

**ESDN Conference 2013 –
Vienna+10: National Sustainable Development
Strategies in Europe**

Taking stock, new developments and future challenge

13-14 June 2013 in Vienna, Austria

Conference Proceedings



European Sustainable Development Network

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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 27 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.

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Introduction

The European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN) Conference 2013, entitled “**Vienna +10: National Sustainable Development Strategies in Europe – Taking stock, new developments and future challenges**”, took place in Vienna, Austria on 13-14 June 2013, and was organized by the ESDN in cooperation with the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management. Ten years after the first ESDN Conference in Vienna, in 2003, which provided important inputs on SD strategies in Europe, participants revisited National SD Strategies (NSDSs) as one of the core themes of the ESDN.

The aim of the annual ESDN conferences is to facilitate the exchange of experiences and knowledge between public administrators responsible for sustainable development strategies and policies at the EU, national and sub-national levels, with experts from National Sustainable Development Councils, members of the SD Observatory of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), NGO representatives, international organizations as well as other experienced SD experts and researchers. In total, **55 participants from 20 countries (19 European countries and New Zealand)** attended the ESDN Conference 2013 (the list of participants can be found in the [ESDN Conferences section](#) at the ESDN website).

This year’s ESDN Conference is the 12th annual conference of the network. Previous ESDN conferences were held in Copenhagen/Denmark (2012), Szentendre/Hungary (2011), Ghent/Belgium (2010), Prague/Czech Republic (2009), Paris/France (2008), Berlin/Germany (2007), Salzburg/Austria (2006), Windsor/UK (2005), Kinsale/Ireland (2004), Vienna/Austria (2003), and The Hague/Netherlands (2002). For a comprehensive documentation of all previous ESDN conferences, please go to the [ESDN homepage](#).

The ESDN Conference 2013 had various objectives in relation to NSDSs:

- to take stock of NSDSs processes and objectives in Europe;
- to investigate past achievements in NSDS processes;
- to explore new developments in SD policy and governance; and
- to identify future challenges for SD in general and NSDSs in particular.

Similar to previous ESDN conferences, the 2013 event dealt with the conference themes in different formats: keynote presentations highlighted general issues and key aspects of the conference theme; panel discussions provided an overview of experiences and standpoints of different actors and institutions; in parallel group work, the participants discussed specific aspects of the conference theme in-depth; summaries of the results of the group work were used for immediate reactions and further discussions during the conference; and interactive formats throughout the conference allowed participants to reflect upon issues raised and to develop recommendations.

The full documentation of the ESDN Conference 2013 can be found at the [ESDN homepage](#) and includes:

- the Conference Programme,
- the Conference Discussion Paper,

- the Conference Proceedings,
- the PowerPoint slides of the keynote presentations and all other presentations,
- the list of participants, and
- a photo documentation.

Welcome addresses

Elisabeth Freytag & Wolfram Tertschnig (*ESDN Co-chairs, both of the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management*) welcomed the conference participants on behalf of the ESDN Steering Group and the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management.

Elisabeth Freytag introduced the topic of the ESDN Conference 2013 - so-called “Vienna+10” - by recalling the ESDN Conference 2003 and the important discussion held on SD strategies from the EU and national levels. She then highlighted that the Austrian Parliament was, at the time of the conference, debating and deciding on a new constitutional law on sustainability. Para 1 of the law says: “The Republic of Austria (the federal, regional and municipal level) commits itself to the principle of sustainability in the use of natural resources in order to enable the highest quality of life for future generations.” She also mentioned that the ESDN was very much in favor of the work to implement paragraph 98 of the Rio+20 Outcome Document. Finally, Elisabeth referred to the European level: in her opinion, the Europe 2020 Strategy primarily aims at traditional economic growth without giving enough weight to SD issues. Moreover, the National Reform Programmes (NRPs) have, so far, failed to include SD issues. Therefore, SD strategies on the European and national level are still useful and important strategy policy documents. .

Wolfram Tertschnig presented some facts and figures about the Austrian experience with SD policy and governance. He highlighted that Austria has been both a supporter and a driver for NSDSs since 2002. Furthermore, Wolfram mentioned that, at present, Austria was also proceeding with the review of its own NSDS. He then described the Austrian horizontal coordination as a strong integration mechanism, well supported by a ‘group of regional coordinators’, although the federal strategy (ÖSTRAT, binding for both, the national and regional levels) remains very complex and the coexistence of the two strategies (NSDS and ÖSTRAT) poses some challenges in practice. However, three new regional governments in Austria made strong commitments towards SD. Finally, he listed a number of achievements and positive outcomes of environmental policies in Austria (e.g. high water quality; 1/5 of agricultural land is dedicated to organic farming; a relatively low carbon intensity of the economy).

Session 1: The past 10 years of NSDSs in Europe and new developments

After the welcome addresses and the overview on the conference objectives in the introductory session, the **keynotes in Session 1** had the aim to provide a broad framing of, on the one hand, the past and current European experiences with NSDSs and, on the other hand, the importance of SD strategies in the framework of Rio+20 and SDGs process.

Session 1 of the ESDN Conference 2013 included (a) **two keynote presentations**, the first one held by *André Martinuzzi & Gerald Berger* and the second by *Derek Osborn*, and (b) a **moderated discussion** in the plenary with the conference delegates. The PPT slides of the keynote presentations can be found in the [ESDN Conferences section](#) of the ESDN homepage.

