

# ESDNewsletter December 2021

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

## Announcements from the ESDN

### ESDN General Assembly

#### ***New ESDN Executive Committee Appointed for 2022***

In the ESDN General Assembly meeting that took place on 30 November 2021, a new ESDN Executive Committee was elected. **Daniel Dubas**, who served as one of the ESDN Vice Presidents from 2020 – 2021 **has been appointed as ESDN President**. Current ESDN President, **Annika Lindblom**, **will become one of the Vice Presidents** in 2022 and will be joined by **Marguy Kohnen and László Borbély**. Current Vice Presidents **Elisabeth Freytag-Rigler and Sami Pirkkala** will step down from the Executive Committee.

### European Sustainable Development Week 2021

The European Sustainable Development Week ended on 08 October 2021.

**In total, 5,440 activities took place in 28 European countries and attracted an estimated 10,406,327 participants!**

The ESDW is a European-wide initiative to stimulate and make visible activities, projects and events that promote sustainable development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The **ESDW 2022** will take place next year from 18 September – 08 October, with the core of the Week taking place from 20 September – 26 September 2022!

**Event registration will open in spring 2022, so please visit the registration page in early May to register your event on the [ESDW website](#).**

### ESDN Youth Workshop 2021

The main ESDN Youth Workshop 2021 took place on 13 November, where 17 Youth Representatives and ESDN members met virtually to discuss sustainable development issues that were important to European Youth. The 17 Youth Representatives went on to develop a manifesto addressed to the ESDN and policymakers, in general. This Workshop was sponsored by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment.

In three working groups, they discussed their demands, supported by mentors from the ESDN. Their ideas for a better consumption and production system include a better rail network and eco-labelling, but also more general demands for a change in the economic system.

To achieve climate justice, it is important for youth representatives to highlight the responsibility of rich countries in causing the climate crisis. For this reason, they are asking for support of the World Youth for Climate Justice Campaign, which is seeking an Advisory Opinion on Climate Justice from the International Court of Justice.

An overarching theme of the manifesto is that of better youth involvement in policymaking. Youth do not only want to be heard, but they also want their voices to be considered and their demands to be implemented. This is only possible with more concrete structures for permanent involvement.

The **Youth Manifesto** can be found [here](#).

## **ESDN Conference 2021: European Recovery and Resilience Mechanisms - Challenges in systemic approaches in SD**

The ESDN Conference 2021 took place virtually on 30 November – 01 December and was organized by the ESDN in cooperation with the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning of the Republic of Slovenia and the SLOGA Platform and took place during Slovenia's EU Presidency and was an official EU Presidency event. The Conference brought together sustainable development policymakers and experts from different stakeholder groups from all over Europe.

The title of this year's Conference was "European Recovery and Resilience Mechanisms - Challenges in systemic approaches in SD". The Conference focused on many topics relating to the recovery and resilience, covering many topics in sustainable development, such as social, environmental, economic, financial and policy resilience. The Conference saw keynote presentations from the European level and national level, as well as inputs from Youth Representatives, who presented their Youth Manifesto from the ESDN Youth Workshop. The Conference also featured 9 Exchange Spaces, which allowed Conference participants to hear a myriad of topics from climate change adaptation, to technology, to governance and policy coherence, to name a few. They were then able to discuss these topics in their smaller groups.

To find out more about the Conference and gain access to the Conference documents (Agenda, Discussion Paper and Conference Report), as well as the keynote presentations from both days of the Conference, please visit the [ESDN website](#).

At the end of the Conference, ESDN President Annika Lindblom awarded 3 ESDN Members with **Honorary ESDN Membership** for their service to sustainable development and to the ESDN over the years. Honorary Membership was bestowed upon **Wolfram Tertschnig, Daniel Wachter and Sauli Rouhinen**.

## **3 ESDN Blog entries published in October, November and December 2021**

### ***The Belgian approach towards Business and Human Rights***

**October's Blog post** features **Hamida Idrissi**, who is a policy expert active within the Federal Institute for Sustainable Development, a public service responsible for sustainable development within the Belgian federal government. She specializes in societal responsibility.

In 2011, the UN Human Rights Council unanimously endorsed the "UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights". These guidelines for states and companies are based on three pillars:

1. The state's obligation to protect human rights;
2. The corporate responsibility to respect human rights; and
3. Remedy for victims in case of violations, and access to effective remedies.

At the instigation of the European Commission and the Council of Europe, Belgium embarked on the development of a national action plan "Business and Human Rights". In doing so, it followed the lead of its neighbours and other European countries. In June 2017, the Belgian Governments adopted the first National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights (NAP).

The Belgian NAP contains 33 actions that aim to stimulate Belgian and international companies active in Belgium to respect and promote human rights not only in their own activities, but also within their sphere of influence. The content of our first NAP is mainly aimed at informing and raising the awareness of companies and organisations on the complex and often sensitive issues related to the respect and protection of human rights.

The importance of an international approach and framework to identify, prevent and mitigate human rights risks in business operations and relationships cannot be understated. This is linked to the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, and the OECD Guidelines.

To read the full Blog, please visit the [ESDN website](#).

