

ESDN Newsletter

(August 2024)

News from the ESDN

22nd ESDN Workshop – “Governance Transformations for More Effective SDG Implementation”

The 22nd ESDN Workshop took place on 26-27 March 2024 in Budva, Montenegro. The topic was “Governance Transformations for More Effective SDG Implementation”. The Workshop was organized in cooperation with the Government of Montenegro and UNDP Montenegro.

Day 1 of the Workshop began on the 26th of March and focused on what some Western Balkan countries have been doing regarding implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, with a focus on institutional mechanisms and frameworks. This was complemented by keynote presentations of good practices from around Europe on governance mechanisms and experiences in implementation. In typical ESDN Workshop fashion, participants were also able to work in interactive groups to further exchange on the keynote presentations, their own experiences with implementation, and further learn from, and discuss with, one another.

Day 2 of the Workshop began on the 27th of March and focused on governing transformations towards sustainability, as well as focused on deriving answers to the question of what is needed to be fit for the future. The Workshop culminated in a final interactive exchange that focused on participants developing a toolbox for effective SDG governance for the future.

More information about the Workshop, including the agenda, the Discussion Paper, and the keynote presentations, can be found here: <https://www.esdn.eu/events/workshops>.



Photo by UNDP Montenegro

ESDN Policy Note - Workshop

The results of this Workshop were drafted into an ESDN Policy Note, which can be found below, as well as on the ESDN website: <https://www.esdn.eu/publications/policy-briefs-2>. This Policy Note was written by the Workshop Moderator and ESDN External Consultant, Gerald Berger.

The Policy Note mainly focuses on the Toolbox for Effective SDG Governance and features recommendations and good practice examples from the countries attending the Workshop. The recommendations include ways to:

1. Develop effective governance frameworks & institutions
2. Engage stakeholders & build partnerships
3. Strengthen capacity-building in public administrations
4. Financing of SDG implementation.

ESDN Young Civil Servants Workshop – “Transformative Policy – Addressing Intergenerational Equity”

The ESDN organized its first ever Young Civil Servant Workshop, which took place in Vienna on the 15th and 16th of April 2024 and focused on Transformative Policies, especially regarding the aspect of Intergenerational Equity.

The Sustainable Development Goals envisage a planet inhabitable not only for the present, but also for the future and are therefore inherently linked to the wellbeing of different generations. The workshop in Vienna will look at the area of transformative policies from an intergenerational equity perspective. What are the main challenges in this regard? How can we use intergenerational equity as a resource in policymaking? To what extent are the SDGs providing and supporting intergenerational equity and (how) can this be elevated in a post-2030 policy framework? What can young civil servants do to support this process? These questions will guide us through an interesting and exciting 1.5 days with inputs from experts, as well as a lot of time to exchange and develop ideas together.

The Workshop brought together around 25 young civil servants from around Europe, aged 35 or younger, to learn and discuss on the topic of intergenerational equity.

The Workshop agenda, Discussion Paper, and presentations can be found here: <https://www.esdn.eu/events/workshops>.



Photo by Viktoria Miess (BMK)

ESDN Policy Note - Young Civil Servants Workshop

The results of this Workshop were drafted into an ESDN Policy Note, which can be found below, as well as on the ESDN website: <https://www.esdn.eu/publications/policy-briefs-2>.

The four recommendations based on the results of the Workshop are as follows:

1. Foster a cultural change in production and consumption patterns
2. Solutions for sustainable development need careful and long-term thought
3. Institutionalize intergenerational equity
4. Empower Young Civil Servants.

ESDN Voluntary National Review Peer Review Workshop

The 1st ESDN VNR Peer Review Workshop took place on 05 June in Brussels, Belgium at the Permanent Representation of Austria to the European Union. It was organized in cooperation with Belgian Interministerial Conference on Sustainable Development, the Austrian Federal Chancellery, and the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. Austria, Belgium, and Switzerland were the focus countries for the VNR Peer Review, as Austria and Switzerland both have valuable experiences in conducting peer reviews.

