoring and reviewing to European and National SD policy strategies.....	19
Session 4: The role of policy actor networks for SDGs monitoring and reviewing	23
Conclusions and next steps	28

Introduction

The 12th ESDN Workshop entitled “**Monitoring and reviewing sustainable development goals (SDGs) in Europe: current debates in EU Member States and on the European level**”, took place in Brussels on the 16 June 2015. The workshop was organized by the ESDN in cooperation with the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. The objectives of the workshop were as follows:

- a) **Explore the following pressing questions for European countries:**
 - Which national challenges have already been identified, tackled, and solved? Which mechanisms have already been realized, foreseen, or debated?
 - Which risks, opportunities and barriers have been acknowledged?
 - Which fields for bilateral or European cooperation on these topics are of interest?
- b) **Provide recommendations for national and EU policy-makers** on issues related to SDGs monitoring and review processes particularly relevant in terms of governance for SD, such as the interaction and coherence between the various levels or the SDGs translation from the global level to the regional (EU), national and subnational level;
- c) **Explore concepts and ways for practical implementation of SDGs monitoring and review processes** at European and national levels; and
- d) **Reflect on ideas and practical experiences** among European countries.

In total, there were 75 participants from 18 countries at the workshop. The aim of the workshop was to bring together policy-makers from different countries and various stakeholders to provide an impetus for the discussion concerning the monitoring and reviewing process of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will be launched by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015. Moreover, it was the aim of the workshop to share different national experiences with integrating the SDGs into existing National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS). Furthermore, the workshop aimed to discuss the role of the European Union (EU) in a possible regional monitoring and reviewing process, as well as the role of the European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN) in facilitating this.

The objectives of the workshop were addressed in the following 4 sessions:

- Session 1: Monitoring and review processes for SDGs**
- Session 2: National experiences with SD monitoring and review: links to SDGs implementation**
- Session 3: Linking SDGs monitoring and reviewing to European and National SD policy strategies**
- Session 4: The role of policy actor networks for SDGs monitoring and reviewing**

Similar to previous ESDN workshops, this event addressed these themes in different formats: keynote presentations highlighted general issues and key aspects of the workshop theme; interactive group work specified aspects of the workshop theme more in-depth; summaries of the results of the group work were used for immediate reactions and further discussions during the workshop; and, interactive discussion formats throughout the workshop allowed participants to reflect upon issues raised and to develop recommendations.

To access the full documentation of the 12th ESDN Workshop, please go to the [ESDN website](#) on which following documents are available for download: (i) Workshop Agenda; (ii) Workshop Discussion Paper; (iii) ESDN Case Studies no. 20 and 21; (iv) the PowerPoint slides of all keynote and other presentations; (v) Workshop Report; and (vi) Participant list.



Figure 1

Participants at the 12th ESDN Workshop

Opening and orientation

The **opening and orientation** session of the workshop included several welcome addresses and provided an overview of the workshop objectives.

The workshop was then officially opened by a welcome address of the ESDN co-chairs **Elisabeth Freytag-Rigler** and **Wolfram Tertschnig** (*both from the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, Austria*).

ELISABETH FREYTAG-RIGLER welcomed the participants on behalf of the ESDN Steering Group. She reflected on the current status of the SDGs and highlighted that their political momentum has the potential to change the world we inhabit. Furthermore, Ms Freytag-Rigler called on the participants of the workshop to participate actively as they have the possibility to contribute to the transformative potential of the SDGs with their knowledge and experiences. She stressed that it is important to discuss what can be done in terms of SDG implementation at the European level and highlighted different channels through which this could be addressed. Firstly, she mentioned that the Europe 2020 Strategy, which is primarily focussed on economic growth, seems inadequate to respond to the SDG challenge. Furthermore, she suggested that the European Semester could be a tool for implementation and regretted that environmental issues have yet to be included in the Semester process. Ms Freytag-Rigler further mentioned the European Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS) as a possible frame for that could be revitalized. The potential role of the ESDN as an informal network of policy-makers and sustainable development (SD) experts should also be further considered in the light of this new challenge. She continued that at the European level, Eurostat will, of course, play a central role in monitoring and reporting the SDGs, since this institution has vast experience in monitoring Sd. She concluded that the aim of this workshop is to contribute to addressing the challenge of how to monitor and review SDGs in Europe by bringing together experts to share their expertise and exchange best practices.

WOLFRAM TERTSCHNIG reflected on his experiences as a national SD coordinator and the ESDN as a tool for vertical integration between the national and European level. He stressed that the SDGs constitute a comprehensive list of goals that cover the entire spectrum of SD in developed and developing countries alike. However, he also made the point that the SDGs constitute the aims of a strategy, but not a specific plan for implementation. When delivering specific plans for implementation, sharing of experiences at the national level will be central to success. Mr Tertschnig suggested that the ESDN could act as a clearing house for good governance for SD. Furthermore, he said that the national-European interface will be of great importance. He raised the question whether the EU will address the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs by reusing the existing institutional make-up and policy machinery, or if there is a need to redesign the architecture of SD governance at the European and Member States level. This question has, ultimately, implications for the role of Member States and the possibility of the ESDN to make a valuable contribution to support a joint societal approach that also involves academia, civil society, and the private sector. Mr Tertschnig concluded his welcome address by reminding the participants on the opportunity that

the SDGs provide for SD in general, and governance for SD in particular. Finally, he pointed to the success of the European Sustainable Development Week (ESDW) in engaging stakeholders in different countries and fostering practical learning. Such a supportive framework that enables all stakeholders to actively engage in SD has to be part of good governance for SD.

JÖRG MAYER-RIES (*Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety, Germany*) welcomed the participants on behalf of the German Government and its representation in Brussels. Mr Mayer-Ries then proceeded to give the participants an overview of the workshop objectives. This ESDN workshop has attracted the highest number of participants to date of ESDN workshops and, thus, shows the immense potential for an active exchange between Member States and other stakeholders on the SDGs. He informed the participants that the workshop addresses the important topic of the strategic role of monitoring and reviewing of strategy towards the fulfilment of the proposed SDGs. The SDGs constitute a universal agenda that encompasses all countries, all policies, and all levels. Therefore, he stressed, the SDGs are a 'charter for the future'. Rather than solely a developmental agenda, they form an agenda for societal change. In this sense, they are not only an addition to the MDGs, but an impetus for fundamental change to society's relationship with the environment as well as cultural and democratic processes. Mr Mayer-Ries highlighted that a monitoring and reviewing mechanisms will be central to the successful implementation of SDGs, and that how this will be realized warrants further investigation. He continued by making the point that it will be of great importance to explore how NSDSs can relate to the global SDG vision and how an accompanying monitoring strategy for the SDG targets can be lined to NSDSs. Mr Mayer-Ries raised the concern that planetary boundaries are omitted as framing conditions for SDGs and that this calls for further discussion. Furthermore, inter-linkages between goals need to be further investigated as this poses a challenge for monitoring. He made the strong argument that reporting requirements could be a tool to promote effective implementation of the SDGs. Mr Mayer-Ries closed his statement by asking the participants to think about the role of the ESDN in terms of fostering the exchange of experiences between Member States and exploring ideas concerning monitoring at the regional levels, as well as involving other stakeholders.

