



# **ESDN CONFERENCE 2017 CONFERENCE REPORT**

**Strategic governance for SD: New  
developments and approaches in the  
context of the 2030 Agenda and  
SDGs**

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# Introduction

This ESDN Conference Report provides information on the inputs, discussions and outcomes of the **ESDN Annual Conference 2017**, entitled “**Strategic Governance for SD: New developments and approaches in the context of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs**”, which took place in **Prague on 22-23 June 2017** in cooperation with the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic (Department of Sustainable Development). The ESDN Annual Conference 2017 provided a chance to learn about new governance approaches and concepts required to address and implement the 2030 Agenda for SD and the SDGs. It also showcased practical examples of implementation efforts from various European countries.

The conference was a 1.5-day event, and brought together policymakers and experts from different stakeholder groups from all over Europe and beyond. A total of 75 participants from 24 countries took part in the conference. The conference provided an opportunity to take stock of the current 2030 Agenda and SDG implementation experiences and approaches within the different European countries, as well as giving the chance for in-depth discussions and hands-on activities to help put these new governance approaches into practice.

The conference started with a welcome and opening session, followed by three sessions, each being comprised of two parts:

- **Session 1: Practical Steps Towards Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development**
  - Part 1: Conceptual Framework for Policy Coherence
  - Part 2: The Reality of Policy Coherence for the SDGs at the National Level
- **Session 2: Good Governance – From New Public Management to Systems Thinking and Knowledge Brokerage**
  - Part 1: Paradigm Shifts and New Approaches in Governance
  - Part 2: Knowledge Brokerage for SD
- **Session 3: Strategic Foresight – From Vision Building to Policy-making**
  - Part 1: The Conundrum of Policy Planning for the Future
  - Part 2: Learning the Methods and their Policy Link

To access the full documentation of the ESDN Conference 2017, please go to the [ESDN Website](#), where the following documents are available for download: (i) conference agenda; (ii) conference background paper; (iii) PowerPoint slides of all keynote and other presentations; (v) conference report; (vi) participant list, and (vii) a photo documentation.

# Opening and Orientation Session



The opening and orientation session included several welcome addresses and a brief introduction to the topic of the conference, strategic governance for SD.

**VLADIMIR ŠPIDLA**, (*Director of the Department of Advisors to the Prime Minister, Czech Republic*) welcomed the participants to the ESDN Conference 2017 and mentioned how the hot days during which the conference took place may well be proof of the need to care more about sustainable development (SD): good governance in the Anthropocene is vital in tackling the challenges ahead. Vladimír Špidla said that society is faced with many fundamental problems and decisions that need to be taken on a very long-term horizon; society will need to find technical solutions to complex problems. In addition,



society needs to be sure that individual citizens will accept the proposed solutions and that solutions are politically implemented. According to Mr. Špidla, uncertainty in this process is something that can be called a 'crisis of democracy'. He believes that successfully addressing and implementing SD largely depends on the establishment of a more efficient democracy. Mr. Špidla suggested that a narrow-minded approach will not succeed when defining the new agenda. However, one must bear in mind that any strategic solutions to address SD more effectively will also affect people and various stakeholders in different ways. Therefore, an open and clear policy process is needed for the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

Additionally, Mr. Špidla argued, that Governance for SD needs to start at the global level, as SD is a global matter. This needs to be followed by actions at all other policy levels, including the European level. In his conclusion, Mr. Špidla

paraphrased the thought of Willy Brandt by saying that society has to dare more democracy. Democracy is not the creation of masses and their manipulation, but it is the process of emancipation of man and cooperative communities and society has to be brave and accomplish it.

**ELISABETH FREYTAG-RIGLER & WOLFRAM TERTSCHNIG**, (ESDN Co-chairs, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, Austria) took to the stage next and welcomed participants of the Annual Conference on behalf of the ESDN Steering Group. They also thanked the Czech Government Office for hosting the conference.



At the beginning, Elisabeth made the participants aware that on 20 June 2017, the General Affairs Council Conclusions on “A sustainable European future: The EU response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” requests the European Commission (EC) to ensure that all new and existing policies are in line with the SDGs and their targets. The ESDN can be proud that the Network was mentioned in the Council Conclusions alongside the European Sustainable Development Week (ESDW). This is the result of hard work that has been done in the ESDN since 2003. There is also information that the EU will report to the HLPF 2019 on the 2030 Agenda implementation at the European level, which may require a stronger interaction and cooperation with the individual Member States. Elisabeth argued that political commitment is key and that this seems to be now more firmly established with the above mentioned Council Conclusions. However, actions at the national and sub-national level are equally important, as are the activities by different stakeholder groups.

Wolfram congratulated the Czech Republic on their new National SD Strategy and their Voluntary National Review (VNR) that they will present at the HLPF 2017. He pointed out that the way in which governments and ministries are organized was appropriate a century ago, but nowadays maybe new and different governance arrangements and mechanisms are called for. With regard to SD, Wolfram argued that new governance systems are necessary to achieve SD and that awareness raising is fundamental in that regard. In addition, political commitment, innovation and reflexivity are paramount. For almost 15 years, the ESDN has been working to achieve this. Civil servants have been cooperating in this informal mechanism because it is useful. Recently, the ESDN has started peer learning activities for the 2030 Agenda and SDG implementation, and will have a side event at the HLPF 2017. The ESDN will also try to demonstrate why its peer learning mechanism is so useful and how it has advanced the 2030 Agenda for member countries.