This event was offered exclusively to the 9 ESDN Regular Member countries that support the work of the ESDN, offering them targeted information and exchange on VNR peer review processes with their peers. The Workshop looked at the VNRs as sincere government evaluation tools, VNR methodologies and peer review, as well as how to best receive contributions from civil society.

More information on the Workshop, including the agenda and presentations, can be found here: [Workshops \(esdn.eu\)](https://www.esdn.eu/workshops)

An ESDN Policy Note will be made available in the coming weeks and will be uploaded [here](#)

ESDN Conference 2024 – “Upgrading Europe: Building Transformative Policies to Reach the Sustainable Development Goals”

The ESDN Conference 2024 took place in Brussels, Belgium on 05 - 06 June 2024! The title of this year's Conference is “Upgrading Europe: Building Transformative Policies to Reach the Sustainable Development Goals”. The ESDN organized the Conference in cooperation with the Belgian Federal Institute for Sustainable Development and the European Economic and Social Committee. The Conference was an official event of Belgium's EU Council Presidency.

As we find ourselves just over the halfway point to reaching the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, with only six more years left, the ESDN and co-organizers focused this year's Conference on transformative policies. The Global Sustainable Development Reports (2019 and 2023) have identified the entry points to transformational change. The purpose of this Conference was to learn more about transformations and how to bring them about, as well as learn from good

practice cases from national governments, local governments, the business sector, academia, and science. The Conference offered ample opportunities for discussions, networking, and information exchanges with colleagues from all parts of Europe.

More information about the Conference, including the agenda, Discussion Paper, and presentations can be found here: <https://www.esdn.eu/events/conferences>.



Photo by Joy De Klerck (Federal Institute for Sustainable Development)

ESDN Policy Note – Conference 2024

The results of the Conference were drafted into an ESDN Policy Note, which can be found on the ESDN website: <https://www.esdn.eu/publications/policy-briefs-2>. This Policy Note was written by the Workshop Moderator and ESDN External Consultant, Gerald Berger.

The Policy Note makes the following 8 recommendations and are based on the presentations, discussions, and interactive exchanges of the conference participants. Taking actions in all of them will enable actual transformations:

1. Coordinate better to develop integrated strategies and more policy coherence at the EU and national level
2. Involve the sub-national level and their actions more effectively
3. Increase capacity-building measures for public administrators
4. Enhance civil society involvement
5. Foster stronger partnerships between policymakers and societal stakeholders
6. Tackle socio-economic challenges and foster a new economic model
7. Include sustainable development in education
8. Curb negative international spillover effects.

ESDN Youth Workshop 2024 – “Towards a Sustainable, Just, and Climate Neutral Europe by 2050”

This year’s Youth Workshop will take place on 05-06 September in Berlin and bring together around 30 ESDN Youth Network Members from 19 European countries. The Workshop will

focus on the topic of foresight and sustainable development scenarios and will feature keynote speakers and experts on this topic. This will help to prepare the Youth Members to discuss the Workshop's main topic of "Towards a Sustainable, Just, and Climate Neutral Europe by 2050", where participants will use 14 megatrends as a tool to look at this complex issue, map the megatrends as they relate to this topic, discuss on future consequences, and develop questions to ESDN Advisory Board Members, who will also be participants at the Workshop and are policy-implementers, working in national level governments, on the policy implications of megatrends on the Workshop topic.

European Sustainable Development Week 2024

The ESDN is happy to announce that the 2024 edition of the European Sustainable Development Week (ESDW) is now officially open to everyone to start registering their sustainable development and SDG-related events that take place from 18 September – 08 October!

Anyone who wants to take a concrete action to support the implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations can register an event. Initiatives, foundations, schools, kindergartens, universities, churches, companies, social institutions, environmental and development associations, municipalities, public utilities, authorities, offices and ministries, but also private persons who would like to start an action in their personal environment.

Click the following link to register your event: <https://www.esdn.eu/esdw/event-registration>



9th ESDN Peer Learning Platform – “Sustainable Culture and Circular Economy: Building Resilience for Tomorrow”

The 9th ESDN Peer Learning Platform will take on 22-23 October in Bucharest, Romania. The topic of the Peer Learning Platform will be “Sustainable Culture and Circular Economy: Building Resilience for Tomorrow”.