SARAH NELEN (*Member of the Cabinet of First Vice-President Frans Timmermans, Sustainable Development Policy*) started her presentation by welcoming the success of the European Sustainable Development Week (ESDW) that was endorsed by Mr Timmermans in a press release. She pointed out that this, as well as Mr Timmermans participation in the Green Week, shows his continued engagement with SD. Ms Nelen stated that the SDGs constitute an opportunity to rethink the European approach to SD and what this would mean in policy terms for the Commission. She reported that Vice-president Timmermans has recently written to his colleagues inviting them to reflect on SD in their respective policy fields, referring back to the three dimensions of economic, social and environmental SD outlined in the Brundtland Report and the EU Treaty obligations towards achieving SD in Europe. She argued that this highlights that the Vice-president regards SD as a broad concept, a vision that is larger than the Europe 2020 Strategy and that must be mainstreamed in all work areas of the Commission. Ms Nelen made the point that sustainability aspects need to be integrated into other policies, such as, e.g. the energy union and the digital agenda. Ms Nelen

reported that Vice-president Timmermans is very focussed on presenting a new Circular Economy package that will go beyond the focus on waste legislation and recycling targets of the previous package. The governance approach taken in the formulation of the new Circular Economy package, where work is divided between DG Growth, DG Environment and other Directorate Generals, also shows a higher level of integration that is needed within the working of the Commission to bring the different angles and dimensions of sustainability together. As such, there will be a much greater focus on the social dimension, such as the job creation potential of green growth. Ms Nelen made the point that although there will be trade-offs between different SD dimensions, there are also a lot of positive synergies that will be exploited.

Ms Nelen stated that it is their central aim to link SD thinking to the framework that is offered at the global level through the formation of SDGs and that this will be taken forward in the September work programme of the Commission. Ms Nelen then reported that the Commission is currently in the process of mapping the SDGs in relation to current EU policies and initiatives to encourage policy-makers to familiarize themselves with the SDGs that are relevant in their specific policy areas and to identify gaps. She highlighted that the integration of the SDGs into different strategies is an on-going process and that this mapping exercise is of utmost importance as a preparation exercise that will enable the Commission to define the next steps to be taken in the political decision making process. Ms Nelen recounted that Vice-President Timmermans' approach is result-orientated rather than proclaiming grand strategies and that this warrants a more lean and active communication and cooperation structure in the Commission. Furthermore, Ms Nelen stated that Eurostat will play a central role in monitoring the progress of implementation of SDGs in Europe. Eurostat are currently working on the last monitoring report of the EU SDS and will, subsequently, adopt a new reporting structure that will focus on the SDGs. In closing her keynote, Ms Nelen highlighted that the experiences of Member States are of highest importance and that there is need to investigate how to best relate these to the European level. She suggested that the ESDN has proven itself as a helpful actor in this respect. In particular, the proposals for peer review processes that are currently discussed in New York need to be considered at the European level.

The keynote of Ms Nelen was followed by a **Q&A session**:

Derek Osborn, the President of the Stakeholder Forum, asked whether the Commission is planning to bring stakeholders into the process at an early stage, suggesting that a co-creation or co-production of a coherent implementation and monitoring strategy would be beneficial. Ms Nelen responded by stressing that this Commission is making transparency and the involvement of stakeholders a priority and that this is specifically part of Vice-president Timmermans' remit. There will be for instance, a 12 week long consultation period for policy proposals.

Claudia Kabel, from the German Federal Environmental Agency, asked about the time frame of the SDGs mapping exercise in the Commission. Ms Nelen reported that the deadline for the mapping exercise has been surpassed, but that the Commission is flexible to ensure a high quality outcome. Therefore, the mapping exercise will be finalized by the end of the summer 2015.

Pia Paola Huber, from the Federal Chancellery of Austria, asked Ms Nelen to further elaborate on the plans for a monitoring mechanism at the EU level. Ms Nelen stated that Eurostat will be the institution that will be charged with monitoring the SDGs at the EU level and that the details of such a reporting and monitoring mechanism are currently being explored.

Paul Lucas, from the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency, posed a question concerning the challenges of a mapping exercise in terms of coherence with national targets with the SDGs. Ms Nelen welcomed the convergence in approaches between national and EU level in mapping which SDGs are already covered by current policies and where gaps exist that need to be addressed.

Finally, Joachim Spangenberg, from the Sustainable Europe Research Institute (SERI), asked Ms Nelen to clarify how an increase in internal discussion and a decrease of the number of official communications will work in terms of transparency. Ms Nelen responded that using less paper is not a contradiction because official Communications are not a decisive policy instrument and there are more efficient ways to communicate this to the public.



Figure 2

Sarah Nelen answering questions posed by the workshop participants

Session 1: Monitoring and review processes for SDGs

Following the opening and orientation, **Session 1** focused on the current discussion of developing an effective monitoring and review process for the SDGs. This session comprised two keynote presentations and two 'flash inputs'. For more detailed information on individual keynotes, please consult to PowerPoint Slides of the keynote presentations that are available in the workshop section on the ESDN website.

MATTHIAS REISTER (*UN Statistics Division (UNSD)*), in a video message, provided the participants of the workshop with an overview of the current work on indicator development in respect to the SDGs of the UN Statistical Division. Mr Reister first informed the participants about the most recent developments on the policy level. The [Zero Draft document on the Post-2015 agenda](#) was released on 2 June 2015. Mr Reister presented what he considered to be the three main points this document: (i) it contains the full list of 17 goals and 169 targets, (ii) poverty eradication and leaving nobody behind are themes that are highlighted throughout the document, and (iii) that it proposes an annual SDG Progress Report that would be prepared by the Inter Agency Expert Group on SDG indicators (IAEG-SDGs), based on data from national statistical offices. He pointed out that the adoption of this document would give the global statistical community the important mandate to compile the data on global indicators and to report on the progress goal by goal. Mr Reister also presented the most important milestones in the development of the indicator framework. This included the endorsement of the roadmap for the development and implementation of a global indicator framework of the UN Statistical Commission and, in particular, the formation for the IAEG-SDGs to be tasked with developing a proposal for the indicator framework to monitor the goals and targets of the Post-2015 Agenda at the global level. This will take place under the leadership of national statistical offices and in an open and transparent manner. After an inter-governmental review of the initially proposed indicators, Member States expressed their support for the formation of the IAEG-SDGs. The first meeting of the IAEG-SDGs took place on 1-2 June 2015, and there will be a second meeting in October 2015. A proposal, developed by this expert group, will then be presented to the UN Statistical Commission in March 2016. Finally, Mr Reister focused on substantive issues regarding the indicator framework and the selection of indicators. He highlighted the UN Member States' requirements for the indicator framework: (i) indicators need to respond to all targets; (ii) there needs to be a limited set of global indicators; and (iii) the global indicators should be an integral part of regional, national and sub-national and thematic indicator frameworks. Mr Reister concluded his presentation by highlighting the importance of a global indicator framework because it informs the global political discussion, provides a structure for the development agenda, and provides information for the communication and advocacy campaigns.