# Session 1: Practical steps towards Policy Coherence for sustainable Development

Session 1 had two parts: The first part was on the OECD's work on policy coherence. In this part, there was one keynote speaker from the OECD, who presented the work of the OECD on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development and the new framework with its eight building blocks for a coherent and integrated implementation. The second part was on the practical steps of policy coherence in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda with presentations from representatives of national ministries who provided an overview of their experiences.

## Part 1: Conceptual Framework for Policy Coherence

**EBBA DOHLMAN**<sup>1</sup> (*Senior Advisor, Policy Coherence for Development, OECD*) outlined that the Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) Unit of the OECD has the role of connecting the dots between different parts of the organization. In this regard, they developed a new framework for policy coherence. She started by quoting Ban Ki-moon, former Secretary-General of the UN, who stated that “Agenda 2030 compels us to look beyond national boundaries and short-term interests and act in solidarity for the long-term. We can no longer afford to think and work in silos”. She then said that this quote essentially captures what policy coherence for SD is all about: an action at home with big impacts everywhere. Policy coherence can inform policy-making and provide a lens for all actions across the policy community.



Breaking out of silos is a challenge that takes a long time, and is exactly why the OECD tried to develop a tool to help governments to face this challenge. Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) is a specific target embedded in SDG 17.14, but there is little guidance on what it is and how it should be used. PCSD emerged as an effort to raise awareness and make sure that “what is given with one hand is not taken away with the other”, meaning policies that are implemented to aid in reaching a certain SDG should not lead to a decline in a country's ability to meet another SDG.

However, it is a limited approach and many governments are embedded in silos. At the same time, there is a lot of literature and experiences on policy coherence that can be used to build on. The goal is, therefore, to foster synergies, identify

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<sup>1</sup> Please find the Power Point Slides of this presentation at [http://www.sd-network.eu/pdf/conferences/2017\\_prague/presentations/Session%201/Ebba%20Dohlmán%20\(OECD\)%20.pdf](http://www.sd-network.eu/pdf/conferences/2017_prague/presentations/Session%201/Ebba%20Dohlmán%20(OECD)%20.pdf)

trade-offs, and address spillovers (both transboundary and intergenerational). Out of this definition, the OECD developed a conceptual framework that guides policymakers in all policy stage processes, ex ante and ex post. It consists of an analytical framework, an institutional framework, and a monitoring framework. Ms. Dohlman explained that all three frameworks need to be considered at the same time. The PCSD eight building blocks are mainly the result of lessons learned from the past and from VNRs presented in 2016.

Ms. Dohlman concluded by saying that breaking up the silos means innovating, adapting, and learning by doing; there is no blue print. However, the OCED is willing to support efforts at the national level.

## Q&A Session

Ebba Dohlmans' presentation was followed by a **Q&A session**, in which participants asked a myriad of questions. One participant asked, *which, in her opinion, is the most important building block of the OECD framework and which one is the most problematic*. Ms. Dohlman answered that, alongside political commitment, probably stakeholder participation is the most important. The answer was justified, Ms. Dohlman stressed, by the fact that there are already political institutions in place, but they are not working properly with regard to sustainable development. Stakeholder participation, private sector and academia involvement can help to keep the pressure up on each other. The long-term perspective can be considered as the most problematic, because most countries are blocked by electoral cycles. Is difficult to think about future generations when countries are called frequently to elections.

Another question focused on the *involvement of citizens and the importance in communicating the sustainable development message so that it is reflected in the elections*. The participant asked Ms. Dohlman if the OECD has a strategy to communicate to citizens in an easy way and if citizens' involvement is included in the building blocks. Ms. Dohlman mentioned that each policy community has a different way of communicating and thinking, and reaching the citizens is often difficult. However, a good case is Finland, which is addressing a lot of challenges at home. At the same time, she wondered if there is any country integrating SDGs in the school program, because that is where we would need to start.

Another participant highlighted the *importance of mutual learning processes*, and learning from small communities and asked if this is included in the OECD strategy. Ms. Dohlman replied by saying that, of course, a lot comes down to learning by doing. The OECD ran several multi-stakeholder workshops, where they played role games in which participants needed to sit in as stakeholder groups and decided on their priorities. When presenting the results, participants needed to consider the priorities of the other groups. This exercise seemed to raise awareness about breaking silos and understanding interlinkages: Dialogue is fundamental. Sometimes the link between domestic actions and elsewhere is

missing. More concretely, even the Paris Climate Agreement does not include something on transboundary impacts. We need to bridge these gaps and foster understanding at many levels.

Again, another participant mentioned their *doubt concerning the building blocks and the fact that it might not be enough*. Ms. Dohlman answered to these uncertainties by saying that everyone comes from different traditions and working cultures and, therefore, it needs time for such a concept to have some impact. In addition, there still is a lot to do and to communicate. According to her, developing countries are currently moving faster than the developed ones on 2030 Agenda implementation because they have a tradition of poverty reduction strategies. However, their obstacle is to bring in civil society and stakeholders.