## ***A Systemic Approach to Implementing the 2030 Agenda: The six areas of transformation of the German Sustainable Development Strategy***

**November's Blog** post features **Stefan Bauernfeind**, who is Head of Division Sustainable Development within the German Federal Chancellery, which coordinates the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in Germany. He discusses the need for action within this decade to reach the Sustainable Development Goals by all actors in society. He also discusses how Germany is progressing towards reaching the SDGs.

In the update of the German Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS) adopted on March 10th this year, a systemic approach to solving the above-mentioned question can be found in the six transformation areas which were defined for the first time (see graph at the end of the Blog). Thereby, the GSDS picked up a suggestion from societal actors from 2019 with reference to the United Nations Global Sustainable Development Report. In addition, in a dialogue process conducted in 2020, the Federal Government was recommended to link the transformation areas of the GSDS to references to those indicators where, according to the current status, the goals will not be achieved, as well as concrete measures how to get back on track. Both suggestions have also been taken up in the new strategy.

As a result, each transformation area of the GSDS now links those SDGs that pose the greatest challenges in Germany, and emphasizes the interaction of various Goals. It is therefore a matter of focusing on a few areas, without, however, losing sight of the 2030 Agenda in its entirety. The concept of the transformation areas thus paves the way

beyond an isolated consideration of individual problems and, at the same time, accentuates the necessary integrated and integrative approach.

To read the full Blog, please visit the [ESDN website](#).

### ***Further developing ESDN's mission: High-quality youth participation as key factor for sustainability***

**December's Blog post** features representatives from the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, **Katrin Kowalczyk, Frank Hönerbach, and Daniel Hanzlik**. They discuss on participatory policy-making, focusing in particular on two successful Youth Camps to involve youth more in the European Sustainable Development Network.

France's "Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat", the Irish Citizen's Assembly on Abortion, the Citizen's Assembly for Climate Change in Spain and the "Conference on the Future of Europe" – deliberative citizen assemblies have become more prominent in recent years. While citizen assemblies seem to be "en vogue" now, citizen participation is a constant player in EU politics.

The German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) is very active in this field, with its own unit on citizen participation and sustainable development. The engagement of the BMU and many other political bodies stems from the recognition that well-designed public participation processes not only broaden the decision-making basis and enrich political programmes and strategies, but can also increase understanding of political processes, strengthen interest and commitment to environmental policy among the population and thus contribute to a vibrant democracy.

As one of the main premises for sustainable development revolves around intergenerational equity and sees sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, young people are a key stakeholder group.

It is therefore fitting that in the framework of discussions within the ESDN about its mid- and long-term strategy and vision, young voices, thoughts, and ideas be heard - and included. The ESDN sees this as a two-way street: The aim is not only to include young people into the European sustainable development debate, but also to offer a deep(er) insight into current sustainability politics as well as direct links to policymakers.

To read the full Blog, please visit the [ESDN website](#).

## **7 ESDN Spotlight Videos Published**

### ***Achieving SDGs through new efforts at all governmental levels***

**Karoline Edtstadler**, Austrian Federal Minister for the EU and Constitution at the Federal Chancellery highlighted the significance of approaching the European, the national, the parliamentary, the regional and the local level when developing actions for reaching

the SDGs. She said that it is also important that we collectively benefit from the synergies and that this is why it is crucial to have discussions and the ESDN workshop (June 2021).

"Multilateralism, including new efforts, is the necessary course of action"

"The SDGs are challenging for everyone. It is out of question that we have to accelerate innovative and joint actions to be taken at all levels."

To watch the full video, please visit the [ESDN website](#) and [YouTube Channel](#).

### ***A European Perspective on Sustainable Finance***

This *Spotlight* video features Alexander Bassen, Professor of Capital Markets and Management at Hamburg University, where he examines the rise of sustainable finance and its impact on the 2030 Agenda. Regulations and public funds are drivers of sustainable finance, and the European Union has put forward many ideas to stimulate sustainable investing.

However, not only governments have to invest into sustainable development, but also private investors. "There is not a lack of money, but a lack of understanding how to invest sustainably", says Alexander Bassen. The EU Taxonomy and ESG ratings play a significant role in enhancing sustainable investment.

To watch the full video, please visit the [ESDN website](#) and [YouTube Channel](#).

### ***Evidence-based policy learning for Sustainable Development***

In this *Spotlight* video, Imme Scholz, Deputy Director of the German Development Institute, highlights the importance of the interaction between policy and science: "Evidence-based policy learning requires continuous communication between researchers and public administrators." This interaction enables the definition of problems and unresolved questions in society and supports evidence-based solutions.

However, scientific knowledge does not liberate policymakers from making decisions. In order to ensure good decision-making, policy learning needs to provide a broad knowledge basis, which includes good and relevant data as well as policy evaluation analysis. In doing so, policy learning can counteract populism and support evidence-based policymaking in the future.

To watch the full video, please visit the [ESDN website](#) and [YouTube Channel](#).

### ***How Different Countries Approach Circular Economy***

Ladeja Godina Kosir, Chair of the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform and Founder and Executive Director of Circular Change, talks about the significance of Circular Economy for many European governments.