Subsequently, two 'flash inputs' explored the possibilities for a monitoring and reviewing framework at different levels:

MARIA CORTÉS PUCH (*Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)*) presented insights from the report [‘Indicators and Monitoring Framework for the Sustainable Development Goals: Launching a Data Revolution’](#) of the SDSN. Ms Cortes Puch reported that the process of SDG formulation that started in 2012 is extremely complex and stressed that we should recognize that we have come very far. She made the point that it is a great challenge to create an agenda that is inspirational, and is operational at the same time. The SDSN was launched by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in August 2012 with the aim to mobilize scientific and technical expertise of different stakeholders from academia, civil society and the private sector. It is chaired by Professor Jeffrey Sachs and structured in 12 thematic groups, involving experts from different countries that provide inputs for the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) and the Open Working Group (OWG) on SDGs. Ms Cortes Puch stated that there have been significant efforts to harness the monitoring and reviewing expertise in the leadership as well as the thematic groups. The outcome of these efforts was the above mentioned report that detailed an approach for a monitoring and reviewing framework for SDGs at the national, global, regional and thematic levels, which is now being taken up by the UN. Ms Cortes Puch shared the interesting two month long process of defining a list of indicators in open consultations with expert communities and UN agencies: She recalled that before the SDSN process, there were very concrete comments on specific indicators, but the characteristics of the overall frameworks still needed to be addressed. Ms Cortes Puch stressed that all levels of monitoring, (national, global, regional and thematic) are essential for the effective implementation of SDGs. She made the point that national indicators will be the most important, since countries will have to decide which areas they prioritize. However, she also argued that a global monitoring framework is clearly needed for this global agenda and, therefore, universal indicators that are collected nationally and then synchronized by experts are needed. She reported that statisticians recommended an upper limit of 100 indicators for monitoring at the global level. Furthermore, Ms Cortes Puch made the point that regional data will help to address regional conflicts and is important as well. Finally, she mentioned that the thematic level enables epistemic communities to look into the issues in a more detailed and knowledgeable way. Overall, the monitoring framework needs to be flexible and evolve with time. Ms Cortes Puch concluded her presentation by sharing the principles for robust indicators set out in the report with the participants.

FRITZ GEBHARD (*Eurostat*) gave a short presentation of the contribution of Eurostat to the development of SDGs and the current and future work of Eurostat in monitoring SD in Europe. Mr Gebhard stressed the important of independent and transparent monitoring for effective implementation. He reported that Eurostat is currently working on the last monitoring report on the European Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS). The preparations to switch to a structure focused on the monitoring of SDGs for a new report that details the status of SDGs in Europe in 2016 are currently being made. Mr Gebhard explained to the participants that Eurostat does not expect a specific list of indicators to be endorsed and taken up, but rather the adoption of a prototype that will evolve over time as progress in data collection and processing are being made. He also addressed the trade-offs between the complexity and range of indicators to effectively monitor progress, on the one hand, and the simplicity and limited number needed to effectively communicate them to policy-makers and the public, on the other. He, therefore, suggested that

while fulfilling the requirement of leaving no target behind, there also needs to be an overall indicator or a small set of politically highly relevant indicators that can be easily communicated to different audiences. Mr Gebhard concluded by welcoming the work done by the IAEG-SDGs in the two discussion streams on conceptual framework and inter-linkages between the different goals and targets headed by Ms Lisa Grace S. Bersales and Ms Fabiola Riccardini, respectively.

DEREK OSBORN (*President of the Stakeholder Forum*) gave a keynotes presentation focusing on the question 'What is needed to set up an effective monitoring and reviewing system for SDGs?'. Mr Osborn began his presentation by pointing out the importance of effectively monitoring and reviewing the goals and targets if the SDGs are to become a real inspiration and dynamic for change towards sustainability at all levels. He referred to the Zero Draft of the HLPF and highlighted specifically key elements from the text referring to the need for national and European SD strategies to elaborate on how the global goals and targets will be implemented in the national context, as well as the need for a review process to be regular, multi-level and involving relevant actors and stakeholders. He also mentioned the potential role of institutional arrangements such as national SD Councils, ombudsmen and increased parliamentary oversight.

Mr Osborn highlighted that the scope of SDGs does not only cover renewed efforts for poverty eradication in the developing world, but the goals universally apply to all UN Member States and, thus, also the domestic agenda of developed countries. He invited the participants of the workshop to consult a recent report on the implications of the universal SDGs for developed countries that is available on the Website of the [Stakeholder Forum](#). The report assessed the goals and targets from the developed country perspective against three criteria: applicability, implementability and transformationality. Mr Osborn underlined that the goals and targets that are categorized as transformational are particularly significant for developed countries, because they will require the biggest shifts in current policies, practice and behaviours, both within government and amongst other actors in society, as well as having substantial spill over effects for the rest of the world. The Stakeholder Forum has identified the goals of sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12), sustainable energy (SDG 7) and combating climate change (SDG 13) as the three most transformational challenges facing developed countries.

Having highlighted the relevance of SDGs for Europe, Mr Osborn talked about the practical issues of effective implementation. He stressed that coordination within different governmental departments and ministries, and within the EU, will be central when addressing these cross-cutting issues. Furthermore, he argued that the consultations with the relevant stakeholder communities will be central in the translation of universal goals into the national context. The inputs from these consultations should then be drawn together in an over-arching national strategy for SD, endorsed by government, parliament and representatives all main sectors of society. Mr Osborn also sees the design of a monitoring and indicators set as a central part of an early consultation process to make this system relevant for the needs of different stakeholders. Moreover, there needs to be a clear allocation of responsibility for delivering targets and making process against indicators. Mr Osborn stressed that such actions at the national level should be complemented by a parallel action at the

EU level and suggested to consider the possibility of creating a new European Sustainable Development Strategy with a high level of involvement of different stakeholders.

Mr Osborn also considered the challenges and pitfalls that have to be overcome. He warned that excessive ambition, too many goals and targets at too many levels, and the involvement of too many stakeholders could result in a generation of paper rather than the urgently needed action. Half-hearted political and public commitment that does not recognise the urgency for change and the lack of capacity or willingness of stakeholders to make meaningful contributions are challenges that need to be addressed. Mr Osborn, therefore, recommended prioritizing goals with transformational potential, paying particular attention to long-term and systemic approaches, institutionalising arrangements for implementation and monitoring, and focussing on capacity building of different stakeholders.



Figure 3

Participants discussing during Session 1

Session 2: National experiences with SD monitoring and review: links to SDGs implementation

Session 2 focussed on national experiences with SD monitoring and review and the implications this has for the implementation of SDGs. The session first explored national experiences in Germany and France, as well as opportunities and challenges for non-European countries. In addition, the participants worked in interactive groups to further develop the ideas put forward in the presentations.