Finally, one participant suggested to also include financial incentives and budgets as a building block, because often there is limited fiscal space, and unless SD is part of the budget, very little action is going to take place.

## Part 2: The Reality of Policy Coherence for the SDGs at the National Level

**ANNA KÁRNÍKOVÁ<sup>2</sup>** (*Director of the Department of Sustainable Development, Office of the Government of the Czech Republic*) emphasized in her opening presentation in Part 2 of Session 1 how, in the Czech Republic, Policy Coherence has been a concept used for decades. Policymakers discussed on how to achieve it for at least two decades and according to her, results could be better than what they actually are. In the last years, there has been a paradigm shift from PCD (Policy Coherence for Development) to PCSD. PCD has not been achieved, but now it is necessary to achieve PCSD. According to Ms. Kárníková, it is not so much about coordination, but more about accomplishing impact assessments. However, these impact assessments require huge analytical capacity. She continued by saying that if countries want a good impact assessment, on-the-ground activities and econometric models would be needed. The question to ask ourselves here is: Do we actually have the capacity? Having the capacity is a precondition for policy coherence.



Ms. Kárníková offered a new point of view for PCSD achievement by saying that we tend to take a system perspective to PCSD, but maybe a recipient perspective could be more useful and provide more accessibility for the concept.

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<sup>2</sup> Please find the Power Point Slides of this presentation at [http://www.sd-network.eu/pdf/conferences/2017\\_prague/presentations/Session%201/Anna%20Karnikova%20\(Czech%20Republic\)%201.pdf](http://www.sd-network.eu/pdf/conferences/2017_prague/presentations/Session%201/Anna%20Karnikova%20(Czech%20Republic)%201.pdf)



If we use the citizens' perspective, we can understand how current policies influence their life and ask: Are they getting the results they need? The recipient part of vulnerable groups is particularly relevant in this context.

**ANNIKA LINDBLOM**<sup>3</sup> (*Ministry of the Environment, Finland*) highlighted the importance of having a good institutional mechanism in place for delivering policies. In Finland, the coordination unit concerning the 2030 Agenda implementation lies with the Prime Minister's Office.



While measuring Finland's progresses in SDG implementation, it emerged that, generally, the country is doing well, but also that there are gaps in some areas, such as climate change and the employment rate. Finland was aware of these gaps, but they were surprised to find out that they are not performing well on several SDG 5 indicators. To find out the reason why, Finland decided to conduct a test with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to check if decisions are supported by CSOs. Different Finnish stakeholder groups organized workshops and following these organized workshops, it was possible to map key areas and critical issues that needed to be put into focus. According to Ms. Lindblom, in order to achieve some results, it is necessary to invest in capacity development, and politics need to adapt. To overcome conflicts of interest and deal with trade-offs, Ms. Lindblom suggested focusing on five main issues:

- Build on scientific work, but understand political realities;
- Design the process to be bullet-proof and prepare yourself for criticism;
- Offer ownership beyond usual suspects;
- Get highest level & political back-up; and
- Make the silos dance together

Ms. Lindblom concluded by answering some questions from participants by saying that it is possible to build trust in society only by taking everybody on board and have a mutual dialogue. She affirmed that openness among ministries and mutual dialogue has been an asset in Finland's work towards PCSD.

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<sup>3</sup> Please find the Power Point Slides of this presentation at [http://www.sdnetwork.eu/pdf/conferences/2017\\_prague/presentations/Session%201/Annika%20Lindblom%20\(Finland\).pdf](http://www.sdnetwork.eu/pdf/conferences/2017_prague/presentations/Session%201/Annika%20Lindblom%20(Finland).pdf)

**HERBERT KRISTOFFERSEN<sup>4</sup>** (*Norwegian Ministry of Finance, Norway*) started his speech by underlining the different administrative setup for SDGs in Norway compared to several countries. In Norway, SDG achievement is a shared responsibility between the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, all line ministries in Norway are responsible for certain SDGs. They are encouraged to cooperate, but are, at the end of the day, responsible for their own SDG. Norway's progress towards the SDGs is rather good. However, like most countries, it has some demanding challenges that need to be addressed.



**LÁSZLÓ BORBÉLY<sup>5</sup>** (*State Counsellor to the Prime Minister's Office of the Romanian Government*) stressed the importance of political will for achieving the SDGs. Without the political will of the EU Parliament and the EU Member States, Mr. Borbély argued, it is not possible to put together all the necessary initiatives and the danger remains of countries continuing to use separate policy strategies. According to him, some efforts need to be put into translating the SDGs into a day-by-day language for policymakers and citizens. Communication is essential and can happen through social media, events, SDG movements, and education. Also important is to start introducing teaching material in educational institutions to make the future generation understand what the SDGs are.