André Martinuzzi & Gerald Berger (both of the [ESDN Office](#) at the *Research Institute for Managing Sustainability, Austria*) gave a keynote presentation on “**Experiences with National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDSs) in Europe – the last 10 years and taking stock of the current situation**”. In their keynote, they addressed the main theme of the ESDN Conference 2013- National SD strategies in Europe – and the main topics outlined in the Conference Discussion Paper. Firstly, *André Martinuzzi* referred to the ESDN conference 2003 in Vienna and thanked the conference participants and the ESDN Steering Group for the engagement and work on SD policy and governance, which, among others, helped steering SD research in the past ten years. Then, he presented an overview of NSDS in Europe, framing NSDS as a public management issue that saw two **trends in the last 20 years**: (1) in the 1990s, the so-called New Public Management, and 2) in the 2000s, the so-called Strategic Public Management. He then started describing the **seven key characteristics of NSDSs**: (1) integration of economic, social and environmental objectives; (2) multi-stakeholder participation, effective partnerships, transparency and accountability; (3) country ownership, shared vision with a clear time-frame on which stakeholders agree, commitment and continuous improvement; (4) capacity development and an enabling environment, building on existing knowledge and processes; (5) focus on priorities, outcomes and coherent means of implementation; (6) linkage with budget and investment processes; and, (7) continuous monitoring and evaluation.

Afterwards, he emphasised the **role of NSDSs as governance instruments**, especially (a) to achieve better policy coordination and integration, (b) as tools for ‘reflexive governance’, and (c) as vehicles for an ambitious governance reform. Finally, he described the main milestones of NSDSs from the 1970s as environmental plans to the first request for NSDSs in the Rio conference (1992), until the last Rio+20 Conference (2012), which emphasised the role of NSDSs especially with paragraph 98 of the [Outcome Document](#) that encouraged regional, national, sub-national and local authorities “to develop and utilize sustainable development strategies as key instruments for guiding decision-making and implementation of sustainable development at all levels”.

Gerald Berger continued by providing a stocktaking of the situation of NSDSs in Europe as outlined in the Conference Discussion Paper which is mainly based on information from national policy-makers of the respective countries. He presented the analysis by describing the status quo

and recent developments in 6 areas: (1) Basic information about SD strategies; (2) Mechanisms of vertical integration; (3) Mechanisms of horizontal integration; (4) Evaluation and review; (5) Indicators and monitoring; and (6) Participation.

Concerning the first area of the stocktaking **‘basic information about SD strategies’**, he particularly emphasised that, in the period between 2011-2013, although there was no activity at EU level, twelve European countries were very active and revised (or are in the process of revising) their NSDSs. In terms of **‘mechanisms of vertical integration’**, Gerald underpinned an important result of the analysis that revealed that several countries developed institutionalised mechanisms coordinating and integrating SD strategies and policies across different levels such as councils, commissions, or other bodies (e.g. Switzerland with the ‘Sustainable Development Forum’). Then, he introduced the three kinds of **‘horizontal mechanisms’** found in Europe describing the collaboration among the different ministries and administrative bodies on the national level for the delivery of SD policies. Fourthly, concerning **‘evaluation and review’**, he pointed out, apart from various internal reviews, evaluation from external parties are few:: on the one hand, only few European countries conducted external reviews through private consultants or independent researchers (e.g. Finland, Austria); on the other hand, only four countries made use of peer reviews as instruments to share good practices and mutual learning (France, Norway, The Netherlands and Germany). In terms of **‘indicators and monitoring’**, Gerald showed that although most countries developed an SD indicator sets with an average of 80 indicators, only few countries developed regular SDI monitoring cycles (e.g. Switzerland). Finally, in terms of **‘participation’**, he highlighted especially three results of the analysis: (1) although participation processes vary among countries in terms of the involvement of stakeholders and responsible institutions, they all displayed common functions by providing space for debate, consultation and information exchange; (2) all countries intended to broaden the involvement of stakeholder groups and civil society to strengthen the ownership of NSDSs; and (3) many countries had a National Council on SD (NCSD) as a multi-stakeholder mechanism to ensure participation of various stakeholders in policy-making (e.g. Finland, Germany).

Finally, **André Martinuzzi** proposed six areas where **weaknesses and constraints of NSDSs** were revealed in recent analyses¹²: (1) Weak political commitment towards sustainable development; (2) The current financial and budget crises put several constraints on sustainable development policy; (3) There are several good practices in parts of NSDS processes, but there is no single example where the whole strategy process was a big success; (4) Sustainable development is a complex and comprehensive concept, difficult to translate into political practice and hard to understand for non-experts; (5) The focus on win-win situations dominated the national sustainable development discourse for a long time and created the false impression that with sustainable development one could only win; and, (6) We lack a visible, high-level champion (i.e. an Al Gore of sustainable development). Finally, André concluded by emphasising **three points for further discussion**: (i) Past experiences and future crucial dimensions; (ii) What role and future for national SD strategies in the new context of the Europe 2020 strategy; and, (iii) the

¹ UNOSD. 2012. DRAFT ISSUES PAPER ON STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT - Meeting the Challenges of the Post Rio+20 World. Available at: http://www.unosd.org/content/documents/Issues%20Paper_Draft_Nov%207%202012.pdf