STEFAN BAUERNFEIND (*Federal Chancellery, Germany*) shared the experience of the German National Sustainable Development Strategy with the participants of the workshop. In Germany, SD is within the remit of the Federal Chancellery. This highlights the importance and cross-cutting nature of the task of implementing SD measures. Mr Bauernfeind reported that, since the first SD strategy in 2002, there has been a continuity of progress reports (every 4 years) and indicator reports (every 2 years), although there have been three major changes of government. The German Government follows a broad concept of SD that includes the goals of economic performance, the protection of natural resources, and social responsibility. This broad concept of SD calls for a strong cooperation between the whole machinery of the government, civil society and other institutions. Mr Bauernfeind then explained key aspects of the system of sustainability management in Germany. Firstly, he introduced the State Secretaries' Committee for SD, which involves representatives from all other ministries and is chaired by the head of the Chancellery and thus also demonstrates high level political commitment and encourages inter-ministerial cooperation. Secondly, Mr Bauernfeind explained that the German Council for SD is a body with 15 members that are appointed by the Chancellor for 3 years and that advises the Federal Government on matters relating to SD. A third important element of the German SD governance system is extensive peer reviews with experts from different countries that have been undertaken so far in 2009 and 2013. Finally, Mr Bauernfeind also explained to the participants that the Parliamentary Advisory Committee on SD, counting 17 members, also plays an important role in developing goals, measures and instruments, entering into dialogue with other parliaments and the EU and also evaluates the sustainability impact assessment of the Federal Government. Mr Bauernfeind also described the monitoring of the NSDS to the participants of the workshop. This includes 10 management rules, 38 indicators/targets in 21 different sections that are independently analysed by the Federal Statistical Office. These are then synthesised into weather symbols to show the level of progress for different goals in the indicator report. Mr Bauernfeind informed the participants about the sustainability impact assessment that is mandatory for all laws and regulations before they are passed in the Bundestag. In addition, Mr Bauernfeind focused his presentation on the future outlook of the Post-2015 Agenda. At the moment, there is a strong political momentum to make 2015 a pivotal year for SD trajectories, as can be seen by the Leaders' Declaration of the G7 Summit, decisions by the German Government, and the State Secretaries Committee recommendations for SD indicators. Mr Bauernfeind informed the participants that new indicators and new goals and targets, as well as a new structure for the

progress report of the NSDS, along the lines of the 17 SDGs, are being prepared through a series of consultations, with the final decision due to be taken in autumn 2015. Mr Bauernfeind concluded by quoting a speech by Chancellor Merkel on 3 June 2015 in which she strongly supports a renewed EU SDS.

STÉPHANE BERNAUDON (*Ministry for Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy, France*) presented the French experience with their NSDS and efforts to incorporate the upcoming SDGs into this strategy. Recently, France adopted its new NSDS, the “National Strategy Of Ecological Transition Towards Sustainable Development 2015 - 2050”. Mr Bernaudon explained that in France the governance mechanism for SD negotiations is divided between the Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development and inter-ministerial coordination, as well as a consultation process with civil society. At the national level, the Interministerial Delegate for SD has a central role in coordinating action. Furthermore, there is a high level of involvement of different stakeholders, for instance, through the National Council of Ecological Transition (Conseil national de la transition écologique) that is constituted by 8 chairs, each from environmental NGOs, social NGOs, unions, businesses, local authorities and members of parliament. Moreover, there is an annual stakeholder consultation to develop the ecological transition roadmap, the Conférence Environnementale. Mr Bernaudon then proceeded to focus more specifically on the new NSDS which is the third one since 2003. These strategies began with a focus on inter-ministerial coordination, then focussed on the design of a green and fair economy and, finally, the third strategy was the first attempt to integrate the 7 EU SDS key challenges and the additional challenges of governance for SD and fostering a knowledge society. The current strategy for 2015-2020 focuses on ecological transition. Mr Bernaudon explained that this vision towards 2020 took a three-fold cross-cutting approach of developing sustainable and resilient territories, engaging in a circular and low-carbon economy, and preventing and reducing environmental, social and territorial inequalities. Moreover, he introduced possible approaches to achieve this vision including: (i) inventing new economic and financial models; (ii) accompanying the ecological transformation of economic activities; (iii) guiding knowledge production, research and innovation; (iv) educating, training and raising awareness; (v) mobilizing stakeholders at all levels; and (vi) promoting SD at European and international levels. He described that the strategy is monitored by a total set of 72 indicators (comprised of 22 indicators for environmental challenges, 17 top level indicators for strategic objectives and 33 complementary indicators). A central component of this implementation effort are voluntary commitments beyond the legal requirements that private or public entities can enter into. Finally, Mr Bernaudon discussed possible leads on the national implementation of SDGs. He considered the possibility of utilizing the existing SD governance mechanism including the Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development that have worked together during the negotiations of the goals.

INGOLF DIETRICH (*Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany*) focused on global reporting and, in particular, the challenges of developing countries and opportunities for cooperation and support. He made the point that a comprehensive framework to ensure life for

future generations is a common task for the world. Furthermore, Mr Dietrich stated that to unlock the transformative potential of the Post-2015 Agenda, we need a new global partnership with the following principles: (i) universality; (ii) shared responsibility; (iii) a multi-stakeholder approach; and (vi) robust review and monitoring mechanism. He reported that the German Government stressed the importance of monitoring and review – and that this review must go beyond purely descriptive monitoring. He argued that there must be an analytical element to identify success and failure, and to facilitate the sharing of experiences and best practices at all levels. Only this will allow states to improve the quality of implementation. Mr Dietrich made the strong argument that developing countries, in particular, will derive huge benefits from improved data and statistics, since the provision of data in different areas will help states to better design and target their policies. Furthermore, he suggested that an effective system of monitoring and review would also increase ownership of the agenda by letting governments present and communicate their commitments in a meaningful way. Mr Dietrich then highlighted which characteristics will be important for such an effective monitoring and review framework; that it should be analytical, transparent, inclusive, independent, marked by regularity, multi-stakeholder in character and efficient in that it builds on and incorporates existing structures and institutions. Mr Dietrich then reviewed the content of the Post-2015 Agenda Zero Draft document and concluded that, from a European perspective on the negotiations, this document constitutes a good base, but he would like to see a higher level of ambitions and the inclusion of a review mechanism that is robust, regular, transparent, and evidence based. He called on Member States to actively engage, on a voluntary basis, and use national strategies and politics in place to their full potential. He further stressed that a strong participation of civil society will be key to the success of the monitoring framework as inputs concerning needs of the private and public sector are needed. Although the structure and harmonization guidelines presented by the Secretary General are promising, he suggested that we are still missing an element of learning from each other and that the cooperation and interrelation between global and national reporting systems is not very clear. Mr Dietrich concluded his presentation by reminding the participants about challenges that need to be addressed in the future. He made the point that states remain distrustful of a global monitoring and reporting system and that we need to address their concerns and show them the positive benefits of review for countries in order to foster ambitious voluntary commitments.

FRANÇOIS FORTIER (*Interregional Adviser on Sustainable Development Policy and Planning, Division for Sustainable Development, UN-DESA*) provided the participants with an overview of the experiences with monitoring and review in non-European countries. Here, he argued, the experience with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is of great importance as this provided the basis for the capacity to focus on international goals through national and international indicators and has greatly improved statistical capacities. He also explained that the MDG experience highlighted that top-down goals and targets have pitfalls in terms of transparency and participation, too much focus on development rather than sustainability, and lack of universality of goals and targets. Part of the MSG experience were National Voluntary Presentations, published on the [Development Strategies that Work](#) website, as well as national dialogues and peer reviews. Although this facilitated better coordination between government authorities and created

opportunities for dialogue, Mr Frontier explained that this also highlighted the need for clear process guidelines, multi-layered reporting, and matching regional and sub-regional capacities. Mr Frontier then stressed the importance of monitoring and reviewing for the implementation of goals (i) as a political tool, to enhance transparency and accountability, and create opportunities for stakeholder engagement; (ii) as a management tool, to adapt goals to the national context and improve mutual learning and feedback; and (iii) as a platform to share governance experiences of substantive changes. Mr Frontier then focused on the challenges and needs for SDG monitoring in non-European countries. Key challenges will be capacity in terms of skills, finance and cooperation, and the availability of relevant data and effective indicators. Furthermore, Mr Frontier stressed that integrating the complexity of SD into policy and sustaining the political will to act will be substantive challenges. Therefore, there is a need for a process that is flexible enough to adapt to national context, but universal enough to enable mutual learning, as well as being transparent and inclusive. Mr Frontier then highlighted the opportunities for effective monitoring and review. Here he stressed the 10 monitoring and review principles put forward by the UN (please see PowerPoint slides on the ESDN website for further details). Furthermore, Mr Frontier stressed that European engagement represents a great opportunity to share experiences, build capacity collaboratively, show innovation and leadership, and support developing countries technically and financially. UN-DESA is supporting inter-governmental UN discussions and national implementation, as well as pilot projects that can be scaled up to facilitate monitoring and reviewing in non-European and European countries alike. Mr Frontier concluded his presentation by highlighting that the role of Europe and the opportunity to cooperate with non-European countries in terms of monitoring and reporting is an important issue that warrants further discussion.