**IHAB FAHMY** (*Deputy Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean*) focused on the necessity of coordinated efforts to achieve the SDGs in the Mediterranean region. Looking at facts, youth unemployment is 30% in the Mediterranean areas, and there is a big loss of biodiversity. Among the most pressing challenge is the level of economic and social integration. To address these challenges, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) has developed a unique working methodology. This is based on three 'Ps':



- Political dimension: regular sectorial ministerial conference;

<sup>4</sup> Please find the Power Point Slides of this presentation at [http://www.sd-network.eu/pdf/conferences/2017\\_prague/presentations/Session%201/Herbert%20Kristoffersen%20\(Norway\).pdf](http://www.sd-network.eu/pdf/conferences/2017_prague/presentations/Session%201/Herbert%20Kristoffersen%20(Norway).pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Please find the Power Point Slides of this presentation at [http://www.sd-network.eu/pdf/conferences/2017\\_prague/presentations/Session%201/Mr.%20Borbely%20\(Romania\).pdf](http://www.sd-network.eu/pdf/conferences/2017_prague/presentations/Session%201/Mr.%20Borbely%20(Romania).pdf)

- Platform dimension: bringing together other representatives, such as regional representatives, and sharing good practice examples and solutions;
- Projects dimension: as a concrete example, last month in Cairo, the UfM held the second Ministerial Conference on Sustainable Urban Development. The conference was a significant milestone for urban coordination.

In addition, the UfM is developing a strategy for transport activities to establish an integrated and efficient sustainable network in the south Mediterranean region. According to Mr. Fahmy, urban sustainability cannot be dealt with unless transportation is addressed and made more sustainable.

## Q&A Session

During the Q&A session following the presentations, Herbert Kristoffersen was asked about the Norwegian paradox. The Norwegian paradox refers to the fact that Norway is domestically lowering CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, but increasing its exports of oil. Herbert answered by saying that Norway is following the norm according to which emissions from fossil fuels are mainly measured where they are consumed. Therefore, exported oil that is burned outside Norway is not counted.

Annika Lindblom responded to a question about how Finland is able to show their policy successes and challenges in such an open and transparent manner. She said that it is a big dilemma whether to present the results of this gap analysis in front of a big audience or not. Finland's answer to this dilemma is that they can show their gaps and strengths, but for politicians is also important to show that they have solutions. Ms. Lindblom mentioned that there was resistance to choose SD indicators that would show Finland in a bad light. However, it is considered important to realize that if they do not measure their gaps, they will never achieve the SDGs. Finland will use its new SD indicators starting this fall.

Another question was directed to Anna Kárníková. After agreeing that an impact assessment is needed, the participant mentioned that, at the same time, a political debate on the SDGs is often lacking. The participant's perception is that there is often an impact assessment, but in the political debate, the conclusions do not play a role. Ms. Kárníková argued that this is often related to a time and resource issue. In addition, she mentioned the case of the Czech Republic's impact analysis for external effect in agricultural policy. Agriculture is mostly regulated by the EU and in this, like in other sectors where the EU is particularly relevant, it is difficult for one individual Member State to intervene.

## Session 2: Good Governance – From New Public Management to Systems Thinking and Knowledge Brokerage

Session 2 also comprised two parts, and both included reflections on good governance from a systemic perspective, including new forms of governance that need to consider the rapidly changing world we live in, and the importance of science expertise for sustainable development. Part 1 was about “Paradigm Shifts and New Approaches in Governance” with presentations from **Vladimír Kváča**, who discussed new public management and the metagovernance concept, and **Anna Kárníková** who presented a concrete example concerning the Czech Republic’s Sustainable Development Strategy. Part 2 was concerned with “Knowledge Brokerage for SD” and included a presentation by **André Martinuzzi**. It also explored different ways to bridge the gap between policymakers and scientists.

### Part 1: Paradigm Shifts and New Approaches in Governance

**VLADIMÍR KVÁČA**<sup>6</sup> (*Chair of EU Public Administration and Governance Network, Czech Republic*) started his presentation by mentioning the strong interlinkage between SDGs and ‘wicked problems’, as well as the fact that all SDGs are concentrated around wicked problems. Mr. Kváča defined wicked problems as problems that, despite all the efforts, are persistent and unsustainable over a long-term perspective. In order to address these ‘wicked problems’, a paradigm shift in public governance and strategic management is necessary, where thinking out of the box will be key. Particularly, according to Mr. Kváča, we have to pay attention to the environment we operate in, because it is moving from a relatively stable and predictable world, to a world characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (‘V.U.C.A. - world’). A metagovernance approach can help to address these challenges by finding the best form of governance for the specific problem at hand. Metagovernance implies a shift from looking for the best practice to thinking about our thinking about governance. According to Mr. Kváča, metagovernance is “governance of governance” and a process to achieve smart governance is a mixture of hierarchical, market and network governance. It entails critical thinking about the daily practices (first order governance) and main modes of governance (second order governance) as any form of governance can be problematic when taken too far.



<sup>6</sup> Please find the Power Point Slides of this presentation at [https://prezi.com/xxw2yl8vgne8/paradigm-shifts-in-public-governance-and-strategic-managemen/?utm\\_campaign=share&utm\\_medium=copy](https://prezi.com/xxw2yl8vgne8/paradigm-shifts-in-public-governance-and-strategic-managemen/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy)



**ANNA KÁRNÍKOVÁ<sup>7</sup>** (*Director of the Department of Sustainable Development, Office of the Government of the Czech Republic*) talked about the preparation and implementation of the new Czech Sustainable Development Strategy. Once it was realized that using old practices would not deliver the right results, the Czech Government started to look for new approaches. The strategy, "Czech Republic 2030", acts as the implementation platform for the SDGs and focuses on 6 key sectoral areas with strategic and specific goals. The next step will be to assess whether these goals have been achieved, and whether the Czech Republic will be able to achieve them by 2030. Important in this monitoring stage is the so-called Shadow Reporting: government will think about how to develop the monitoring phase, but also different stakeholder groups will be given a chance to deliver their perspectives, which can oftentimes uncover unaccounted for data that is important in accurate monitoring.