Circular Economy has gained significant importance for many governments and businesses across Europe. However, there are still differences in the stage of understanding when it comes to circular change.

“In order to be implemented effectively, circular change needs a systematic approach, which has to be adapted to individual countries and the desires of their citizens”, says Ladeja Godina Kosir. In this interview, she shares her experience in developing national circular economy road-mapping processes and discusses the most important aspects when developing them.

To watch the full video, please visit the [ESDN website](#) and [YouTube Channel](#).

### ***The History of the ESDN***

**Wolfram Tertschnig**, who, at the time of this interview, worked at the Austrian Federal Ministry for Climate Action, and who had co-chaired the ESDN for nearly 20 years, talks about the Network's history. He provides an overview of the most important milestones and changes since the ESDN began.

The ESDN achieves openness and trust among its members through its informal environment. “We are a family of practitioners who have a joint objective”, Wolfram explains.

The most recent milestones are the adoption of the 2030 Agenda at UN-level and the understanding that the ESDN developed at the Luxembourg Conference prior to the general assembly that adopted the 2030 Agenda. In the future, the ESDN will continue to deliver expertise on more innovative frameworks and to pursue the global Sustainable Development Goals.

To watch the full video, please visit the [ESDN website](#) and [YouTube Channel](#).

### ***Why ESDN is so Special***

**Annika Lindblom**, Ministerial Adviser for International Affairs at the Finnish Ministry of the Environment and ESDN President, explains the unique aspects of the ESDN.

The ESDN has a great impact on EU policies for sustainable development. It brings together sustainable development practitioners and shows them what sustainable development means in different countries across Europe.

This Spotlight Video highlights why the ESDN is so special and discusses the most important benefits for ESDN members. “It is the richness of the ESDN members that makes it so interesting to become part of the ESDN family”, says Annika Lindblom. Countries can learn from each other and work together on the 2030 Agenda.

To watch the full video, please visit the [ESDN website](#) and [YouTube Channel](#).

### ***Collaborations and Cooperations of the ESDN***

“Collaborations with diverse stakeholders are crucial for reaching different groups of people”, says Elisabeth Freytag-Rigler. The ESDN is in close cooperation with over 35 member countries, the EU Commission, the EU Parliament and other EU stakeholders.

In this video statement, Elisabeth Freytag-Rigler explains how the ESDN benefits from working on an international level and what unique aspects there are when cooperating with the ESDN.

To watch the full video, please visit the [ESDN website](#) and [YouTube Channel](#).

## **1 ESDN Policy Brief Published**

### ***ESDN Policy Brief 7: Recommendations for Engaging Civil Society and Citizens for the 2030 Agenda***

Civil society is a key partner for the government in implementing the 2030 Agenda with a whole-of-society approach. Civil society, and especially civil society organisations, can provide a number of resources to the government, for example access to, and knowledge about, marginalised groups, multiplier effects for awareness raising campaigns and representing diverse stakeholders, whose opinions have to be included in the implementation process. However, the extent of cooperation between governments and civil society varies in Europe. Recently, a study by the European Commission has found that engagement between the government and civil society is not sufficient in most European countries, even in environments that are very conducive to the work of CSOs.

#### Policy Recommendations

- 1) General Recommendations for involving civil society stakeholders
- 2) Working with civil society organisations
- 3) Engaging individual citizens
- 4) Involving civil society in writing Voluntary National Reviews
- 5) Youth Involvement

This Policy Brief is based on presentations and discussions at the 6<sup>th</sup> ESDN Peer Learning Platform in Mariehamn, Åland Islands in August 2021.

The full version can be downloaded [here](#).

## **News on Sustainable Development Governance from European Countries**

### **Slovakia:**

The first monitoring report on the results of the implementation of the national Agenda 2030 priorities was elaborated and approved by the Government on 23 September 2021. The Second monitoring report will be prepared in 2022/2023. The second Voluntary National Review is expected in 2023.

### **Spain:**

## **Catalonia: 2 Sets of indicators to monitor SDG achievement in Catalonia**

Official Catalan statistics have now two sets of annual indicators to monitor the level of SDG achievement in Catalonia. The first one, presented on September 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020, takes as a reference the indicators published by Eurostat. The second one, presented on November 4<sup>th</sup> 2021, is based on the methodological criteria of the United Nations. Any indicators meeting the pre-established criteria for quality, soundness and methodological suitability are progressively added to these frameworks. The aim of these indicators is to provide, in a continuous manner, statistical data and metadata on sustainable development in Catalonia.

Next steps of the project will focus on the design and implementation of a quantitative system to monitor the degree of fulfilment of SDGs in Catalonia. This system will provide trends for each published indicator and it will be based on a set of specific quantitative rules.

The Statistical Institute of Catalonia and the Ministry of Climate Action, Food and Rural Agenda, through the Advisory Council for Sustainable Development, are the bodies responsible for these statistics, which has the collaboration of the rest of the ministries of the Government of Catalonia.

## **News on European Governance for Sustainable Development**

No submissions were received for this edition of the ESDNewsletter.