Figure 4

Interactive Group Work Session

Session 2 proceeded with an **INTERACTIVE GROUP WORK** to give participants the opportunity to work through and discuss key issues presented during the first part of the workshop. The participants were asked to discuss, in table groups, the key question “**How to design an active and effective link between SDGs/SD objectives and monitoring/review work?**” Each table group was asked to come up with one recommendation. See below a list of **recommendations** that was collected, clustered and discussed in the workshop:

Clear targets adapted to respective political level and context

- ❖ Monitoring should drive agenda-setting at different levels (e.g. EU, national) and for different stakeholders;
- ❖ Monitor all targets and translate them to the national context for a political follow-up;
- ❖ Use SDGs as structure for national sustainable development strategies;
- ❖ SDG strategy based on all 17 goals, broken down to EU level, with targets measurable and indicators that measure the distance to targets;
- ❖ Avoid cherry-picking: systematic and comprehensive analysis of all SDGs in all countries, also looking at “difficult” systemic issues;
- ❖ Maintain an outwards focus to supporting partner countries, while at the same time deliver a targeted and integrated/balanced approach to goal and target implementation that reflects the national context.

Accountability, ownership and communication

- ❖ Involve stakeholders, communicate comparable indicators and make them fun! (e.g. have school children work with these goals):
- ❖ Design an evolving framework as regards institutions, data sources, etc., in order to allow for accountability towards the public;
- ❖ Defining/identifying differentiated ownership for different SDGs (ministries, societal actors);
- ❖ There will not be an active and effective link without effectively tackling individual and collective cynicism within political systems and addressing this through political and public thinking ;
- ❖ Monitoring data and qualitative interpretation with stakeholders to explore impact of goals;
- ❖ Institutional arrangement and accountability systems (e.g. link between initiatives and impacts).

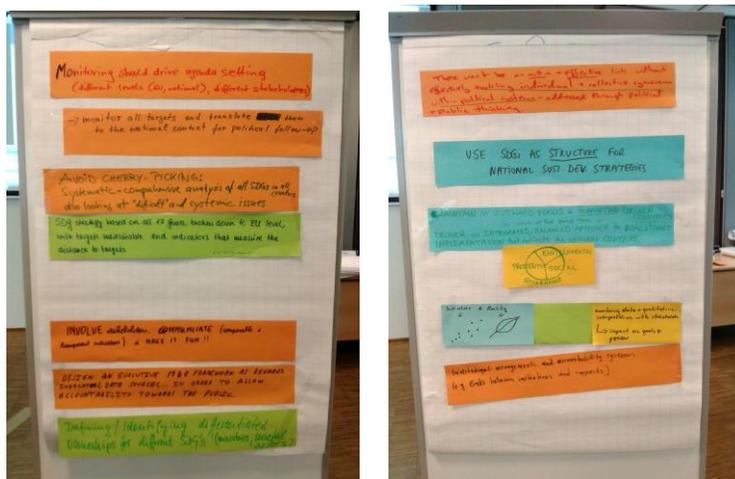


Figure 5
Flipcharts with results from
first Interactive Group Work
Session

Session 3: Linking SDGs monitoring and reviewing to European and National SD policy strategies

Following the interactive group work, **Session 3** focused more specifically on how the monitoring and review mechanisms of SDGs can be linked to European and national SD strategies. The session began with a focus on the perspective of the European Union and then further explored three national perspectives from Switzerland, Belgium and Estonia. Session 3 of the workshop was concluded by a second interactive group work session.

KATJA WEIGELT (*Policy Officer Post-2015 Team, Dir. A Policy and Coherence DG DEVCO, European Commission*) presented the European Union's perspective on monitoring, accountability and review for the Post-2015 agenda. Ms Weigelt first gave the participants an overview of the wider inter-governmental process of SDG development, in particular, how the Third Financing for Development Conference in Addis Ababa in July 2015 and the UN Summit in New York in September 2015 will contribute to COP21 in Paris in December 2015, as well as the Post-2015 Agenda as a whole, and the monitoring and reviewing framework, in particular. She stressed that it is of great importance to avoid parallel and duplicated processes in terms of monitoring and reviewing, and design a streamlined approach. Then, Ms Weigelt focused on the main objectives and function of an overarching Monitoring, Accountability and Review Framework (MAR) for the whole Post-2015 Agenda. These objectives included: (i) monitoring progress towards the implementation of SDGs and other relevant commitments; (ii) fostering the exchange of best practices; (iii) providing the focus to motivate and incentivise further action and adoption of policies; (iv) engaging all stakeholders in the process to reinforce ownership and accountability; and (v) reinforcing the universal character of the Post-2015 Agenda. Ms Weigelt made the point that a strong MAR framework will contribute to the mutual accountability needed for a global partnership; making accountability a key component of SDG monitoring is, therefore, of great importance. Ms Weigelt then elaborated on the characteristics that are essential for the effectiveness of the MAR framework: Firstly, the framework should be underpinned by transparency, inclusiveness, responsiveness, efficiency and effectiveness. Secondly, it should be operating at local, regional and international level and should involve all stakeholders, including civil society, academia, the private sector, and governments. She explained that, while reporting on national implementation would be carried out at the national level, peer review and a review of shared targets would take place at the regional level. At the global level, progress could be assessed according to a core set of harmonised global SDG indicators, covering the whole agenda, complemented by thematic reports, information from regional reviews and national reports, and augmented by reports from UN agencies and civil society. She further suggested that the HLPF will be the primary forum on the global level and will have a key oversight role. Ms Weigelt also stressed that the development of a core set of results-oriented global indicators should underpin future measurement and that data collection should make use of the possibilities offered by digital and geospatial data, technologies and in situ monitoring. Ms Weigelt ended her presentation by highlighting that creating such a MAR framework will require follow-up

within the EU in terms of mapping existing relevant actions and commitments, investigating what gaps exist in the present framework and policies and thus identifying what actions are needed at different levels.