## Q&A Session

A particular question focused on the status of the "Czech Republic 2030" strategy when there is a change of government, i.e. is it likely that the this strategy will be neglected and a new strategy will be developed. Ms. Kárníková answered that all the parties in the parliament were approached. Therefore, people who belong to different political parties are aware of what the government is doing. She said that there is confidence that new governments can find their priorities in the current strategy framework as well.

## Part 2: Knowledge Brokerage for SD

**ANDRÉ MARTINUZZI<sup>8</sup>** (*Head of the Institute for Managing Sustainability, Vienna University of Economics and Business & ESDN Office*) underlined the importance of bridging the gap between policymakers and scientists, but also made the participants aware of the inherent differences between these two actor groups. Researchers think in a cause-effect way, while policymakers think about the problem and how to solve it; researchers want to reframe, while policymakers copy solutions or take ideas from the good practice examples of other countries.



<sup>7</sup> Please find the Power Point Slides of this presentation at [http://www.sd-network.eu/pdf/conferences/2017\\_prague/presentations/Session%202/Anna%20Karnikova\\_ESDN\\_CR%202030.pdf](http://www.sd-network.eu/pdf/conferences/2017_prague/presentations/Session%202/Anna%20Karnikova_ESDN_CR%202030.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Please find the Power Point Slides of this presentation at [http://www.sd-network.eu/pdf/conferences/2017\\_prague/presentations/Session%202/Martinuzzi%20ESDN%202017%20print.pdf](http://www.sd-network.eu/pdf/conferences/2017_prague/presentations/Session%202/Martinuzzi%20ESDN%202017%20print.pdf)



Researchers need to keep in mind that policy-making takes place at different places by different actors at different times, and because of that it is hard to link up. However, what policymakers should keep in mind is that impact on policy is not an incentive for researchers to contribute; it is not a currency researchers work with, as their currency is publications in academic journals. Mr. Martinuzzi then presented different research projects (mainly funded by the European Commission), where an exchange between scientists and policymakers actually happened. Among these, he mentioned RESPONDER, AWARE, BESSE, CORPUS, and several others. Mr. Martinuzzi finally outlined different interaction formats between researchers and policymakers, which can be categorized into four archetypes, coined by Martinuzzi (2016) as “games of knowledge brokerage”.

## **Interactive Group Work: Good Governance and Policy Coherence for SD**

At the end of Day 1, participants were invited to an Interactive Group Work, during which they were asked to: 1) share experiences in achieving policy coherence for sustainable development; and 2) highlight two practical insights to inspire/inform our/the OECD action. The summary of practical insights to inform further actions developed by participants in the Group Work are summarized below:



- Use of existing policies as a starting point for updating and upgrading policies to be fit for purpose for the 2030 Agenda and SDGs;
- More involvement of parliaments in the 2030 Agenda/SDG policy process;
- Developing a common understanding of what policy coherence is and what it needs to become reality, including a list of the benefits of policy coherence;
- Create incentives for policy silos to dance, i.e. develop mechanisms and activities for sectoral ministries to better and more effectively cooperate in the 2030 Agenda/SDG implementation process;
- Change the behavior and mindset of policymakers;
- Overarching analysis of trade-offs in the SDGs, including a reflection on how to resolve conflicts and create synergies;
- Early involvement of local stakeholders and institutionalized stakeholder involvement that goes beyond electoral cycles;
- Inclusion of SDGs in education/schools at all levels – systems thinking for SD should be developed very early;
- Investments in institutionalizing long-term dialogue and interaction: create a ‘new normal’ as part of the cultural DNA;
- Seize the crisis moment to make progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda/SDGs;
- Development of concrete methods/procedures to achieve radical change.

## Session 3: Strategic Foresight – From Vision Building to Policy-making

Session 3 had, as the previous two sessions, two parts: It began with two keynote presentations on the general issue of “The Conundrum of Policy Planning for the Future”. The first keynote by **MICHAL PAZOUR** discussed the role of strategic foresight for policy-making. The second presentation by **ANITA PIRC-VELKAVERH** focused on the concept of foresight for sustainable development from the perspective of the EEA’s experiences. The second part of Session 2, titled “Learning the Methods and their Policy Link”, comprised four parallel break-out group sessions that focused on different scenario development strategies: foresight and scenario development, roadmapping, horizon scanning, and strategic policy-making, respectively.

### Part 1: The Conundrum of Policy Planning for the Future

**MICHAL PAZOUR’S<sup>9</sup>** (*Head of Strategy Studies Unit, Technology Centre of Czech Academy of Sciences*) presentation underlined the growing complexity characterizing our world, which is creating new challenges for policy-making. What are the challenges related to growing complexity? 1) Policy-makers need to better understand complex systems, their features and behavior; 2) need to respond rapidly, flexibly and in a systemic way; 3) need to consider different partners, their views and needs in policy design; and 4) need to strengthen collective intelligence through collaboration, partnership and networks.