ESDN Newsflashes

Luxembourg’s Sustainability Check

The Sustainability Check (Nohaltegkeetscheck) is a tool for supporting and self-assessing draft laws in relation to their impact on sustainable development in Luxembourg. It allows for better ownership of the general sustainable development policy and in particular Luxembourg’s National Plan for Sustainable Development (PNDD) by ministries and administrations.

Read the full Newsflash here: <https://www.esdn.eu/newsflash/detail/luxembourgs-sustainability-check>.

“Sustainable Romania” Project - An example of efficient use of European funds for SDG implementation

On December 8, 2023, the “Sustainable Romania” project held a concluding conference, which signified the culmination of the "Sustainable Romania" project, serving as the primary platform for the development of the strategic and institutional framework necessary for implementing the National Strategy for Sustainable Development in Romania by 2030. This initiative received co-financing from the European Social Fund under the Administrative Capacity Operational Program 2014-2020 and spanned a duration of five years.

Read the full Newsflash here: <https://www.esdn.eu/newsflash/detail/sustainable-romania-project-an-example-of-efficient-use-of-european-funds-for-sdg-implementation>.

One goal, Two Toolboxes - Practical support for Swiss cantons, municipalities, and businesses in implementing the 2030 Agenda

The 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy (2030 SDS) sets out the guidelines for the Federal Council’s sustainability policy and establishes sustainable development as an important requirement for all federal policy areas. As a transversal strategy, it formulates priorities and sets goals for the period up to 2030. All federal offices are called upon to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the 2030 SDS within their areas of responsibility and to integrate the principles and goals into their regular planning, budgeting, and policy management processes.

Read the full Newsflash here: <https://www.esdn.eu/newsflash/detail/one-goal-two-toolboxes-practical-support-for-swiss-cantons-municipalities-and-businesses-in-implementing-the-2030-agenda>.

The European Conference for a Just Transition - a Belgian Presidency High-Level event

As President of the Council of the European Union, Belgium, following the Spanish efforts made on this issue, made Just Transition one of its priorities in the environment formation. The Presidency objective is to adopt council conclusions at the formal council meeting on the 17th of June. These council conclusions will be on the mid-term review of the 8th Environmental Action Program and the three priorities of the Belgian Presidency namely: circular economy, adaptation, and resilience and Just Transition.

Read the full Newsflash here: <https://www.esdn.eu/newsflash/detail/the-european-conference-for-a-just-transition-a-belgian-presidency-high-level-event>.

Together for the Goals: The Eighth National SDG Report of The Netherlands

Since the establishment of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, The Netherlands publishes a yearly report on the national progress and implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This year, the eighth edition of the report has been published.

The Report can be found here (Dutch): <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2024/05/15/achtste-sdg-rapportage-nederland-op-weg-naar-brede-welvaart>. The Report should be available in English by the end of August.

Read the full Newsflash here: <https://www.esdn.eu/newsflash/detail/together-for-the-goals-the-eighth-national-sdg-report-of-the-netherlands>.

News From European Countries

Belgium

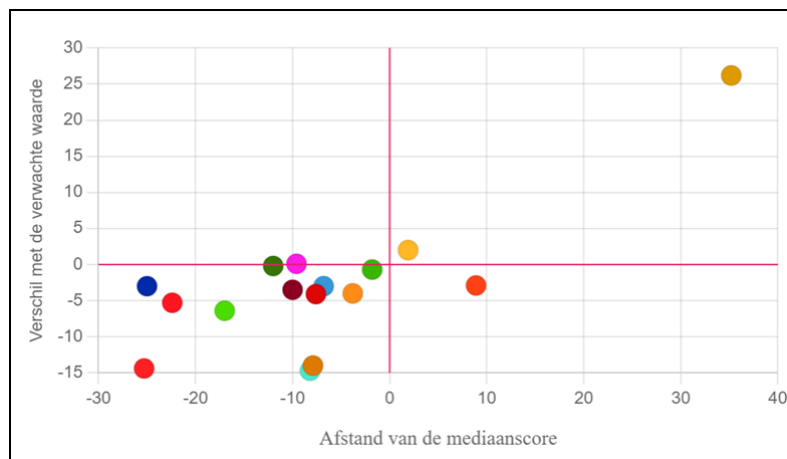
On track to 2030? Delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals in the EU