Session 3 then explored three national perspectives on how SDGs monitoring and reviewing could influence National SD Strategies from Switzerland, Belgium and Estonia:

DANIEL DUBAS (*Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE), Switzerland*) gave a presentation on the influence of SDGs monitoring and reviewing in the Swiss Federal SD Strategy (NSDS). Mr Dubas stressed that the alignment between NSDS and SDGs is important because the new goal and target framework of the SDGs needs to be integrated into the national strategies, and, in particular, the programmes and policies of Switzerland, in order to be effectively implemented. Furthermore, Mr Dubas argued that good coordination between national and international processes will also be a central factor of success. In Switzerland, the formulation of the SDGs has already had an impact on the NSDS, as there was an attempt to integrate the SDGs into the review of the national SD strategy which will be decided upon by federal government in January 2016. Although the NSDS 2016-2019 will refer to the SDGs as much as possible, there will be a transition period to align the goals of the previous NSDS to the SDGs within the restraint of the legislative planning period of the national government. In this process, the long-term future vision, which has been explored in stakeholder dialogues, is translated into specific goal to be achieved by 2030, as well as a specific action plan for the next 4 years in the form of the NSDS 2016-2019. Mr Dubas subsequently shared the key objectives of the NSDS 2016-2019 with the participants of the workshop, these are as follows: (i) avoid having different tracks for SDGs and the national policy for SD; (ii) define clear goals/targets for SD in Switzerland; (iii) make a contribution to achieve the SDGs on the global level; (iv) make sure the NSDS is as much as possible aligned with the future SDG system (monitoring and reviewing); (v) improve the measurement of SD through indicators; (vi) focus of the action plan on goals/targets for which the need for action is high; and (vii) create an aid to orientation for other actors. Mr Dubas said the integration of the Post-2015 Agenda into the NSDS will include a strengthening of international aspects of the NSDS. First, Switzerland will have a transition plan for 2016/17. Here, the 8-10 key policy fields have been linked to the 17 SDGs, but a full structural integration has not yet taken place. This full integration will only start in 2018, after which there will be a 4-year policy cycle of the strategy that includes a review process aligned with the SDG review process. Furthermore, Mr Dubas suggested that for this monitoring and reviewing policy cycle, additional indicators are needed at national level to account for country specific issues, thus creating a system in which NSDS and SDGs are reviewed at the same time, but not with exactly the same indicators. This is being prepared for at the moment by adapting the national SD indicator system of Switzerland, MONET, to the SDG indicators to create the system MONET+.

CÉDRIC VAN DE WALLE (*Federal Public Planning Service for Sustainable Development, Belgium*) shared the national experience with linking the NSDS to the SDGs in Belgium. He began his presentation by introducing the participants to the complex institutional framework in Belgium. Mr Van De Walle made the point that there is a great need to foster better cooperation, in particular in the light of the cross-cutting nature of the SDGs. The key impact of SDGs on Belgian SD strategies is a

need to translate political commitments into strategies that are in coherence with the new framework set out by the UN and, thus, update SD strategies in terms of plans, indicators and monitoring, accountability and review processes. A challenge for this is the problematic of timing of action plans with international outputs. Furthermore, Mr Van De Walle suggested that this needs to take place while focussing on operational issues such as inter-ministerial cooperation, as well as strategic issues concerning the integration of SDGs into policies. Mr Van De Walle then discussed the opportunities for updating and improving the SD governance framework in Belgium. According to Mr Van De Walle, this should include fine tuning and review of existing and well-functioning structures and processes, with particular focus on greater coherence by linking with other departmental structures. Furthermore, he stressed that more effective inclusion of stakeholders and civil society could improve ownership and accountability of the process. In his concluding remarks, Mr Van De Walle stressed that a renewal of political commitments translated into SD strategies and other thematic policies has to be accompanied by an updating and broadening of existing structures and reporting mechanisms to meet the ambitions and large scope of SDGs. He hopes that this approach to monitoring and review will strengthen the need for cooperation, coordination and participatory mechanisms in Belgium.

EILI LEPIK (*Strategy Unit - Government Office, Estonia*) gave a keynote presentation on the Estonian perspective on how the SDGs monitoring and reviewing could influence the NSDS process. She reported that the SDGs are a regular discussion topic for the current government. The corner stone of the NSDS process in Estonia is the Estonian Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS): Sustainable Estonia 21 (2005). Ms Lepik stated that the main goals of this document are still relevant: (i) viability of the Estonian cultural space; (ii) growth of welfare; (iii) coherent society; and (iv) ecological balance. This NSDS was accompanied by a regular indicator-based progress report every 2 years. Furthermore, Ms Lepik explained that the strategy is continuously re-evaluated by the Estonian Sustainable Development Commission, constituted by various NGOs and meeting 4-5 times a year. The Commission publishes focus reports on different topics with suggestions to government. Ms Lepik echoed the previous presentations by stating that it is important to avoid duplication and thus merge SDGs and NSDS monitoring. To what extent this is possible, depends on the content of national goals and indicators (these are negotiated with stakeholders), the characteristic of NSDS monitoring process in terms of frequency, content of reports, organisational aspects (the UN recommends annual reporting, while the Estonian system is based on bi-annual reporting and regional reporting at the EU level is still unclear). Ms Lepik made the point that a key question to be addressed is if the existing system is adjusted or if a new system needs to be designed. To conclude her presentation, Ms Lepik discussed the next steps to be taken on these issues. This will have to include an analysis of the current NSDS and its implementation from the SDGs perspective, which could be the next focus report of Estonian SD Commission. Moreover, it needs to be decided if the current NSDS is reviewed. The integration between the NSDS and the SDGs will also call for a comparison of SDG and NSDS indicators and, subsequently, a revision of national SD indicators in 2016 and an analysis of the possibilities of merging NSDS and SDG monitoring processes. Ms Lepik also stressed that raising awareness in government, the private sector, civil society organisation and the general public that by achieving the SDGs, Estonians are contributing to the global level is

essential. Finally, there needs to be discussion on integrating SDGs into other national policies in Estonia, such as NSDS:SE21, Estonia 2020 and the Government Work Program.

Following these presentations, the participants took part in a second **INTERACTIVE GROUP WORK** on the question **“How could SDG monitoring / reviewing influence and improve SD policy strategy processes in Europe? – and what could be the role of the ESDN to support this?”**. Each group table was asked to select one key idea about how monitoring and reviewing SDGs could influence policy in Europe and what role the ESDN could play in supporting this. See below the result of the group work:

- ❖ Align, enhance and harmonise policy objectives across sectors and countries towards SD – *ESDN as an informal, effective contact platform for exchange best practices;*
- ❖ Bridging the North-South divide, integrate national and EU SD strategies with international/ development cooperation policies to enable systemic change – *foster the collective SD search and learn process via peer reviews (EU MS) coordinated by the ESDN;*
- ❖ Ideal ESDN Conference focussed in indicators, best practices and peer review – *ESDN key to good practice, peer review, outreach and contribution to the Europe 2030 strategy;*
- ❖ Revisit EU 2020 Strategy and ensure cross-dimensional integration – *ESDN could foster governance innovations and bottom up societal activities through ESDW;*
- ❖ Monitoring / indicators bring flesh to the bones, it makes SD visible and concrete;
- ❖ Closing the loop – monitoring feeds back into review of strategy implementation and mainstreaming;
- ❖ Common monitoring standards might lead to better vertical and horizontal integration – *ESDN as a forum for the exchange of best practices;*
- ❖ SDGs monitoring and review can be influential only if focused on targets and times lines, and indicators are based on a clear concept of (strong) sustainability;
- ❖ Set the stage: create accountability, momentum for change, enhance coherence and political will – *ESDN as platform for information, exchange of best practice and ideas for EU institutions.*