² Gjoksi, N., M. Sedlacko and G. Berger. 2010. National Sustainable Development Strategies in Europe: Status quo and recent developments. ESDN Quarterly Report September 2010. Available at: http://www.sd-network.eu/?k=quarterly%20reports&report_id=18

European NSDSs and their relationships with the new Rio+20 framework and the work on the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In the second keynote of Session 1, **Derek Osborn** (*Expert in the German NSDS Peer Review, former member of the European Economic and Social Committee, UK*) in his presentation, **“The importance of SD strategies in Europe and beyond – and how they could relate to the new post-Rio+20 Sustainable Development Goals”**, began by describing his role as a provocateur who usually asks the question “Why aren’t we doing much better?”. He, therefore, suggested that, since in SD we are not doing very well, the period 2012-2015 could represent a window of opportunity at international level by making the most of the post-Rio+20 Agenda and, in particular, of the SD Goals process. He also noted that the balance of forces on the international level changed and new collaborations are needed at UN and other levels which may have a consequence for the European influence on SD issues. Derek then described the **‘sustainability challenge’** by arguing that SD is not maintaining things as they are, but about recognising current ‘unsustainability’ trends and about radical change towards a more sustainable future. Therefore, he highlighted several needs that should be addressed to meet this challenge, such as emphasising the importance of continuing with existing SD agenda, and broadening it to encompass new high priority agendas for future. Finally, he offered some questions to the participants for further discussion: (1) Are SD agendas broad enough and relevant enough to include unsustainable challenges (e.g. climate change or loss of biodiversity); (2) Are the right actors engaged (e.g. economic and financial actors; business and social partners)?; (3) Are education and information processes directed towards the right goals (e.g. in schools, universities, business schools)?; (4) Are the SD planning processes done correctly?

After the presentations, Session 1 was concluded by a **moderated discussion** where participants discussed on their tables about what they heard in the keynote presentations. They were asked to come up with the two most important insights taken from the keynotes and one additional insight the participants wanted to share with others. The results are shown in the picture and box below, which also shows the eight clusters into which the participants’ group works was grouped.

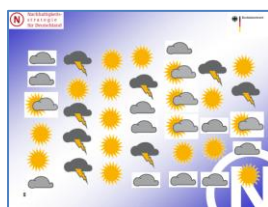


Most Important Insights on SD	
1) SD influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EUSDS is not dead • SD is about Unsustainability • SD has influence
2) Win & Lose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An inclusive strategy makes the balance between winners and loser clear • There are always winners and losers • Analyse SD-winners and losers • Is it always about win-win?
3) Finance & Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can we learn now from the business sector? • Link to financial markets
4) EU level issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need strategy EU2050 ("vision") to go with EU2020 • Rio+20 follow-up + post-2015 Agenda: role of ESDN (Methodology & Coherence) • New EC should be scrutinized on their stand on SD
5) Values and 'Superman'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with youth through radical psychological ideas • The Power of values (for SD) • Do we need an SD-Superman?
6) Horizontal Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So far we have failed to persuade key ministries to think long term / to show economic consequences of business-as-usual • Need for an aligning mechanism for policies • It makes no sense to have 2 competing integrating strategies (?) • Mainstreaming SD: criteria of success
7) Long-term approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need SDS as the long term strategies for the country and the shorter (after election) to fit to them • Long-term SD goals can/should orient us to solve short-term crisis • SDS is a guarantee for systemic resilience enhancement
8) Need for implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for more effective implementation & accountability • What is the point of a strategy if it is not vertically integrated • Precautionary approach should not be forgotten even during non-extraordinary or non-problematic time periods! • Main purpose of SD = social/human wellbeing & welfare

Session 2: Past achievements of NSDSs in Europe

Session 2 was kicked off with 5 brief presentations by national SD coordinators on the experiences with their NSDSs processes. The overviews on 5 European countries (Germany, Finland, Italy, Montenegro, and Slovenia) offered different perspectives on NSDS objectives and processes.

Stefan Bauernfeind (Federal Chancellery, Germany) presented the German experience with the



NSDS by emphasising how important the issue of sustainable development is for Germany. He then highlighted that the German NSDS was firstly developed in 2002 and then reviewed several times with so-called 'progress reports'. Finally, he showed some



results from the monitoring reports and from the impact assessments performed by the German Statistical Office.

Sauli Rouhinen (Ministry of Environment, Finland) presented the Finnish experience with their NSDS and the role on the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development (FNCSO), particularly emphasising the high political



profile that SD had in Finland with the involvement of the Prime Minister who chaired the FNCSD. He then focused on several important messages by mentioning: (a) the planetary boundaries concept and the need to involve future generations, (b) the new Finnish approach for a 'societal commitment' for SD, and (c) Local Agenda 21, the activity on the local level, and of the grassroots movements in Finland.