On track to 2030? Delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals in the EU was co-organised on the 18th of June in Brussels by the Belgian Federal Minister for Climate, Environment, Sustainable Development, and the Green Deal: Zakia Khattabi, and the European Commissioner for Economy: Paolo Gentiloni. The conference was a hybrid high-level event of both the Belgian Presidency of the EU Council and the European Commission. *On track to 2030?* tackled, firstly, the lessons to be learned from the EU 2023 Voluntary Review, secondly, the financial and economic aspects of EU engagement with the 2030 Agenda, and thirdly, the global and transboundary context around EU SDG policies. The event, consisting of keynotes and panel discussions, aimed to take stock of achieved European progress, share expert insights, and inspire future accelerated SDG action in Europe, on all levels and by governments

and stakeholders alike, also looking forward to the 2024 UN Summit of the Future. The conference attracted about 200 participants and included many high-level speakers. Her Majesty Queen Mathilde of the Belgians kicked off the event with an opening speech. European Commissioner for Environment Virginijus Sinkevičius delivered a closing statement. *On track to 2030?* coincided with the publication of the 2024 Eurostat SDG monitoring report.

Flanders – SDG monitor for Flemish cities and municipalities

The Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG) worked with consultant Idea to update its SDG Index, a comprehensive list of local SDG indicators. This index now forms the basis for the new version of the [SDG Monitor for cities and municipalities](#). With a dataset of more than 200 indicators, the monitor provides valuable information for Flemish cities and municipalities, which are currently working hard on local context analyses and policy proposals in the election year 2024.



Finland

Sustainability Assessment

The Finnish Prime Minister's Office conducts an annual societal sustainability assessment to strengthen the knowledge base and to understand the wider picture on the current sustainability challenges. The assessment will also analyze possible future developments in short to medium term and identify interdependencies between different sustainability challenges. A discussion Paper (in Finnish with short English and Swedish abstracts) describing the purpose, objectives and methodology of the sustainability assessment is available online.

Link: <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/165632>

Government of Åland adopted the report 'Everyone can flourish on the islands of peace - Åland Voluntary Review 2024'.

The report gives an overview of the "Everyone Can Flourish" idea and Åland's approach to sustainability. The report has been submitted by the Government of Åland to UN DESA (within the framework of the 2030 Agenda).

Link to the Report:

[https://issuu.com/barkraft/docs/everyone can flourish on the island of peace?fr=sM2RhYjY4NjEwNDI](https://issuu.com/barkraft/docs/everyone_can_flourish_on_the_island_of_peace?fr=sM2RhYjY4NjEwNDI)

Netherlands

Together for the Goals: The Eighth National SDG Report of The Netherlands

On the 15th of May, The Dutch government sent its annual SDG report to parliament, together with the annual statistical Monitor Wellbeing & SDGs. The data in the Monitor show that Netherlands has a high degree of wellbeing in the present, but that this comes at the cost of future wellbeing. The SDG report, “Netherlands on the way to wellbeing”, focuses on the successes and challenges that the government and other sectors experience in working towards the SDG’s and wellbeing.

While the statistical Monitor is independently published by Statistics Netherlands, the annual SDG report is written by the government, youth, the business sector, decentralized governments and the knowledge sector together. It therefore provides a broad overview of how the Netherlands is progressing towards sustainability.

Link to the 8th National SDG Report (Dutch):

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2024/05/15/achtste-sdg-rapportage-nederland-op-weg-naar-brede-welvaart>



Romania

Boosting the Institutional Framework for Implementing the 2030 Agenda through the National Recovery Plan

The Department of Sustainable Development, which coordinates the implementation of the 17 SDGs at the national level, is taking advantage of financing brought in by the European

Mechanism of Recovery and Resilience. The aim is to enhance public institutions' capacity for an efficient transition to sustainability. It is important to highlight that there is a high need and demand for sustainability skills and instruments at all levels in Romania, especially among local public authorities.