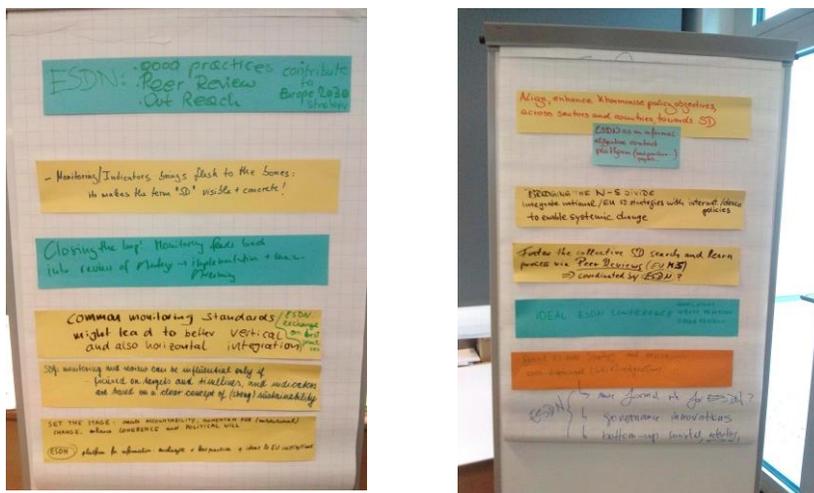


Figure 6

Flipcharts with results of the second Interactive Group Work Session

Session 4: The role of policy actor networks for SDGs monitoring and reviewing

The final session of the workshop, **Session 4**, focused on the role a policy actor network such as the ESDN in the monitoring and reviewing framework for SDGs. The session was started with an impulse talk on multi-level and multi-regional reviewing. This was followed by a panel discussion on the potential of policy actor networks in this regard.

MARIANNE BEISHEIM (*German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), Germany*) gave an impulse talk on multi-level and multi-regional reviewing of the SDGs. She stressed that follow up and review will be an integral part of the Post-2015 Agenda. Ms Beisheim quoted the Zero Draft Document from 2 June 2015 that calls for “a robust, effective, inclusive and transparent follow-up and review framework, operating at the national, regional and global levels, (which) will *promote effective implementation* of this Agenda and accountability to our citizens”. She made the point that monitoring and review is an integral part of the means of implementation. Similarly, Ms Beisheim recounted that the [Res 67/290 on the High Level Political Forum \(HLPF\) for SD](#) states that there will be regular, voluntary and state-led reviews that produce a platform for stakeholder participation and replace the national voluntary presentations of the MDGs starting in 2016. Since these reviews are voluntary and state-led, there is an urgent need to motivate countries to participate. She sees the danger that replacing the national voluntary presentations of the MDGs will result in a loss of momentum of the Member States if there are no presentations at the global level to replace this. Continuing to analyse the Zero Draft, Ms Beisheim suggested that the UN Member States have mixed feelings on regional review and prefer a flexible approach that enables states to “identify the most suitable regional forum in which to engage themselves” since some states do not necessarily see their neighbours as peers. She argued that the EU needs to interpret this and define its own approach. Ms Beisheim suggested that the ESDN could develop a prototype multi-level and regional review together with the EU institutions. The characteristics of such a multilevel and regional review mechanism would be that it is: (i) participatory at national and regional levels; (ii) have institutional provisions for preparatory and follow-up process; (iii) link with relevant existing institutions, reviews and reports; (iv) contains peer learning in terms of discussing data on indicators and analysing trends, identifying frontrunner ideas, best practices, policies, discussing challenges, trade-offs and motivate laggards, as well as regional and trans-boundary issues, and preparing input for annual thematic focus/review of HLPF; (v) communicate results and push for follow-up; and finally, (vi) provide support for countries presenting at HLPF review.

This presentation was followed by a **PANEL DISCUSSION** on the potential role of policy actor networks, such as the ESDN in SDGs monitoring and reviewing in Europe. First, each panellist gave a short opening statement, followed by a discussion and exchange with the workshop participants.

JAIME REYNOLDS (*Post-2015 Team, DG Environment, European Commission*) reflected upon the discussions in the workshop, stating that in his opinion it is important to think about the terminology we use in our discussions and further explore the different definitions of monitoring, which can cover different fields as well as data and analysis, an assessment of trends and peer reviews. These different mechanisms and facets of monitoring need to be discussed. Furthermore, Mr Reynolds also raised the question of what we mean by talking about 'Europe'. He applauded a workshop participant suggesting that we need to think more widely about the architecture to handle SD issues across Europe and how we can work together more effectively. He mentioned the OECD and other UN agencies as possible institutions to cooperate with to channel their expertise on regional peer reviews. Concerning the role of ESDN, Mr Reynolds said that we need to decide what the particular added value of the network is. This could be networking among policy-makers, including a wider range of stakeholders, or connecting with the wider public. He called upon the ESDN to decide what their role is and focus on this function to avoid confusion and duplication with other institutions or networks.

STAFFAN NILSSON (*Former President of the European Economic and Social Committee*) recounted the three main events that are due to take place this year: the Finance for Development Conference, the UN Sustainable Development Summit, and the COP 21 in Paris. He stressed that there are strong interlinks between these events and that, if we succeed to achieve a meaningful outcome in each of them, the outcomes could form the new architecture for tackling SD in the future. Mr Nilsson said that for him the key message is that non-governmental actors (such as SD business champions, local communities and informal networks that connect leaders in SD) are indispensable to organize mutual support and exchange knowledge and expertise. He recounted that there are difficulties in promoting SD ideas in national governments due to their complex structure and conflicting interests. Therefore, he suggested that networks are needed to push the SD in EU Council negotiations. An example of this is that the ESDN was successful in urging the First Vice-President Timmermans to be the official supporter of the first European Sustainable Development Week (ESDW). Mr Nilsson suggested that the discussions of the day have shown that the monitoring and review of SDGs calls for a multi-level and multi-stakeholder system that enables a vertical flow of information. Mr Nilsson suggested that multi-stakeholder dimensions need to be further discussed as the implementation of the SDGs will require civil society actors. During the workshop, Mr Nilsson said, the difficulty to communicate with citizens was a central topic of discussion and suggested that the involvement of civil society actors could help in this regard. Mr Nilsson thus recommended including civil society actors into the governance system for the monitoring and reviewing mechanisms of the SDGs. Finally, he referred to a proposal of the EESC to form a Post-2015 Forum that should play an important role in this process.

ALEXANDER CARIUS (*Director of Adelphi, Germany*) made the point that SDGs shape the global development agenda; it is a charter for the future. He then proceeded to share two key reflections with the participants of the workshop. Firstly, he made the point that we have to acknowledge that not all problems can be resolved with a council of experts; rather we need to consider how to bring the SDGs, that are dealt with in New York and are potentially highly technical, into sectorial policies.

He argued that we need to make sure the ‘non-SDG constituencies’ are not left behind. Secondly, we also have to consider how to best organise the review process and how to take our understanding of stakeholder processes into other sectors to foster social learning. Mr Carius stated that his key recommendation is not to be too Eurocentric and suggested learning from stakeholder engagement mechanisms in other regions. He suggested that the ESDN should consider which mechanisms, tools and services could change to face these challenges, such as outreach to the wider public, accessing the right policy making mechanisms, leveraging capacities of other networks that already have communication strategies in place. He reiterated the importance of increasing public acceptance, ownership and legitimacy, in particular targeting the young generation. Mr Carius suggested that if the ESDN aims to take the SDG agenda on board, it will have to evaluate if the ESDN can do this within the existing structure of networking or if a more marketing-focused and policy lobbying approach should be considered.