Francesca De Crescenzo (*Ministry of Environment, Italy*) brought insights from the Italian experience with the NSDS that started in 2002 with the National Environmental Action Strategy for SD which had the objective of 100% mainstreaming the environmental pillar of SD. She then reported a lack of inter-ministerial ownership of the Italian 2002 SD strategy. Therefore, in 2012 Italy focused on a new 'National Green



Economy Agenda' that was targeted to few political priorities (8 in total): 1) Implementing "Stati Generali" GE; 2) Low-carbon economy and GJ; 3) Green Products List – GPP; 4) Smart Cities; 5) National Adaptation Plan and Securing the People and the Land; 6) Environmental Cooperation for SD in the context of Rio+20; 7) Simplification and Transparency; and 8) Greening the tax system. Furthermore, she



mentioned the work and interest on the issues of the 'beyond GDP' discourse with the report "bes 2013". Finally, she referred to the importance of international and European processes as policy drivers, especially for the SD-related policies and strategies.

Bosiljka Vukovic (*Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism, Montenegro*) reported the NSDS experiences of Montenegro. Firstly, she described the positive things that worked well in Montenegro, for instance the broad participation and societal involvement or the regular monitoring exercise that is performed every year. She also described what did not work so well, such as the absence of political backing for the Office for SD. Finally, she mentioned the lessons learnt from the Montenegrin experience towards rethinking its own NSDS with the necessity for: 1) horizontal integration among dimensions; 2) new objectives with indicators; 3) ownership; and 4) the development of a National Action Plan.

Darja Piciga (*Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment, Slovenia*)



presented the Slovenian experience with the Slovenia's Development Strategy (SDS) by emphasising how important international meetings (e.g. Rio+20) were for Slovenia's policies as well as the



large impact on national implementation of EU policies and directives. She also stressed the positive impacts coming from the

work of civil society and the importance of education and awareness-raising for SD in the country.

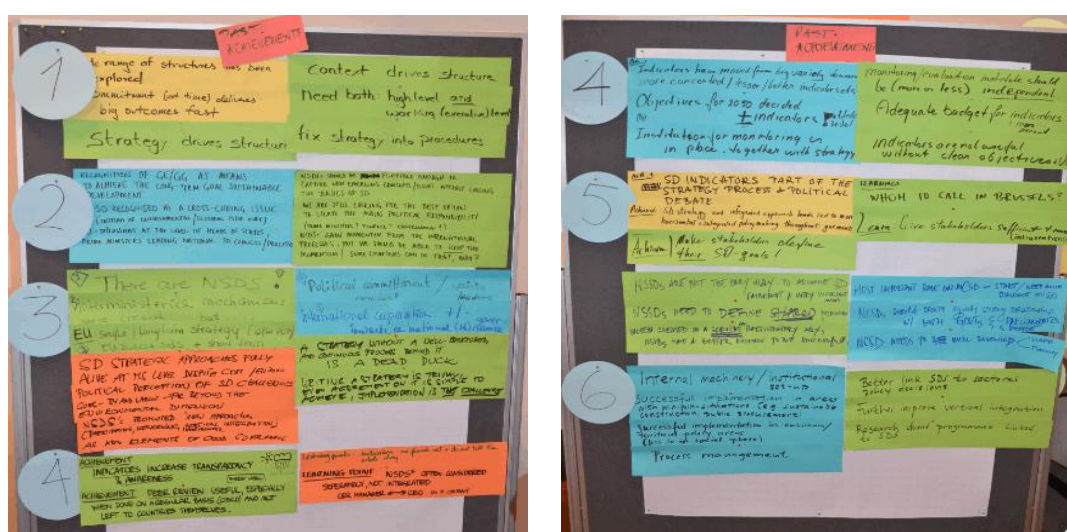
After the 5 country presentations, a **group work session** entitled "Past achievements of NSDSs in Europe" followed that included a discussion and exchange of experiences among participants. The participants were asked to join six different table working groups on six different topics: 1) Institutional anchoring of NSDSs; 2) Securing political support and leaders' commitment for

NSDSs; 3) Inter-ministerial cooperation and the steering capacity of NSDSs; 4) Fostering monitoring and evaluation; 5) Promoting stakeholder participation in NSDSs processes and the role of national SD councils; 6) Effective implementation of NSDSs. The moderator of the conference **Peter Woodward** introduced the format for the group work and asked each table to come up with:

- a) 3 main achievements of NSDSs in the past; and
- b) 3 main learning points and insights about their topic.

Furthermore, each table was asked to choose a rapporteur. During the work on tables, participants had to write their main messages on long moderation cards that, at the end of the exercise, were collected and discussed in the plenary (see following fig.1 and fig.2).

Fig.1 Past achievements and lessons learned



Below, we list the main messages collected during this session:

WG 1 "Institutional anchoring of NSDSs"	
Achievements	Lessons learned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide range of structures has been explored • Commitment (not time) delivers big outcomes fast • Strategy drives structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context drives structure • Need both: high level and working (executive level) • Fix strategy into procedures
WG 2 "Securing political support and leaders' commitment for NSDSs"	
Achievements	Lessons learned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of Green Economy/Green Growth (GE/GG) as means to achieve the long-term goal of sustainable development • SD recognized as a cross-cutting issue (instead of environmental/sectoral only) • EU-discussions at the level of heads of states, Prime Ministers leading national SD councils/processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSDSs should be flexible enough to capture new emerging concepts/issues without losing the basics of SD • We are still looking for the best option to locate the main political responsibility (Prime Ministers? Finance? Environment?) • NSDSs gain momentum from the international processes, but we should be able to keep the momentum! Some countries can do that, why?