Currently the policy-making world is mainly based on current trends, but Mr. Pazour said that what we need is to explore future developments of these trends. Policy needs to be more based on future opportunities and on the future we want to achieve. It needs to be more proactive, explore what can happen and needs to be more participatory. Strategic foresight is an approach that can be used for many kinds of policies and can offer more insights. However, it is also important to understand what strategic foresight is. Strategic foresight is not forecasting: it does not aim to predict the future, but rather to explore the future. The basic question of foresight is what happens if *x-situation* occurs, and what can we do if this *x-situation* does happen: we have to deal with a portfolio of possible futures. Based on the portfolio of future developments, we can try to identify the preferred one. Strategic foresight is an open, participatory, and

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<sup>9</sup> Please find the Power Point Slides of this presentation at [http://www.sd-network.eu/pdf/conferences/2017\\_prague/presentations/Session%203/Michal%20Pazour.pdf](http://www.sd-network.eu/pdf/conferences/2017_prague/presentations/Session%203/Michal%20Pazour.pdf)

action oriented exercise. To make foresight successful, authority, legitimacy and credibility are essential.

When speaking about strategic foresight in SD policy, it is key to consider that complexity is in the very heart of the SD agenda. In this respect, foresight is a perfect tool for dealing with complexity. Mr. Pazour concluded his presentation by quoting Abraham Lincoln and saying that “the best way to predict the future is to create it”.

## Q&A Session

Mr. Pazour was asked if there are criteria regarding what to look at during the strategic foresight process. He answered that it depends on the project, because the project defines the criteria to focus on. At the very first stage, when you frame the project, you set the criteria. In the case of the SDGs, which is very broad and covers many topics, the criteria for foresight in SD would be very rich, but if we talk about a no carbon future, that is more specific, you can set a limited set of criteria. Context and scope are very important in foresight.

Another participant asked if Mr. Pazour knows of a foresight management project when it comes to the 2030 Agenda, and if there is something already happening within the foresight community. He said that the SD agenda is on the top of foresight activities in some countries. What countries usually do is to select part of the Agenda and explore the future in a specific field. A lot of attention is given to transport, environmental issues, and technologies, especially how technologies can reshape the structure of industry and services.

**ANITA PIRC-VELKAVRH'S<sup>10</sup>** (*Department of Foresight and Sustainable Development, European Environment Agency (EEA)*) presentation dealt with Foresight for Sustainable Development, with a particular focus on the experiences of the EEA. Every five years, the EEA releases the SOER report. The messages from SOER 2015 were that, looking at recent trends, Europe is unlikely to reach its vision for 2050, and the long-term outlook is worrying. The EEA found two major factors that are contributing to the long-term challenge: 1) the changing global context, and 2) the systemic characteristic of environmental challenges. According to Ms. Pirc-Velkavrh, socioeconomic changes are needed to reach the European vision, as well as a profound transition. A transition from mainly problem-focused knowledge to more solutions-oriented knowledge is necessary. There is no data about the



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<sup>10</sup> Please find the Power Point Slides of this presentation at [http://www.sd-network.eu/pdf/conferences/2017\\_prague/presentations/Session%203/Anita%20Pirc%20Velkavrh%201\\_Scenarios%20use-20-6-17\\_esdn1.pdf](http://www.sd-network.eu/pdf/conferences/2017_prague/presentations/Session%203/Anita%20Pirc%20Velkavrh%201_Scenarios%20use-20-6-17_esdn1.pdf)

future, but some important insights are available. Foresight is a forward looking approach that aims to help decision-makers explore and anticipate, as well as prepare for a range of possible future scenarios, influence them and shape the future. For the SOER 2020, the EEA will upgrade the traditional thematic trends assessment with a system assessment that allows a forward-looking perspective. Many new policies have been introduced with clear, long-term perspectives (i.e. low carbon, circular economy, SDGs, biodiversity etc.), which need to be understood in the context of the EU vision “living well within the limits of our planet”. Even if the EEA will not build new scenarios for this purpose, the existing research and other institutions’ scenarios and transitions knowledge base will be used to enlighten the environmental forward-looking perspective.

## Q&A Session

A participant was particularly interested in planetary boundaries and tipping points and asked Ms. Pirc-Velkavrh where the EEA identifies tipping points in the European environmental eco-system. She answered that the EEA is not yet analyzing tipping points, but that they are in the process of doing it. Another question focused on the environmental challenges analysis conducted by the EEA and what kind of messages the EEA comes up with. Ms. Pirc-Velkavrh said that the EEA does not give recommendations, but their messages are rather findings about where the EU stands, where good practice can be identified, and what can be learned from them.