Firstly, based on the positive experience of training 150 sustainable development experts from public servants working in the central public administration, the Romanian Department of Sustainable Development is taking a bold step to increase the number of such experts to 2,000 by 2026, most of whom will be from local public authorities. Humans are the most valuable resource for development, which is why we need more public servants to learn about sustainability and to be able to design and implement public policies in accordance with the core values of the 2030 Agenda.

Another very important project that the Department will undertake to ensure expertise for sustainable development and coherent public policies based on evidence is the establishment of a Center of Excellence at the central level, with hubs in the 8 development regions of Romania. This center will be a flexible and agile structure that will bring together experts to provide knowledge and support tools for public policies.

Last but not least, in the spirit of digitalization and the principle of transparency and access to high-quality data, a one-stop-shop platform will be established. Anyone will be able to access all national and European sustainable development indicators (which have already been aggregated on a single website), as well as best practice examples or territorial sustainable development indicators. Additionally, the platform will include tools to facilitate areas closely related to sustainable development: non-financial/sustainability reporting of companies and the circular economy.

Through strategic initiatives like enhancing public institution capacities, increasing the number of trained sustainability experts, and establishing a Center of Excellence, Romania is making significant strides in aligning with the 2030 Agenda. The creation of a one-stop-shop platform underscores the country's commitment to transparency, digitalization, and accessibility to high-quality data. These efforts collectively aim to foster a robust institutional framework that supports sustainable development at all levels, ensuring that Romania is well-equipped to meet its sustainability goals and contribute to a more sustainable future.

Switzerland

Sustainable Development Forum and the 2030 Dialogue

On the 14th and 15th of May, the Swiss Federal Office for Spatial Development organized the Sustainable Development Forum and the 2030 Dialogue as a joint event entitled “Sustainability beyond borders”. The event focused on the often-unintended negative spillover effects of our actions on other countries and regions.

This topic is particularly important for Switzerland, as the country is doing very well in the international SDG rankings but poorly in specific spillover-indexes.

During these two days, representatives from the federal, cantonal or municipal level as well as participants from business, science and civil society discussed the various levers for avoiding these undesirable effects.



Sustainable Development Funding Programme 2023-2024 on Sustainable Housing

The “Sustainable Development Funding Programme” supports municipalities, cantons and private institutions that wish to implement innovative projects on a given topic in favour of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The responsible unit is the Sustainable Development Section located at the Federal Office for spatial Development ARE. This year, the programme focusses on the topic of "Sustainable Housing". Given this focus, the Federal Office for Housing (FOH) is partnering financially and, moreover, with its expertise. 15 projects were selected for implementation in 2024. Some of them bring forward solutions for the housing shortage or aim for the sustainable use of communal spaces, while others provide concepts for circular economy, or concrete tools and guidance for energy efficiency.

Link: <https://www.are.admin.ch/are/de/home/nachhaltige-entwicklung/programme-und-projekte/foerderprogramm.html>



Interesting Projects and Research from around Europe

CSR Europe

Business Manifesto

The persistence of poverty and social exclusion are not due to fate. They pose a systemic risk that only a steady political will and the engagement of all players can overcome.

Practically, we propose to make the protection of the most vulnerable a cornerstone of all European policies and decisions, whether it is social issues, access to rights, culture, health, environmental and climate policies, the industrial strategy, skills development, trade agreements or international partnerships.

Link to the Manifesto: <https://www.csreurope.org/action-over-ambition-delivering-on-a-just-industrial-transition-for-a-sustainable-europe-2030>

European Environment Initiative (EURENI)

Two reports highlighting the key role of plant-based nutrition in transforming our food system

Plant-based diets cannot only help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, they also make an essential contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Two recent reports highlight the key role of plant-based nutrition in transforming our food system:

“Policy Strategies and Instruments for the Promotion of a Plant-Based Diet in Europe” highlights current developments and policies to promote plant-based diets at supranational, national, regional and local levels in Europe (read [here](#)); “Good Practices to Promote a Plant-Based Diet in Europe” shares experiences from producers, food processors, start-ups, companies, associations, and actors from the catering and gastronomy sector to offer inspiration to other stakeholders and further promote plant-based nutrition (read [here](#)).