WG 3 “Inter-ministerial cooperation and the steering capacity of NSDSs”	
Achievements	Lessons learned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are NSDSs! • Inter-ministerial mechanisms were created but ... • EU single/long-term strategy (after 2014) EU2020 + short-term strategies in line • SD strategic approaches fully alive at MS level despite COM/EU2020 • Political perception of SD challenges goes by and large far beyond the environmental dimension • NSDS's promoted new approaches (participation, networking, vertical and horizontal integration) as key elements of good governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political commitment/opinion leaders examples • International cooperation +/- impact on national SD governance • A strategy without a well-structured and continuous process behind it is a “dead duck” • Writing a strategy is trivial, even agreement on it is simple to achieve: <u>implementation is the challenge</u>

WG 4 “Fostering monitoring and evaluation”	
Achievements	Lessons learned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicators increase transparency and awareness • Peer review useful, especially when done on a regular basis (OECD) and not left to countries themselves • Indicators have moved from big variety towards more concerted / lesser / better indicator sets • Objectives for 2050 decided + indicators at federal level • Institution for monitoring is in place, together with strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicators: no fixed set + do not tell the whole story • NSDSs often considered separately, not integrated (CSR manager ↔ CEO company) • Monitoring/evaluation institute should be (more or less) independent • Adequate budget for indicators + monitoring essential • Indicators are not useful without clear objectives + vision

WG 5 “Promoting stakeholder participation in NSDSs processes and the role of national SD councils”	
Achievements	Lessons learned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SD Indicators part of the strategy process and political debate • SD strategy and integrated approach led to more horizontal + integrated policymaking throughout government • Make stakeholders define their SD-goals! • NSDSs are not the only way to advance SD (albeit a very important one) • NSDSs need to define shared responsibilities • When created in a genuine participatory way, NSDSs have a better chance to be successful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whom to call in Brussels? • Give stakeholders sufficient time (interventions) • Most important role on NCSD – Start/keep alive dialogue on SD • NCSDs should create equally strong relationship with both Governments, Parliaments and People • NCSDs need to be well resourced (staff, financing)

WG 6 “Effective implementation of NSDSs and achieving NSDSs targets”	
Achievements	Lessons learned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal machinery/institutional set-up • Successful implementation in areas with win-win situations (e.g. sustainable construction, public procurement) • Successful implementation in environmental /territorial policy areas (less so in social sphere) • Process management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better link SDS to sectoral policy decisions • Further improve vertical integration • Research development programmes linked to SDS

A rapporteur from each group then presented the results from their working group to the plenary, followed by a brief panel discussion.

Session 3: The future for NSDs in Europe and beyond

Session 3 consisted of a **high-level panel discussion** on the “the future for NSDs in Europe and beyond”, preceded by a 10 minutes **keynote presentation** by **Mariana Popova** (*Eurostat*), which provided some ‘food-for-thought’ for the coming discussion. In her presentation, Mariana firstly mentioned the work of Eurostat on the EU SDS monitoring reports and stressed the usefulness also for the Member States level. She pointed out that there was the necessity of a mandate to change the headline indicator for socio-economic development (GDP per capita) to a more suitable one for measuring socio-economic development rather than economic activity only. In this context, a problem emerged in the presence of many different indicator sets for measuring different paradigms (e.g. quality of life, SD, green economy) that created confusion and were misleading many practitioners. She also explained that environmental and social indicators were there to indicate the presence of a trade-off relationship. At the end, Mariana referred to the forthcoming 2013 Monitoring Report on the EU SDS that will be published later in 2013, including 10 indicator chapters, with an updated form of presenting the indicator results.

The panel comprised five panellists who briefly presented their viewpoints on the topic before the discussion was opened to the plenary: (i) **Wolfram Tertschnig** (*ESDN Steering Group, Austria*); (ii) **Sylvie Motard** (*Senior Programme Officer, UNEP Regional Office for Europe*); (iii) **Staffan Nilsson** (*Member of European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the EESC’s SD Observatory*); (iv) **Günther Bachmann** (*Secretary General of the German Council for SD*); and, (v) **Mariana Popova** (*Eurostat*).

At the beginning, **Sylvie Motard** from UNEP reported that an intensive process in the UN system was going on regarding SD issues with several parallel processes such as, for instance, (a) an extensive consultation process for SDGs, and (b) a report on the post-2015 development agenda. She then mentioned that UNEP’s perspective on the SDGs was based on the experiences with MDGs, taking into account some of the weaknesses of MDGs, such as the fact that MDGs were not well connected among each other. Therefore, she mentioned one of the challenges concerning SDGs: only in the environmental sector, there were 500 internationally agreed goals and, since this complexity was not functioning well, she suggested integrating and mainstreaming environmental goals as a necessary step for SDGs. In addition, she pointed out that regional perspectives will be taken up in a process that was set up and integrated in the global discussion.

Steffan Nilsson from the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) argued that, in his view, the European Commission put very little effort and commitment in sustainable development. He mentioned that only Environmental Commissioner Potočník put the attention on the necessity to keep the long-term SD perspective alive. In the context of Rio+20, he suggested starting with two crucial actions: on the one hand, he proposed to prepare a common message from EESC and other institutions on SD; on the other hand, he was convinced that to get a stronger standing, BRIC countries should be involved also by European players. He

concluded by giving his viewpoint on NSDSs in general by arguing that the EU SDS had limited value because it did not sufficiently reflect implementation that was already happening on the national level as well as local engagement and committees that were already in place.