## Part 2: Learning the Methods and their Policy Link

In part 2 of this session, participants split into 4 parallel break-out groups. Each one focused on a particular scenario building or foresight method and how these methods can be used in real life policy-making. Please find below a short summary of each of the parallel groups:

### Group 1: Foresight and Scenario Development

**ANITA PIRC-VELKAVRH<sup>11</sup>** (*Department of Foresight and Sustainable Development, European Environment Agency (EEA)*) started her group session about foresight and scenario development by making participants aware that the changing nature, time perspective and context of environmental problems also calls for changing assessment approaches and types of information used. More forward-



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<sup>11</sup> Please find the Power Point Slides of this presentation at [http://www.sd-network.eu/pdf/conferences/2017\\_prague/presentations/Session%203/Anita%20Pirc%20Velkavrh\\_break%20out2%20-%20Overview.pdf](http://www.sd-network.eu/pdf/conferences/2017_prague/presentations/Session%203/Anita%20Pirc%20Velkavrh_break%20out2%20-%20Overview.pdf)



looking environmental integrated assessment calls for the application of methods that will provide insights into future uncertainties and complexities. Foresight becomes an increasingly more relevant approach to support policy- and strategy-making for at least two reasons: 1) to deliver information for the forward-looking perspective; and 2) due to its participatory nature, to integrate various stakeholders' perspectives at early stages of policy-making.

Visioning and scenario building are important key approaches to bring light into the possible options for the future, trade-offs, risks and opportunities. Different types of information and methods are needed to contribute to different purposes and to different phases of the policy cycle. For example, horizon scanning for agenda setting, scenario building for policy development, stakeholders' perspectives for policy implementation and checking of the robustness of policies through different scenario lenses in the phase of policy evaluation.

The long-term future is very uncertain, as there is no data for the future. The different character of the evidence base makes it very difficult to bring foresight and forward-looking analyses directly into policy-making. The EEA wanted to evaluate success factors and factors of failure of the use and impact of foresight in policy-making. To learn and raise awareness for that problem, the EEA launched the study "Strategic foresight for sustainability transitions: A review of policy uses and impacts of foresight in selected EEA member countries".

## **Group 2: Roadmapping**

**ONDŘEJ VALENTA<sup>12</sup>** (*Technology Centre of Czech Academy of Sciences*) began by pointing out that roadmapping is based on the collective knowledge and expertise of various approaches, and is a suitable tool for framing, structuring and visualizing future activities. Although roadmapping is one of the important methods in future-oriented activities, the use of the term "roadmap" in the context of strategic



planning in the business sector can be traced back to the 1940s. Motorola is generally acknowledged as playing a key role in popularizing "technology roadmapping" in the late 1970s. Since then, the approach has been adopted by many different organizations, at company, sectoral and national levels, to support many different strategic and policy goals. This is particularly do to the high flexibility of roadmapping, and the ability to be adapted to various contexts.

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<sup>12</sup> Please find the Power Point Slides of this presentation at [http://www.sd-network.eu/pdf/conferences/2017\\_prague/presentations/Session%203/Ondrej%20Valenta%20Roadmapping.pdf](http://www.sd-network.eu/pdf/conferences/2017_prague/presentations/Session%203/Ondrej%20Valenta%20Roadmapping.pdf)



The Roadmapping session provided an introduction to the roadmapping method as a tool for an extended look at the future of a chosen field of inquiry. Participants of the session became acquainted with the principles of roadmapping and walked through the steps of creating a roadmap:

- Step 1: Strategic Landscape: Identification and prioritization of key current and anticipated trends and drivers, constraints, and assumptions
- Step 2: Clarify vision and objectives: Clear definition of the vision or goal and quantification
- Step 3: Summarization of current situation: Assessment of current capacities, resources, state-of-the-art
- Step 4: Roadmapping: Structuring to map the route forward
- Step 5: Highlighting: Key milestones along the way and also risks, barriers, enablers, options, decision points, knowledge gaps, etc.
- Step 6: Communication and implementation: Shared understanding and commitment of the users/producers; Assigned tasks, responsibilities, deadlines; Visual presentation of the roadmap; Iterative process – need for constant update

Critical factors for a successful implementation:

- Roadmap embedded in a broader policy strategy, existing network
- The importance of momentum, creating a sense of urgency
- High level of commitment: involvement of the „right“ people, clear link to decision-makers
- Maintaining a degree of flexibility

Part of the session was also dedicated to a practical exercise.

### **Group 3: Horizon Scanning**

**MIROSLAV HAVRÁNEK<sup>13</sup>** (*Technology Centre of Czech Academy of Sciences*) focused on the horizon scanning method and how it is implemented in emerging environmental issues in the Environmental Information and Observation Network (EIONET). EIONET is the largest environmental network in the world.