Both reports were published as part of the “[PlantEurope](#)” project funded by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection’s “European Environment Initiative” (EURENI) funding programme.

European Environmental Bureau

European Pact for the Future

The Austrian and German Environment Ministries have supported us in developing the Pact, including consultations across civil society, youth, think tanks, business and policy makers, and the Belgian Presidency hosted our launch event a couple of weeks ago in Brussels.

The Pact has been well received and is sparking a lot of interest (it was trending in the top 3 of Twitter/X during its launch) as a holistic vision of what is needed in the next legislative cycle (see [web page](#) & [laid out summary](#)). We are approaching 1000 signature and **would very much welcome more individuals and organisations signing it**. The web page gives the dozen demands and if you click on the downward arrows on the right of each flagship ask, you get more information on “the issues” and “the asks”. There is a sign-up button on the top right and at the bottom, where we have started adding names of those signed up.

[Sign](#) the EUROPEAN PACT FOR THE FUTURE!

Nordregio

Nordic Voluntary Subnational Review (VSR)

The Nordic Voluntary Subnational Review (VSR) is the first cross-national report of its kind in the world. It has been developed as a joint venture by the Nordic Associations of Local and Regional Governments (LRGAs) and Nordregio. The aim of the report is to highlight how the Nordic municipalities and regional authorities have localized the Sustainable Development Goals – progress made, as well as obstacles they have met in their work. Through the report and a toolbox, we want to share learnings and tested methods with local and regional authorities globally.

Link to the Report:

<https://pub.nordregio.org/r-2024-16-the-nordic-view-on-sustainability-learnings-from-the-local-level/>

Link to the Toolbox:

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/f6674a8cb9f249fe8bb72b22ade8608b/page/Homepage/?draft=true>

PATHFINDER

Co-authored the case study, [*Examining the role of tourism social enterprise Venezia Autentica in responding to overtourism and progressing the Sustainable Development Goals*](#) in the book, "[International Case Studies in Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Tourism](#)". It addresses the social response to the impact of excessive tourism in Venice through social responsibility and innovation.

Co-authored a book chapter, *Building a case for social enterprise to mobilise the SDGs in tourism, Venezia Autentica*. The book, "[The Elgar Companion to Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals](#)" (e-elgar.com) comprises theoretical, empirical, and conceptual chapters from leading international scholars, reflecting on critical debates and developments surrounding the role of tourism in progressing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

United Nations Environment Programme

World Environment Day to focus on land restoration

Celebrated every year on 5 June, World Environment Day puts a spotlight on environmental challenges and mobilizes hundreds of millions of people to take action for the environment.

In 2024, the focus is on Land Restoration, Desertification & Drought Resilience or under the motto of 'We are #GenerationRestoration. Our Land. Our Future'. Everyone alive right now is part of the first generation to experience the devastating effects of land degradation, drought, and climate change – and may be part of the last generation able to do something about it. From reducing food waste to supporting local farmers, increasing urban forests or rewilding, we can all take part.

For more information, ideas, and to register your action, visit:
<https://www.worldenvironmentday.global/>.



World Fair Trade Organization

WFTO, the Home of Fair Trade Enterprises, is a global community of entrepreneurs, visionaries, and changemakers united by a shared belief that a fair, just, and equitable way of doing business is possible. Last Saturday, the 11th of May 2024, they celebrated **World Fair Trade Day 2024** under the theme of **#BusinessRevolution**, which saw active participation in their photo action with over 500 submissions. The theme "Business Revolution" stems from the urgent need to focus on business models that can address environmental crises, social inequalities, and the shortcomings of profit-maximizing enterprises and catalyze change in our economic systems. Central to WFTO's mission are the 10 Fair Trade Principles, which are shaped to complement and support the SDGs. By advocating for better business models and showcasing positive examples of Fair Trade Enterprises that embrace those principles, WFTO's campaign demonstrates that entrepreneurship can be a force for good and that different economic models are possible.