Günther Bachmann from the German Council for SD suggested an optimistic view on the NSDSs that were, at that moment, exposed to a changing context. He referred to the situation Germany where important changes are happening, for instance, in terms of the minimum wage policy or the phasing out of nuclear power. With these processes in mind, Germany had good reasons to ask the European Commission for a revision of the EU SDS. He then emphasised that NSDSs need to change in various respects in order to become meaningful in the future, for instance, by bringing in the private sector to develop long-term visions. He concluded by arguing that transforming consumption and production patterns towards more sustainable ways should remain a key issue in SD policy-making.

Wolfram Tertschnig from the ESDN Steering Group emphasised the role of National SD strategies and the need to further improve these strategies. Therefore, he argued that NSDSs were the backbone of SD in the Europe because, given the lack of activities by the European Commission for the EU SDS, nothing was happening if not at the national level. He then emphasised the need to look for better coherence between NSDSs and other sectoral policy strategies (e.g. innovation, CSR) and to explore potential relationships with other strategies. He concluded by pointing to an important challenge of NSDSs, namely the need to define their relationship with the NRPs that had a very different approach than the one followed for SD by NSDSs.

In the following **plenary discussion**, a participant mentioned the Swedish example of inter-linkages between the SD community and others. For instance, in Sweden the finance ministry required all state-owned companies to engage in CSR goals. It was also emphasised how important it would be for environmental goals to be fully integrated into other policy goals and, at the same time, to transfer SD from the 'environment ghetto' into 'the 'centre of power' of policy-making.

Derek Osborn stressed how the EESC represents a success story, especially in the ability of linking SD community with other policy communities and bringing in not only economic and social partners, but also civil society in general. With regard to SD governance, **Steffan Nilson** referred to the challenge of different political-administrative systems and political cultures in the various European countries.

Alan AtKisson noted that the institutional anchoring of SD is tricky. On the one hand, if SD was transferred to a high-level political institution, it would signal a high political importance. However, as the experience on the EU level shows, SD can also be very successfully neglected and exposed to day-to-day political struggles if in the responsibility of such a high-level institution. On the other hand, environmental ministries are usually 'weak' ministries in terms of personnel and resources compared to other ministries, which could result in SD having a hard time gaining a more prominent position. But at the same time, environmental ministries could be the right place because SD would be located in a more stable, expert institution and less prone to political vulnerability.

Stefan Bauernfeind mentioned how the EU SDS monitoring reports by Eurostat were helpful and important documents, particularly as a good reference for NSDS. He also noted the importance of continuing initiatives on EU level and, at the same time, the necessity for NSDSs to be tailor-made for different national contexts, especially concerning the main governance bodies. Additionally, **Tibor Farago** introduced to the discussion the poverty issue, not only in terms of MDGs and the post-2015 agenda, but also in terms of the necessity for coherence at the EU level among policies on competitiveness, on solidarity and on cohesion. **Sylvie Motard** mentioned that the MDG on poverty eradication was not achieved whilst Eurostat was able to measure the inequality (or poverty gap) at least at the EU level. **André Martinuzzi** stressed that CSR strategies in the EU Member States include no indicators and no evaluation, whilst there was a presence of existing initiatives on CSR, which were not integrated into strategies.

After the plenary discussion, the panellists were given the opportunity to deliver one key message on NSDS processes to the participants. **Mariana Popova** noted that Eurostat was very dependent on political bodies for continuing its work on EU SDS indicators and its monitoring reports. But they are very keen to continue their work on monitoring SD indicators in Europe. **Günther Bachmann** commented that in terms of competition, both soft policies and regulation were deemed necessary to allow for competitiveness, also in the context of SD. **Staffan Nilsson** argued for a revised SDS and/or the greening of Europe 2020 and emphasised the need to find a 'common picture' of SD and other policies. **Sylvie Motard** welcomed the collaboration with other countries on SD issues as necessary for the forthcoming work UN is preparing for the Rio+20 follow-up. **Wolfram Tertschnig** concluded by stressing the necessity for providing role models on SD governance and networking on a national level.

Session 4: Future needs and new impulses for NSDSs

The second conference day was kicked off in **Session 4 with three keynotes** which had the objective to provide participants with different perspectives on the topic: **"How the world is changing and what does this imply for SD?"**. The PPT slides of all three keynote presentations can be found on the [ESDN homepage](#).

[Alan AtKisson](#) (*President AtKisson Group and Member of Commission President Barroso's Science and Technology Advisory Council, Sweden*) started by emphasising the EU and its role as being still the epicentre of SD policies in the world. Then, he announced the publishing of an interesting report by WWF and CDP that was trying to get businesses on-board in the fight



against climate change and towards carbon reductions: "The 3% solution. Driving profits through carbon reduction". Secondly, he offered two main personal conclusions and reflections. On the one hand, he stressed the importance of continuing to mainstream SD: in fact, in a phase of institutionalisation for SD, he called for a provision of knowledge, research and innovation management that should help embed SD in practice and in policies. On the other hand, he reminded the audience to keep in

mind what SD is about and referred to a statement from South Korea: "Green growth is the tool of a green economy which is part of SD". He then, by providing several examples from the

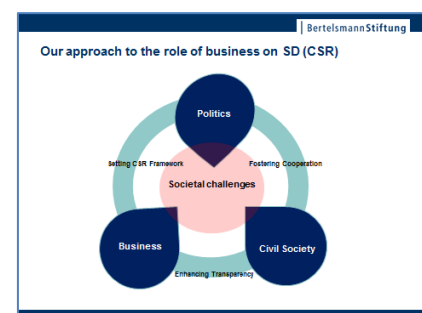
business world, research or society, showed how SD could finally to be considered to be at centre stage, also by portraying the 'sustainability compass' (see picture on the left side). He concluded by stressing that the concept of green growth would dominate the arena for the next years to come, especially in the context of economic growth and the business understanding of SD.