As defined by the OECD, horizon scanning is a technique for detecting early signs of potentially important developments through a systematic examination of potential threats and opportunities, with emphasis on new technology and its effects on the issue at hand. The method

<sup>13</sup> Please find the Power Point Slides of this presentation at [http://www.sd-network.eu/pdf/conferences/2017\\_prague/presentations/Session%203/Miroslav%20Havranek%20Horizon%20ScanningESDN%20\\_Prague.pdf](http://www.sd-network.eu/pdf/conferences/2017_prague/presentations/Session%203/Miroslav%20Havranek%20Horizon%20ScanningESDN%20_Prague.pdf)

calls for determining what is constant, what changes, and what constantly changes. It explores novel and unexpected issues, as well as persistent problems and trends, including matters at the margins of current thinking that challenge past assumptions. Horizon scanning is often based on desk research, helping to develop the big picture behind the issues to be examined. Desk research involves a wide variety of sources, such as the Internet, government ministries and agencies, non-governmental organizations, international organizations and companies, research communities, and on-line and off-line databases and journals. Horizon scanning can also be undertaken by small groups of experts who are at the forefront in the area of concern: They share their perspectives and knowledge with each other so as to 'scan' how new phenomena might influence the future. A solid 'scan of the horizon' can provide the background to develop strategies for anticipating future developments and thereby gain lead time. It can also be a way to assess trends to feed into a scenario development process. Horizon scanning allows the development of strategic policy planning and avoids that possible wicked signals become a trend.

Horizon scanning consists of the following process:

- Gathering signals: look what is out there, which sources are credible and you want to use
- Sorting signals: you will get a lot of signals and insight, you need to sort to define the cluster, themes, and various core topics
- Sense making: most of sense making is done by a group of people and experts
- Validation: some peers from the outside are needed to go through your material and your ideas and say what the strengths are and what makes no sense. Following this, you know which scenario you can plan for
- Publication: reporting activities
- Feedback: help to focus on particular issues or streamline the process.

#### **Group 4: Strategic policy management**

**SIRPA KEKKONEN<sup>14</sup>** (*Head of Government Strategy Secretariat, Prime Minister's Office, Finland*) started her group session by saying that the challenge of today (for strategic policy-making) is to master and live in "the whole" and not the silos. Strengthening the capacity for strategic policy-making by the Government has long been a systemic challenge in Finland. During the present Government term, a



<sup>14</sup> Please find the Power Point Slides of this presentation at [http://www.sd-network.eu/pdf/conferences/2017\\_prague/presentations/Session%203/Sirpa%20Kekkonen%20\(Finland\).pdf](http://www.sd-network.eu/pdf/conferences/2017_prague/presentations/Session%203/Sirpa%20Kekkonen%20(Finland).pdf)

new strategy process has been set up, aiming at having clear political priorities and positioning Government policies in a longer-term perspective that will overcome the regular four year electoral period.

A cornerstone of the new system in Finland is a Strategic Government Programme (coalition agreement). This states a ten year vision and goals, as well as five prioritized policy areas, including major structural reforms of the governance system. The Government's working methods have been changed to support the implementation of the Strategic Government Programme: Every second Monday the Government convenes to a longer Strategy session to discuss the strategy and analyze progress in priority policies. The Government Strategy Secretariat has been established to provide the Government with monitoring and evaluation of its Programme, which helps in the support of the new working methods.

As part of the policy-making reform, a development process has been launched to better integrate sectoral strategies into the Government's Strategic Programme and limit the number of separate Government strategies. Steps have also been taken to strengthen the connection between the Government Strategy and Financial Planning. To conclude, she reminded the participants that being strategic means to have the ability to prioritize, one cannot do everything at the same time.

### Sharing outcomes and lessons learned from the break-out groups

After the parallel break-out groups, participants met again in the plenary and discussed the outcomes and lessons learned from the individual methods. Below is a short summary of the discussion:

**GROUP 1** analyzed how useful scenario development can be for the SDGs. What emerged is that scenario development would be useful for EU strategic policy-making, but that the time to implement it is missing. However, group participants suggested that it would be possible to harvest and map some scenario building that already exist. Concerning the role of the ESDN network, its meetings could be a good scenario development occasion to build a common perspective.

What emerged from **GROUP 2** on roadmapping is that the method is more apt for companies, rather than for civil servants. However, participants discussed in-depth how roadmapping could be beneficial in the policy world.

The horizon scanning group (**GROUP 3**) was provided with a general outline of the method and then went through a list of already detected signals. Participants were asked to define: 1) the possibility or probability of the signal to happen; and 2) how significantly it can influence the European environment if it manifests itself in a significant way.

**GROUP 4** focused on the Finnish strategic policy model and the group discussed the notion of cutting down the 'strategy jungle'. To cut down the strategy jungle, Finland went from over 900 government policy objectives to 3-5 prioritized policy goals. The group also spoke about coherence between policy and then about how to deal with different strategies in society.

## Conference Closure and Next Steps

**ANNA KÁRNÍKOVÁ** (*Director of the Department of Sustainable Development, Office of the Government of the Czech Republic*) congratulated everyone on an intense and interesting conference! She thanked all speakers and participants for attending the conference and for sharing their experiences.

**ELISABETH FREYTAG-RIGLER & WOLFRAM TERTSCHNIG**, (*ESDN Co-chair, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, Austria*) also gave their thanks to participants for joining the conference and making it a really successful event. They stressed that there is a lot of innovation going on with regard to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, and that it is important to learn from each other. In this respect, the ideas and concepts we learn from each other need to be shared and spread far beyond our network of dedicated change-makers.

The next event of the ESDN will be a workshop in Berlin on 16-17 October 2017, entitled “Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs at the sub-national level: Practical experiences and governance needs”. Next year, the ESDN will continue putting efforts into its peer learning approach and will start working on the next Annual Conference, which will take place in Vienna under Austria’s EU Presidency.