STEFAN BAUERNEFIND (*Federal Chancellery, Germany*) highlighted the many fruitful discussions during the workshop by stressing four main elements have emerged for him: Firstly, Mr Bauernfeind made the point that the SDGs could be the milestone for sustainability, a charter for a sustainable future that incorporates tasks at the national, global and regional level. Secondly, Mr Bauernfeind stressed that universality is a key element of the SDGs and thus implementation needs the active participation of stakeholders at all levels and from all sectors to further this agenda. He supported the ideas of a scientific- and NGO-based SD council on the European level, or an ombudsman for future generations, or the idea of a Forum for the Post-2015 Agenda. Thirdly, he highlighted the importance of the EU level that is ‘sandwiched’ between the UN level and national states and, thus, constitutes an essential connection line between global and national levels. Lastly, Mr Bauernfeind referred to the EU SDS which mentions that Member States could make use of the ESDN to facilitate exchange of good practices and experiences, investigate thematic issues and enhance the coherence between EU, national and subnational policy making. This suggests that the ESDN could be a forum for enhancing policy integration, exchanging of good practice, creating a lean and intelligent peer learning process, and outreach to other stakeholders.

After these opening statements, a **Q&A session** provided the change for workshop participants to discuss with the panellists.

Francois Frontier, from the Division for Sustainable Development (UN-DESA), asked what characteristics a peer review of SD hosted by ESDN could have and if this would focus on specific theme. He continued by making the point that in the EU, a multitude of peer review mechanisms already exist in, for instance, social and economic development. He proposed that it would be efficient to incorporate SD issues into the already existing peer review mechanisms.

Robert Bernardo, from UNDP, stressed that multi-level and stakeholder governance is a great challenge considering that many institutions lack the structure, organisational culture and dedicated individuals. He asked what could incentivise these systems to work in the multi-level, multi-stakeholder capacity and give them the authority they need to promote sustainable development.

Derek Osborn, the president of the Stakeholder Forum, welcomed that bodies such as the ESDN and the EESC dedicated to explore ways in which they can make a positive contribution to the implementation of SDGs and voiced his disappointment with the lack of a clear plan of the European Commission at this point in time.

Marc-Olivier Pahl, from the Ministry for Climate Protection, Environment, Agriculture, Nature Conservation and Consumer Protection of North-Rhine Westphalia, stressed that the fundamental idea of SD is integration and that this must be at the core of the political system. He made the suggestion that rather than applying a solely technical approach, focussing on the implementation of SDGs is an opportunity to make SD a core principle of European government. Thus we should focus on mainstreaming SD in the entire political system, rather than only concentrating our efforts on monitoring.

Andreas Versmann, from the Sustainable Development Observatory of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), reported that the EESC has the idea to establish Post-2020 Forum that acts as a multi-stakeholder governance tool by bringing together businesses, trade unions, NGOs and other stakeholders. He suggested that the ESDN could play an important part in this. Until now, ESDN has been a government expert network, however, the implementation of the SDGs is not only a national government issue, rather, reaching the local level and different stakeholders will be central. This should be considered by the ESDN in their outreach efforts.

The panellists responded to these questions with the following statements:

Stefan Bauernfeind agreed that the outreach to society is of great importance and that the ESDN could have a key role to play in this. He suggested that developing a separate SD peer review mechanism does not exclude that other peer reviews incorporate SD issues into their processes. Referring to the integration of SD issues into all policy areas, he mentioned that it is a good signal that the EU is moving away from the Europe 2020 Strategy which primarily focused on economic growth only.

Alexander Carius stated that the global system of SDG monitoring will be voluntary and that he is sceptical about the idea of making reporting mandatory for a state at different events. He further made the point that there is currently no system in place that allows us to address the 'elephant in the room' (SDGs) – so political courage is needed. He suggested that we could learn the most from small countries that try innovative, new approaches.

Staffan Nilsson agreed that sectorial divisions and different ministries working in silos is still a major problem at Member State and European level. He acknowledged that cooperation between different sectors is difficult. He also voiced his disappointment that the Commission did not revise the EU SDS, but stated that at least the Europe 2020 Strategy does not seem to be prevalent on the agenda any more. He also argued that we need to face the fact that the EU, and the Commission in

particular, can only act with strong support from the Member States. This means that we need a political leadership that is committed to change at all levels.

Jaime Reynolds stated that he would welcome it if the ESDN would do some work on peer review mechanisms and suggested that this could be an ideal subject for a further meeting. Concerning the position of the EU, he underlined that this is a very dynamic area and that it is essential for the Commission to undertake a mapping exercise and investigate how to best incorporate SDGs into the agenda while dealing with other pressures. Mr Reynolds concluded that any additional arguments and insights that the ESDN or individual Member States can provide will be extremely valuable.



Figure 7

Panel Discussion

(Left to right: Jaime Reynolds, Staffen Nilsson, Alexander Carius and Stefan Bauernfeind)

Conclusions and next steps

JÖRG MAYER-RIES (*Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Germany*) considered the workshop as was very beneficial by focussing on technical issues such as monitoring and review, and also by reflecting on this in the context of big problems. Mr Mayer-Ries stressed that ESDN is a network that can be a tool to envision new possibilities and also concrete ideas. He suggested that the SDGs implementation in Europe needs a strong Commission, strong Member States and the active participation of stakeholders. Furthermore, he pointed out that it has become clear in this workshop that there are SD strategies in Europe that have great potential and that there is an urgent need for these to be communicated better and to engage more people. He closed by suggesting that the ESDN is a community with a rather restricted outreach and we need to work on that in the future.

ELISABETH FREYTAG-RIGLER & WOLFRAM TERTSCHNIG (*Federal Ministry of the Environment, Austria & ESDN co-chairs*) shared their final statements with the participants and closed the workshop.

Mr Tertschnig suggested that the ESDN has restricted resources for outreach activities and that, therefore, a partnership with other institutions would be beneficial. In the context of SDGs implementation, he quoted Secretary General of the UN, Ban Ki-moon, in saying that there is no Plan B, but raised the concern that there might not be a concrete Plan A as of yet. This is why the ESDN is planning to revisit this topic when discussing the governance architecture and strategic framework needed at the Member State and EU level in the ESDN Conference 2015. Mr Tertschnig called on the national SD practitioners and other members of the ESDN to critically assess what they can contribute in terms of exchange of experiences between Member States and also in regards to the role of the ESDN vis-à-vis the European mechanisms. Mr Tertschnig also announced the next ESDN workshop on 12 November 2015 in Paris, which will focus on options and possibilities to further develop the Conférence environnementale and environmental dialogue in the context of the SDG debate.

Ms Freytag-Rigler highlighted that the aim of this workshop was to exchange experiences and to reflect upon requirements for SDGs implementation and monitoring. She suggested that efforts to improve the outreach of the ESDN will be discussed in the Steering Group. Ms Freytag-Rigler concluded the workshop by thanking Jörg Mayer-Ries, Gerald Berger and the ESDN Office, as well as all participants and speakers that took part.



European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN)

www.sd-network.eu