[Markku Wilenius](#) (*Professor of Futures Studies at Turku School of Economics, Member of Club of Rome, Finland*) in his presentation pointed to the long cycles and events that changed society over time by outlining that modern economies fluctuate in cycles of 40-60 years. Therefore, he showed the succession of development waves in industrial societies (since 1780) and delineated the drivers behind the **6th Wave (2010-2050)**, by stressing especially the search for **resource productivity**. He concluded by emphasising the role of intellectual capital and of eco-innovation that was defined as "any innovation that reduces the use of natural resources (including materials, energy, water, biomass and land) and decreases the release of harmful substances



across the whole life-cycle". Finally, he portrayed an example from Finland's new strategy for SD in the form of "Society's Commitment to Sustainability".

[Samuil Simeonov](#) (*Project Manager, Business in Society, Bertelsmann Foundation, Germany*) started by reflecting on several thoughts from the first day of the conference and then explained the main message he wanted to convey to the participants: in his perception, for SD to succeed there was the necessity to involve businesses. Therefore, he outlined the potential of multi-stakeholder collaborations for SD and particularly involving businesses in SD through public-private partnerships. In his view, the relationships between CSR and societal challenges are crucial. Therefore, he described three trends in corporate sustainability: 1) changing awareness, attitude and actions towards SD; 2) rise of collective actions and public-private collaborations at all levels; and 3) proliferation of so-called civil regulation next to public regulation. Then, he outlined the importance of multi-stakeholders initiatives and three ways to enhance SD: first, he stressed the need to make businesses part of the solution because of their positive and negative impacts on society, of their resources and capacity, of their willingness to engage, and their potential for leadership. Second, in his view there was the need to promote public-private collaboration due to complex societal problems, limited public resources and win-win potential. Third, he considers the search for institutional and policy innovations very important in order to close the expectations of a capability gap, to address regulatory, participatory and implementation deficits, and to increase legitimacy, effectiveness and efficiency of governance. He concluded by referring to the need of policymakers who help foster these typologies of collaborations.

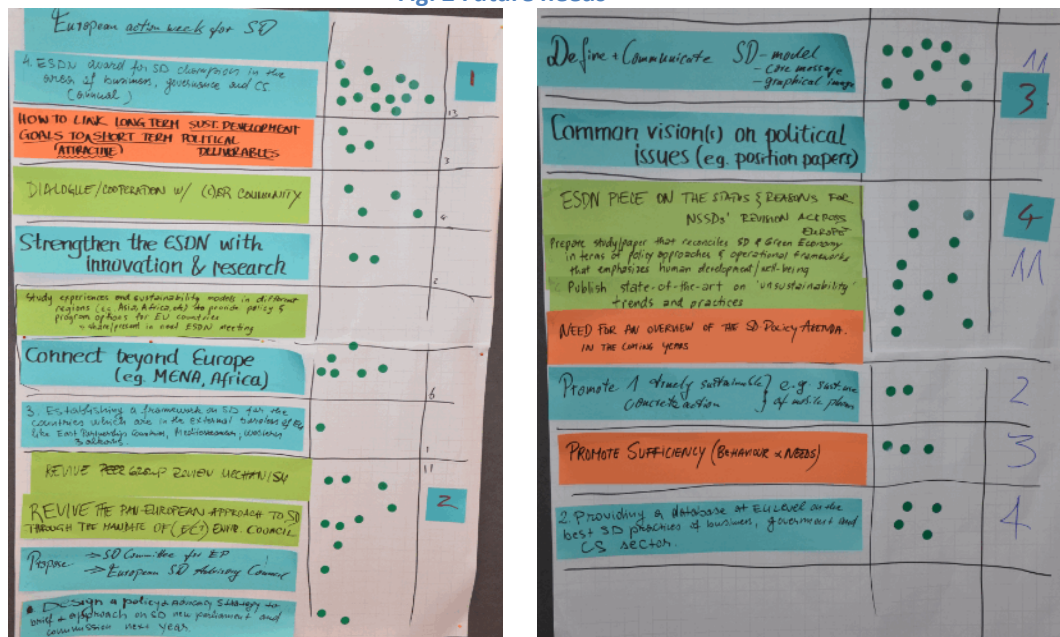


A **group work session**, based on analysing and exchanging experiences among participants on the topic "**Future needs and new impulses for NSDSs in Europe**", took place after the three keynote presentations. In contrast to day one, where participants elaborated on six predefined

topics, they now were asked to reflect on **three key issues/future needs/new impulses** for NSDS processes and, in a second step, to define first steps to achieve these.

A **discussion session** followed in the plenary where all messages from the working groups were collected and explained one by one with the intention for all participants to understand the various perspectives from the group discussions. When all cards were collected and stuck on pin-walls, a clustering exercise took place in order to facilitate reflection and organise similar thoughts together. A voting session followed for narrowing down towards the four most important priorities for SD and NSDSs (please see pictures below).

Fig. 2 Future needs



As shown in the pictures, the **topics were ranked as follows:**

1. European action week for SD / ESDN annual award for SD champion in the area of business, governance and civil society (13 votes);
2. Revive peer-group review mechanism / Revive the Pan-European approach to SD through the mandate of Environmental Council / Propose SD Committee for EP and European SD Advisory Council / Design a policy & advocacy strategy to brief and approach on SD new parliament and commission next years (11 votes);
3. Define and communicate SD model, SD core message and SD graphical image (11 votes);
4. ESDN piece on the status-reasons for NSDSs' revision across Europe / Prepare study-paper that reconciles SD & Green Economy in terms of policy approaches and operational frameworks that emphasises human development and well-being / Publish State-of-the-art on "unsustainability" trends and practices / Need for an overview of the SD policy agenda in the coming years (11 votes);
5. Connect beyond Europe (e.g. MENA, Africa) (6 votes);
6. Dialogue and cooperation with (C)SR Community (4 votes);
7. Providing a database at EU-level on the best SD practices of business, government and civil society sector (4 votes).
8. Promote Sufficiency (Behaviour and needs) (3 votes);

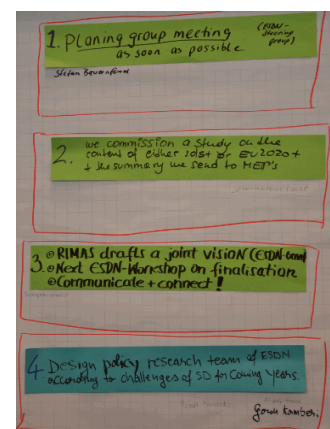
9. How to link long term sustainable development goals to attractive short time political deliverables (3 votes);
10. Strengthen the ESDN with innovation and research (2 votes);
11. Promote 1 truly sustainable concrete action (e.g. sustainable use of mobile phones) (2 votes);
12. Establishing a framework on SD for the countries which are in the external borders of EU like East Partnerships countries, Mediterranean, Western Balkans (1 vote);
13. Study experiences and sustainability models in different regions (e.g. Asia, Africa, etc.) do provide policy and program options for EU countries → share/present in next ESDN meeting (0 votes);
14. Common visions on political issues (e.g. position papers) (0 votes);

In the voting session, **four topics** were chosen for further exploration:

1. European action week for SD / ESDN annual award for SD champion in the area of business, governance and civil society (13 votes);
2. Revive peer-group review mechanism / Revive the Pan-European approach to SD through the mandate of Environmental Council / Propose SD Committee for EP and European SD Advisory Council / Design a policy & advocacy strategy to brief and approach on SD new parliament and commission next years (11 votes);
3. Define and communicate SD model, SD core message and SD graphical image (11 votes);
4. ESDN piece on the status-reasons for NSDSs' revision across Europe / Prepare study-paper that reconciles SD & Green Economy in terms of policy approaches and operational frameworks that emphasises human development and well-being / Publish State-of-the-art on "unsustainability" trends and practices / Need for an overview of the SD policy agenda in the coming years (11 votes).

Session 5: Key issues for the ESDN to support future needs and challenges for NSDSs

The final **Session 5** started with participants joining four working groups, each for one of the four most-voted topics from the previous session (see above), in order to explore the topic **"What are the ways we can operationalize this area?"** by brainstorming ideas, thoughts and possible concrete next steps, especially in the light of the work of the ESDN. Back in the plenary, one rapporteur per group reported about their respective group work results.



The results are described as follows:

1. Awareness raising:

- a. "European Action Week" for SD;
- b. ESDN award for champion in the area of business, governance and civil society.

Immediate next step:

Planning group meeting (ESDN Steering Group)

2. Fostering actions at the European level:

- a. revive Peer Review mechanism;
- b. revive the pan-European approach to SD through the mandate of the Environmental Council;
- c. propose an SD Committee in the EP and European SD Advisory Council; design a policy and advocacy strategy to brief new Parliament and Commission on SD next year.

Immediate next step:

Commissioning a study on the content of EU SDS and Europe 2020 and send summary to MEPs

3. Vision and definition of SD:

- a. define and communicate SD mode, core message, graphical image;
- b. common vision on political issues (e.g. position papers).

Immediate next step:

RIMAS draft a joint SD vision (ESDN-based); next ESDN Workshop on finalization; communicate and connect

4. Studies and reports:

- a. ESDN piece on the status and reason for NSDSs revisions across Europe;
- b. prepare study/paper that reconciles SD & Green Economy in terms of policy approaches and operational frameworks that emphasized well-being/human development;
- c. publish state-of-the-art of 'unsustainability' trends and practices;
- d. need for an overview of the SD policy agenda in the coming years.

Immediate next step:

Design policy research team of ESDN according to challenges of SD for the coming years.

After this session, [Elisabeth Freytag & Wolfram Tertschnig](#) closed the conference and thanked the conference participants for their attendance. They pointed out that the ESDN will inform the conference participants about the next steps the ESDN will undertake in following-up on the conference results.



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